

Celibacy in Buddhism: Exploring *Kāmmachanda Nirodho* as a Path of Self-Liberation in the Modern Era

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the concept of *kāmmachanda nirodho* (cessation of sensory desire) within Buddhism, focusing on its doctrinal foundation and relevance to contemporary monastic life. Unlike previous studies that have predominantly treated celibacy as a moral prescription, this research argues that celibacy constitutes a profound psychospiritual strategy aimed at liberation from suffering (*dukkha*). Employing a qualitative methodology with a literature-based approach, the study analyzes primary sources from the *Tiṭṭaka* and secondary sources including scholarly literature, journal articles, and theories from modern psychology and sociology. The findings suggest that *kāmmachanda nirodho* is not merely an avoidance of worldly pleasures but a transformative spiritual practice directed toward the attainment of *nibbāna*. Rooted in ignorance (*avijjā*), sensory desire is identified as a principal source of suffering. Through the path of morality, concentration, and wisdom outlined in the Noble Eightfold Path, practitioners can progress toward liberation. The study also emphasizes the value of psychological perspectives in understanding the dynamics of celibacy in the digital age. The research contributes to religious studies, advocates for adaptive monastic curricula, and informs policy efforts to support the well-being of celibate practitioners. Its originality lies in the interdisciplinary analysis combining classical Buddhist texts with psychospiritual perspectives to yield new insights for contemporary spiritual life.

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Introduction

In the midst of modernity and a digital culture that increasingly normalizes instant gratification and sensory pleasures, the practice of celibacy in religious teachings, particularly in Buddhism, faces significant challenges. The decision to

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abstain from sexual relationships and worldly pleasures is frequently perceived as extreme or outdated within contemporary urban societies. However, in the Buddhist tradition, celibacy holds profound spiritual significance: it is regarded as a path toward enlightenment (*nibbāna*) and liberation from the cycle of birth and death (*samsāra*) (Marco-Gracia, 2018). Far beyond mere renunciation, celibacy represents a disciplined pursuit of inner purification and heightened spiritual awareness.

The increasing pressure on spiritual life in the modern era is also marked by widespread exposure to pornography, the commodification of the body, and the normalization of casual sexual relationships, all of which are now easily accessible through digital platforms. For Buddhist practitioners—particularly monks and nuns—these external pressures present unique challenges in upholding their commitment to celibacy. A life driven by craving (*taṇhā*) or including sexual desire, is understood in Buddhism as a primary cause of suffering (*dukkha*) that perpetuates the cycle of rebirth (Mikheeva & Agoramoorthy, 2023). Therefore, celibacy serves as a crucial means of detachment from worldly attachments and the illusion of pleasure.

Within the Buddhist framework, *kāmmacchanda* (sensory desire) is identified as one of the most formidable obstacles to spiritual advancement. This form of desire is not limited to sexual urges but also includes cravings for wealth, palatable food, physical comfort, and social status. Numerous studies emphasize the importance of controlling *kāmmacchanda*, particularly among monastics, who embrace celibacy to prioritize spiritual cultivation over sensory indulgence (Dalzell, 2011; Freitas, 2015; Keshavarz, Abadian, Shamsiri Milani, Hamdieh, & Nasiri, 2022; Untung, Kariima, & Suntoro, 2024). In this context, celibacy is not merely a moral choice, but a vital pathway toward deep spiritual transformation.

Scholarly research on religious celibacy has developed along three primary trajectories. First, in Abrahamic traditions such as Judaism and Islam, celibacy is generally not upheld as the principal route to spiritual fulfillment. Biale (2023) notes that marriage is a religious obligation in Judaism, though historical exceptions existed among sects such as the Essenes and Qumran communities who adopted ascetic lifestyles (Diamond & Olsen, 2007). In Islam, celibacy is typically discouraged as it is perceived to contradict human nature and social harmony, despite the existence of ascetic practices within certain spiritual movements (Tumanan, 2022; Imtoul & Hussein, 2009). Second, in Buddhism, celibacy is central to monastic discipline and is viewed as indispensable for progressing toward *nibbāna*. Powers (2007) emphasizes its role in Indian and Tibetan traditions as a means of avoiding attachment and suffering, while Balogun & Ojelabi (2020) highlight sexual restraint as a cornerstone of monastic life. Nevertheless, these accounts tend to adopt a normative-descriptive approach and have not fully engaged with the psychospiritual dimensions of *kāmmacchanda nirodho*—the cessation of sensual desire—as a liberative practice. Third, psychological and sociological perspectives have increasingly explored the impact of celibacy on mental and spiritual well-being in contemporary contexts. Sacco et al. (2016) found that celibacy can deepen spiritual connection among Catholic priests, but may also lead to inner conflict if the commitment is weak—an idea echoed by Baumann et al. (2019), who introduced the concept of “spiritual dryness” and its association with psychosexual distress.

Additionally, Freeman-Coppadge & Horne (2019) describe the psychological and spiritual struggles of celibate LGBTQ+ Christians, while Speckhard & Ellenberg (2022) draw attention to the high incidence of psychiatric disorders among involuntary celibates (incels), primarily due to social isolation. From these various perspectives, it becomes clear that existing academic studies lack an integrative approach to *kāmmacchanda nirodho* as both a morally significant and psychospiritually liberating practice. Therefore, this research aims to bridge the gap between Buddhist doctrinal frameworks, lived experiences of monastics, and contemporary psychological-sociological approaches.

This study seeks to address limitations in existing literature by offering a more comprehensive analysis of *kāmmacchanda nirodho* within Buddhist teachings and practices, particularly in the context of modern monastic life. Unlike prior studies that often adopt normative or generalized perspectives, this research specifically investigates celibacy as not merely abstention from sensual pleasures, but as a strategic spiritual practice aimed at achieving enlightenment (*nibbāna*). Drawing on canonical Buddhist texts and doctrinal exegesis, as well as the lived experiences of celibate practitioners, this study highlights the practical significance of celibacy in overcoming mental defilements and fostering spiritual growth. Additionally, it examines the psychological challenges celibates face today, including loneliness and emotional distress, and underscores the importance of community and support systems in sustaining such a lifestyle. As such, this research offers a novel interdisciplinary contribution that integrates doctrinal, practical, and psychological perspectives on *kāmmacchanda nirodho* in contemporary Buddhism.

The central hypothesis of this study posits that the practice of celibacy within Buddhist monastic life, as an expression of *kāmmacchanda nirodho* (cessation of sensual desire), plays a pivotal role in enabling practitioners to progress toward enlightenment (*nibbāna*) by diminishing attachment to worldly desires—including sexual and material cravings. This research asserts that celibacy functions not merely as an abstention from sensual pleasures, but as a deliberate spiritual tool to cultivate inner peace, tranquility, and profound insight, all of which are integral to spiritual development and liberation (Rahula, 2007; Schmithausen, 1997). A review of Buddhist doctrinal sources identifies sensual desire, particularly sexual craving, as one of the principal causes of suffering (*dukkha*) and a binding force within the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*). By abstaining from such desires, monastic practitioners seek to transcend the perpetuation of suffering and break free from cyclical existence. This hypothesis therefore posits that celibacy serves as an intentional psychological and spiritual intervention to mitigate emotional and cognitive impediments, thereby facilitating the attainment of *nibbāna*.

In a modern psychological framework, such discipline aligns with the theory of ego depletion, which suggests that the human capacity to resist impulses is a finite resource that can, however, be enhanced through consistent spiritual practice and self-regulation (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 2018). Moreover, celibacy can also be interpreted through the lens of attachment theory, which posits that human beings are biologically predisposed to form emotional bonds. Within the context of monastic life, this intrinsic drive is not eradicated but redirected toward spiritual ideals rather than interpersonal or material attachments (Rever, 1972). By exploring these interdisciplinary frameworks, this study aims to advance our

understanding of how the renunciation of sensual desires affects spiritual growth within Buddhist monastic contexts. It also seeks to examine the psychological challenges faced by celibate practitioners in the modern era, particularly in relation to increased accessibility to worldly pleasures and temptations in contemporary society.

Method

This research focuses on exploring the concept of celibacy in Buddhism, with particular attention to *kāmmacchanda nirodho* as a form of renunciation of sensual desires. The primary unit of analysis in this study comprises Buddhist religious texts, with a specific emphasis on the *Tipiṭaka*, the principal scripture of the *Theravāda* Buddhist tradition. In addition, monastic practice and the conceptual understanding of celibacy are included as complementary units of analysis, representing both the doctrinal and experiential dimensions of renouncing sensual desire within the context of Buddhist spiritual life.

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, which was selected for its suitability in capturing the depth and complexity of values, meanings, and practices associated with celibacy from religious and spiritual perspectives. A qualitative approach is deemed most appropriate, as it allows for interpretive engagement with religious texts and facilitates reflection on their embedded meanings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The research is exploratory and descriptive in nature, seeking to address the gaps in existing literature that have not comprehensively examined the concept of *kāmmacchanda nirodho*, particularly in relation to monastic practices and contemporary spiritual challenges.

The data sources utilized in this study consist of two main categories: primary and secondary sources. Primary data were derived from a literature-based analysis of the *Tipiṭaka*, which serves as the doctrinal cornerstone of Buddhism. Secondary data were collected from a range of supporting literature, including scholarly journal articles and books relevant to religious studies and qualitative methodology (Dodgson, 2017; Gerring, 2017). These sources were used in an integrative manner to enhance analytical validity and provide a broader contextual understanding of themes related to celibacy, spiritual development, and mental discipline.

Data collection was conducted through a structured literature review involving several systematic steps. The initial phase involved the preparation of necessary tools such as note-taking materials and qualitative data analysis software. The researcher compiled a working bibliography of core texts to be analyzed (Silverman & Patterson, 2021). This was followed by an intensive reading of the collected literature, focusing especially on key sections of the *Tipiṭaka* relevant to celibacy and *kāmmacchanda nirodho*. Pertinent information was systematically recorded and synthesized as the foundation for argumentation and interpretation throughout the research process (Maxwell, 2021). Additional theoretical perspectives were drawn from works by Fink (2019) and Snyder (2019) to contextualize the analysis within broader academic discourse.

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis and descriptive thematic analysis, consistent with established practices in qualitative research. These techniques enabled the researcher to identify and explore central themes within the texts, categorize information under relevant thematic constructs such as self-

discipline, renunciation, spiritual struggle, and community support, and draw reflective conclusions regarding the conceptual significance of celibacy in Buddhism (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Through this integrated methodological framework, the study seeks to contribute original insights to the field of Buddhist studies and contemporary religious scholarship by synthesizing doctrinal, experiential, and psychological perspectives.

Findings

The Meaning of Tanhā in the Cosmological Narrative of Aggañña Sutta

The *Aggañña Sutta*, a discourse delivered by the Buddha, presents a cosmological narrative describing the origin of the world and the initial encounter of beings with material existence. According to this sutta, in the beginning, all beings existed in a state of autonomy and contentment, free from dependence or need. They inhabited a fluid, luminous realm, marked by harmony and fulfillment. However, this primordial state began to deteriorate due to the emergence of *taṇhā*—craving or greed—as beings, though having enough, became consumed by the desire for more (Morrison, 2001). Succumbing to sensory indulgence, they began to partake in the delights of the world, marking the onset of conditioned experience. As a consequence of this craving, the once-liquid world gradually solidified, prompting beings to consume increasingly complex forms of nourishment, such as plant shoots and wild rice. Concurrent with these material transformations, a shift occurred in the beings' physical forms: those who were previously androgynous began to develop distinct male and female characteristics. This led to the emergence of sexual attraction and pair bonding, which in turn gave rise to the notions of "me," "mine," and personal ownership—concepts that became foundational to the structure of human social existence.

Additionally, the *Aggañña Sutta* also contains prophetic insights, in which the Buddha forewarns of future world cycles, including periods of destruction and renewal. During such times, beings are reborn in radiant, non-material forms, described in the *Dīgha Nikāya* as: "There they remain, made by the mind, enduring in joy." However, even in such luminous states, pride in physical appearance gives rise to arrogance and social stratification, as beings begin to compare themselves to others. As the earth solidified further, beings found sustenance in spontaneously growing fungi, but as their pride and craving intensified, these resources disappeared. They eventually resorted to consuming uncultivated grains, and with the deepening of sexual attraction, sexual intercourse ensued—representing the culmination of their descent into conditioned existence (Gill, 2019).

Within this narrative, *taṇhā* emerges as a central theme, signifying the "thirst" that underlies suffering and the perpetuation of *saṃsāra* (Thēra, 2010). As a psychological force, *taṇhā* must be overcome in order to attain *nibbana* (Chowdhury, 2019). In his first sermon, the Buddha highlighted the necessity of extinguishing the root of suffering—namely, the craving for sensual pleasure (*kāma-taṇhā*)—as the gateway to liberation (Pannarathana, 2023). By relinquishing desire and detachment from clinging, individuals can experience true spiritual freedom (Groupe, 2010). Through the *Aggañña Sutta*, the Buddha offers more than a mythological account of creation; he presents a profound philosophical reflection on the genesis of human suffering and the conditioning power of *taṇhā*. This discourse

invites contemplation on the existential dynamics of craving and the spiritual imperative to transcend desire in the pursuit of liberation.

Controlling Sensory Desires as the Path to Spiritual Freedom

In the Buddhist tradition, the understanding of sensual lust is articulated as a profound psychological and spiritual reflection, particularly by monastics. Monks emphasize that lust does not emerge arbitrarily; rather, it arises from a complex interplay between consciousness and desire. This process begins with the element of sense desire, which gives rise to awareness of the object of desire. This awareness subsequently evolves into craving, ultimately culminating in infatuation with sensual pleasures (Langenberg, 2015). This cyclical pattern illustrates how individuals, ensnared by ignorance (*avijjā*), misperceive and pursue gratification through three avenues of behavior: bodily action, speech, and thought. Within this framework, ignorance is regarded as the root of all sexual desires. As Webster, (2005) argues, misapprehensions about desire can lead to profound suffering.

To illustrate the destructive consequences of uncontrolled lust, Buddhist monastics often employ the simile of a torch ignited in a dry meadow. If such a torch is not extinguished promptly, it can cause devastating harm to surrounding life. In this analogy, an ascetic or *brahmin* who cultivates self-restraint must act swiftly to extinguish the flames of desire to prevent greater suffering (Marwaha, 2006). The Buddha taught that by cultivating thoughts of renunciation, one can begin to discern the root causes of desire. This renunciatory mindset fosters the realization of freedom and generates the aspiration to sever attachments to the material world. On this spiritual path, the practitioner is naturally inclined to seek out vehicles of renunciation, such as scriptural study and meditative practice (Pannarathana, 2023).

Another commonly used simile is that of a person who promptly extinguishes a torch in a dry meadow. Through this swift action, neighboring beings are spared from harm. Likewise, an ascetic who promptly curtails his desires avoids detrimental consequences and attains mental tranquility. With a calm and disciplined mind, one can perceive the joy that is unburdened by worldly anxieties (Wright, 2017). Upon the dissolution of the physical body, the prospect of rebirth in heavenly realms becomes attainable for those who have fully abandoned sexual desires. This process illustrates that self-mastery serves not only to avert immediate suffering, but also functions as a pathway toward higher spiritual rebirth.

Thus, the contemplation of sensual lust in Buddhism calls individuals to recognize the profound importance of relinquishing entangling desires. By doing so, one may discover the path that leads to true liberation.

Moral Discipline and Self-mastery as Foundations of Enlightenment in Buddhism

In the teachings of the Buddha, profound emphasis is placed on the significance of self-mastery and moral discipline in a monk's spiritual journey. The Buddha taught that in order to attain enlightenment, a monk must cultivate impeccable virtue, maintain a concentrated mind, and develop wisdom. He stressed the necessity of overcoming binding desires and highlighted the importance of

direct experiential insight in penetrating mental defilements (Loy, 2015). The Buddha advised the monastics: “If you reject other doctrines and enjoy only worldly food with wisdom, then you will attain a god-like state.” This statement underscores the notion that by abandoning desire and nurturing wisdom, one may attain a state of liberation from suffering.

Within this framework, the Five Precepts (*Sīla*) serve as fundamental ethical guidelines for monastics. These precepts not only require intellectual understanding of the *Dhamma* but also demand the embodiment of holy living in communal practice with fellow monks. Bhante emphasized that monastics should diligently study and embody the teachings so they may serve as moral exemplars for the lay community. In this role, monks are expected to communicate skillfully, disseminate understanding of the Four *Jhānas*, and support others in attaining happiness through deep contemplative insight (Uthaphun, 2017).

As articulated in the *Nibbedhika Sutta*, knowledge of sensual pleasures and their origins is critical to spiritual advancement. Sensual craving acts as a major obstacle to liberation, as it manifests in various forms—including physical appearance, sound, and taste—which generate attachment and pride. These attachments often result in morally and spiritually unfavorable rebirths (Matthews, 2006). The overcoming of sensual desire thus constitutes a central focus in Buddhist practice. The Buddha taught that the cessation of sensory contact is key to extinguishing sensual craving. In this pursuit, the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariyo Aṭṭhaṅgiko Maggo*) plays an essential role. Comprising right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, this path provides a comprehensive framework for the gradual elimination of desire (Strickler, 2021).

The Buddha's teachings affirm that true spiritual attainment is grounded in rigorous self-discipline, profound understanding of sensual phenomena, and consistent ethical practice. Through the cultivation of personal development within a communal context, monks are expected not only to pursue enlightenment individually but also to contribute to the spiritual welfare of all beings. In this sense, the integration of doctrinal understanding with daily ethical conduct constitutes a crucial step toward happiness and ultimate liberation from suffering (Evola, 1996).

Sensory Awareness and the Noble Eightfold Path as the Key to Liberation from Suffering

Food and thoughts are regarded as key contributors to the arising of various sensations—both pleasant and unpleasant (Gentry, 2019). These sensations, while closely tied to material experiences, are fundamentally impermanent. Within the Buddha's teachings, awareness of these sensations and their influence on one's actions and intentions is emphasized as essential for the attainment of enlightenment. Monastics, as stewards of this tradition, recognize that sensory inputs and perceptions can give rise to pride and attachment. Awareness of the six types of perception—form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and *Dhamma*—serves as the foundation for cultivating wisdom and self-restraint (Lindahl & Britton, 2019). The repetitive engagement with these perceptions forms habitual patterns that can either lead to spiritual awakening or further entrench one in suffering.

The Buddha taught that ignorance (*avijjā*) is the root cause of impure thoughts, which in turn give rise to unwholesome actions (Elschinger, 2010). By adhering to the Noble Eightfold Path, one can overcome this ignorance and thereby eradicate the suffering rooted in craving (*taṇhā*) (Mahatthanadull, 2018). This path guides individuals toward understanding and transcending suffering through mindful observation of their thoughts, behaviors, and the sensory stimuli that engage consciousness. One of the central tenets of this teaching is the contemplation of the human body. The Buddha encouraged monks to reflect upon the body not merely as an object of enjoyment but as an impermanent, impure entity destined to decay. Such realization helps diminish attachment to sensory pleasure and fosters the aspiration for liberation from the cycle of rebirth (*samsāra*).

Moreover, the Buddha underscored the necessity of overcoming craving that originates from contact with sense objects. Each of the five senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch—serves as a gateway through which desire can emerge (Matthews, 2006). By developing insight into this process, practitioners can extinguish the craving that inevitably leads to suffering. Through continuous mindfulness and disciplined practice, monks can cultivate a profound awareness that leads to equanimity. Observation of the body and mind enables the development of a stable, concentrated mental state, which is essential for accessing deeper meditative absorptions (*jhānas*). Within this framework, understanding the nature of suffering and the path to its cessation becomes increasingly apparent.

In Buddhism, suffering is understood to arise from dissatisfaction and unfulfilled desire. Therefore, following the Noble Eightfold Path provides a systematic method for overcoming craving and attaining freedom from suffering. Ultimately, the teachings emphasize that liberation from desire constitutes the heart of spiritual practice. Through consistent effort, discipline, and insight, individuals can transcend the uncertainties of conditioned existence and realize the supreme peace of *nibbāna*. Although this path requires perseverance and inner transformation, it offers enduring spiritual benefits for those committed to the practice.

Discussion

This study explores the concept of *kāmmacchanda nirodho*, or the cessation of sensual desire, within the Buddhist tradition—focusing on the *Aggañña Sutta* narrative and teachings concerning the origins of the world and the emergence of suffering through craving (*taṇhā*). The findings indicate that celibacy in Buddhism is not merely a personal lifestyle choice, but rather a profound spiritual commitment essential for attaining *nibbāna*. Sensory desires are shown to stem from ignorance (*avijjā*) and function as the root cause of suffering. Thus, overcoming these desires necessitates discipline, self-restraint, and ethical training. The study underscores the central role of the Noble Eightfold Path as a transformative guide to transcend the cycle of suffering. It also highlights the importance of social support and the incorporation of contemporary psychological perspectives in sustaining celibate practice, especially in the face of modern challenges such as loneliness and mental distress. In doing so, the research contributes to a broader understanding of Buddhist spiritual practices and their relevance to contemporary life.

The relationship between the cessation of sensual desire (*kāmmacchanda nirodho*) and the attainment of *nibbāna* is rooted in the understanding that suffering (*dukkha*) originates from ignorance (*avijjā*), which gives rise to craving (*taṇhā*)—including sexual and material attachments. When individuals fail to recognize the impermanence of sensory experiences, they become entangled in the continuous pursuit of pleasure, thereby remaining trapped in the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*). Celibacy, in this light, is not merely a renunciation of pleasure, but a strategic spiritual practice aimed at overcoming psychological and emotional impediments to enlightenment, as articulated by Rahula (2007) and Schmithausen (1997). The Noble Eightfold Path offers a framework for transcending ignorance through moral conduct, meditative concentration, and wisdom. This doctrinal perspective is reinforced by modern psychological theories such as ego depletion, which posits that impulse control can be strengthened through spiritual discipline (Baumeister et al., 2018), and attachment theory, which interprets emotional bonds in monastic life as being redirected toward spiritual values (Rever, 1972). Consequently, the dynamic interplay between *taṇhā*, *avijjā*, and *dukkha* demonstrates how ignorance of existential truths can perpetuate suffering—while celibacy offers a pathway toward profound spiritual transformation.

The results affirm previous findings that *taṇhā* is the root of suffering in Buddhist thought, and that self-control is a foundational element on the path to liberation, as established in the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path (Aich, 2013; Kalra et al., 2018; Shulman, 2014). Such studies have highlighted the important role of the Noble Eightfold Path as a comprehensive ethical and mental development framework to free individuals from suffering (Aich, 2013; Kalra et al., 2018; Kristeller & Jones, 2006). While earlier studies emphasized the ethical and meditative dimensions of Buddhist soteriology, this research presents a more contextualized and interdisciplinary approach by integrating classical texts such as the *Aggañña Sutta* with contemporary psychological concerns like loneliness and emotional suffering. The novelty of this study lies in its synthesis of ancient Buddhist wisdom with modern psychological frameworks—particularly ego-depletion theory and attachment theory—while emphasizing the importance of community support for celibate practitioners (Chadha & Nichols, 2023; Phong, 2024). Accordingly, this research illustrates that the practice of *kāmmacchanda nirodho* is not merely the avoidance of sensory pleasures, but a dynamic and adaptable strategy for inner transformation amid the existential challenges of modernity.

These findings hold social, historical, and ideological significance. Socially, they demonstrate that the Buddhist doctrine of *kāmmacchanda nirodho* offers a powerful response to suffering born from material attachment. Historically, the study reinforces the enduring relevance of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path as both philosophical and practical tools for liberation (Allinson, 2024; Quyet, Lan, & Phuong, 2022; Shulman, 2014). Ideologically, celibacy is reinterpreted not merely as an individual religious discipline but also as a form of resistance to the consumerist and hedonistic tendencies of contemporary society. By emphasizing mindfulness, ethical conduct, and meditative introspection, the Buddhist model proposes an alternative vision of life rooted in simplicity, compassion, and liberation from suffering (Sorajjakool, Carr, & Burse, 2010). Its application in healthcare contexts, particularly in palliative care, also illustrates its

potential to alleviate suffering through empathy and spiritual acceptance (Masel, Schur, & Watzke, 2012; McDonald, 2019). In the modern world, the principle of *kāmmacchanda nirodho* can be adopted as a psychospiritual approach to support mental health through mindfulness and self-compassion (Segall & Kristeller, 2023). Thus, this study contributes not only to religious discourse but also to an interdisciplinary dialogue uniting spirituality, psychology, and humanistic ethics in the pursuit of a more meaningful and integrated life.

The findings also reveal two crucial dimensions of Buddhist spiritual practice with regard to *kāmmacchanda nirodho* as a strategy to overcome suffering. Functionally, celibacy is shown to be an effective path toward inner liberation through spiritual discipline, mental tranquility, and deepened existential understanding. As reflected in various religious traditions, celibacy serves as both a form of asceticism and inner purification (Holland, 2008; Powers, 2007). In Buddhism, this practice facilitates detachment from worldly entanglements as a prerequisite for realizing *nibbāna*. However, the potential dysfunctions of celibacy must also be critically addressed. Excessive focus on self-restraint can contribute to psychological difficulties, particularly in societies that normalize sensual gratification (Baumann et al., 2019; Freeman-Coppadge & Horne, 2019; Galea, 2011). In some cases, this can lead to a sense of alienation, identity tension, and spiritual dryness that negatively impacts the emotional and social well-being of practitioners. This may manifest in feelings of alienation, identity conflict, and spiritual dryness, adversely affecting practitioners' emotional and social well-being. Such challenges have also emerged in diverse cultural contexts, including critiques of celibacy in East Asian Buddhism (Kieschnick, 2007) and the defense of married clergy in Catholicism (Ballano, 2023). To mitigate these risks, community-based support and adaptive spiritual frameworks are essential. Some traditions, such as Hinduism's devotional *sevā*, offer alternative pathways that emphasize emotional regulation rather than strict renunciation (Hamaya, 2019). These insights affirm that while celibacy can serve as a vehicle for spiritual transformation, it must be balanced with psychological care and realistic engagement with contemporary conditions to remain sustainable and life-affirming.

Based on these findings, several strategic recommendations are proposed to support the sustainable practice of *kāmmacchanda nirodho* in the modern world. First, Buddhist educational institutions and monasteries should develop spiritual training programs that emphasize not only moral and celibate discipline but also address practitioners' emotional and psychological well-being. Such curricula should incorporate contemporary therapeutic frameworks, including mindfulness, self-compassion, and stress management, to prevent distress stemming from excessive austerity. Second, policies should be implemented to support the formation of peer groups and spiritual communities where celibate individuals—both monastic and lay—can share experiences, strengthen commitments, and reduce social isolation. Third, interdisciplinary collaboration between Buddhist institutions, mental health professionals, and spiritual caregivers should be fostered to create context-sensitive, adaptive guidelines for celibacy that retain their doctrinal integrity while remaining flexible to modern realities. Lastly, on a national level, religious policy should promote regulations or ethical protections that safeguard the mental health and spiritual autonomy of celibate practitioners.

Through these efforts, the core values of Buddhism can continue to flourish and remain relevant amid the complexities of contemporary life.

Conclusion

This study affirms that *kāmmacchanda nirodho*, or the renunciation of sensory desires, plays a central role in the spiritual teachings and practices of Buddhism, particularly within the context of monastic life. The key findings indicate that celibacy is not merely a rejection of worldly pleasures, but rather a profound spiritual strategy aimed at liberation from suffering rooted in *taṇhā* (craving) and *avijjā* (ignorance). Through disciplined engagement with the Noble Eightfold Path, Buddhist practitioners are guided toward the attainment of *nibbāna* by cultivating inner discipline, emotional regulation, and a deepened understanding of the impermanent and conditioned nature of existence.

From an academic perspective, this research contributes a novel interdisciplinary approach that integrates narrative analysis of classical Buddhist texts—such as the *Aggañña Sutta*—with contemporary psychological insights. This approach expands the scope of Buddhist studies from a predominantly normative-descriptive orientation to one that is more contextual and applicable to the spiritual challenges of the modern era. Furthermore, the study highlights the significance of social support structures and adaptive psychospiritual methods in sustaining the practice of celibacy, ensuring that core spiritual values are upheld in a balanced and sustainable manner.

However, the study is not without limitations. Its reliance on a literature-based methodology, without incorporating field observations or direct engagement with celibate practitioners, constrains its ability to capture the lived psychological and social dynamics of Buddhist monastics in the digital age. As such, future research is recommended to adopt ethnographic or phenomenological approaches, which would allow for a more nuanced and experiential understanding of celibacy. Such methodologies could also contribute to the development of contextualized models of spiritual practice that address contemporary psychosocial realities.

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