

The Wheel of Dhamma in Contemporary Thai Culture

Dr. Pallabi Mukherjee¹, Charmaree Tangkasikit²

¹Assistant Professor, Supervisor, ²Research Scholar (Ph.D.)

Swami Vivekanand Subharti University, Meerut, U.P. charmisin@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of the Wheel of Dhamma (Dhammacakka) teachings in contemporary Thai society, emphasizing their practical application and adaptation within an evolving social and cultural landscape. It examines how individuals integrate these teachings into their daily lives through ethical conduct, meditation, and mindfulness practices. The study analyzes the experiences of practitioners to understand how engagement with the Dhammacakka fosters personal transformation, social harmony, and spiritual growth. Additionally, it investigates how these teachings remain relevant in modern society despite shifts in lifestyle and values. The findings reveal that while traditional practices remain foundational, their interpretation and application continue to evolve, ensuring accessibility and significance for contemporary practitioners. This study contributes to the broader discourse on Buddhism's adaptability, demonstrating how the Dhammacakka serves as both a guiding framework for personal development and a means of maintaining Buddhist principles amidst changing societal norms.

Keywords: Dhammacakka, Ethical Conduct, Meditation, Mindfulness, Spiritual Growth,

Introduction

The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, often referred to as the "Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Dhamma," is a foundational discourse in Buddhism that encapsulates the Buddha's first teaching after attaining Enlightenment. It presents the core principles of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, serving as the guiding framework for ethical conduct, mental discipline, and wisdom. Throughout history, this sutta has played a significant role in Buddhist practice, shaping individual spiritual development and communal religious traditions.

In contemporary Thai society, Dhammacakka chanting, meditation, and ethical observance continue to deepen one's understanding of Buddhist teachings. Monastic communities and lay practitioners engage in these

practices to cultivate mindfulness, enhance moral conduct, and achieve inner peace. However, integrating these ancient teachings into modern lifestyles presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly in adapting traditional practices to the demands of daily life.

This study examines the engagement with the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta through chanting, meditation, and ethical conduct. By analyzing their experiences, levels of commitment, and perceptions of Buddhist philosophy, this research highlights how these practices contribute to spiritual growth and moral development. Furthermore, it explores how the Dhammacakka is a foundation for understanding fundamental Buddhist principles in a rapidly evolving cultural landscape.

Aim of the Article

This article aims to explore the role of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta in contemporary Thai society, focusing on its practice, interpretation, and adaptation in daily life. It examines how chanting, meditation, and ethical conduct associated with the sutta influence spiritual development and moral discipline among practitioners. Additionally, the study seeks to understand the extent of engagement among respondents and how their experiences reflect broader trends in modern Buddhist practice. By analyzing these aspects, the article provides insights into the relevance of the Dhammacakka in an evolving cultural and social context.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey analysis and qualitative thematic examination to explore the engagement with the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta in their chanting, meditation, and ethical conduct.

- 1. Textual Analysis:** The study examines the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta from contemporary perspectives to contextualize findings within Buddhist doctrinal frameworks.
- 2. Survey Data Collection:** A structured questionnaire was distributed to gather qualitative data on respondents' frequency of practice, levels of commitment, and perceived impact on their daily lives.
- 3. In-depth Interviews:** Selected participants were interviewed to gain deeper insights into their experiences, challenges, and personal reflections on their practice.
- 4. Observational Analysis:** Direct observations were conducted in meditation settings to assess environmental factors, group dynamics, and the integration of the sutta's teachings into daily practice.

The development of Buddhism in Thailand

The spread of Buddhism in Southeast Asia is intricately linked to Indian cultural influences and trade routes. By the 3rd century of Buddhism, it began to take root in the region, adapting to local traditions and beliefs. Over time, Southeast Asia became home to influential Buddhist kingdoms, including Funan, Dvaravati, Srivijaya, Bagan, the Khmer Empire, Champa, and Lanna, each contributing uniquely to the development of Buddhism and cultural landscapes. The development of Buddhism in present-day Thailand can be categorized into four distinct periods:

Theravada Buddhism under King Ashoka: Theravada Buddhism was introduced to this region, laying the foundations of early Buddhism.

Mahayana Buddhism Influences: Between the 13th and 16th Buddhist centuries, Mahayana Buddhism spread through two primary channels. First, the rulers of Srivijaya from Sumatra introduced Mahayana Buddhism to southern Thailand, particularly Surat Thani. Second, the Khmer Empire under the Suryavarman dynasty expanded into northeastern and central Thailand, making Lopburi a significant center. Khmer rulers practiced a syncretic form of Mahayana Buddhism, blending it with Brahmanism, which also influenced the Thai language and literature.

Theravada Buddhism from Bagan: Around 1600 BE (1057 CE), King Anawrahta of Bagan expanded his kingdom to Lanna, Lan Xang, Lopburi, and Dvaravati. It led to the widespread adoption of Theravada Buddhism in northern Thailand, overshadowing Khmer influences.

Theravada Buddhism Revival from Sri Lanka: Sri Lankan Theravada traditions were reintroduced around 1800 BE (1257 CE) during the rise of the Sukhothai Kingdom. Starting from Nakhon Si Thammarat, this influence flourished under King Ramkhamhaeng, integrating with existing practices and diminishing Mahayana Buddhism. King Lithai (1897 BE / 1354 CE) further strengthened Theravada Buddhism by inviting Sri Lankan monks, promoting the teachings through texts like Traiphum Phra Ruang, and organizing the Sangha into village and forest groups. It marked the establishment of Theravada as the dominant form of Buddhism in Thailand.

The fundamental thought of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

Dhammacakka served as an important symbolic representation of the Buddha and his Dhamma, particularly the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, which outlines the foundation of the Dhamma as the Buddha proclaimed the

Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: "Those who renounce worldly possessions to live a life of celibacy, sustaining themselves through alms, are called 'bhikkhus.' There are two extremes to avoid: indulgence in sensual pleasures (kāmasukhallikānuyoga), which is based, leads to ruin, and hinders liberation; and self-mortification (attakilamathānuyoga), which causes suffering, is unbeneficial, and does not lead to the cessation of defilements. Both are ignoble and do not bring an end to suffering."

After pointing out the erroneous paths of kāmasukhallikānuyoga (devotion to sensual pleasures) and attakilamathānuyoga (self-mortification) to the group of five ascetics, the Buddha then expounded on the Middle Path (Majjhimāpaṭipadā), a balanced approach realized through supreme wisdom, as the way leading to Enlightenment and Nibbāna. This Middle Path avoids the two extremes and leads to the complete cessation of suffering. The Middle Way is embodied in the Noble Eightfold Path (Ariya Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga), which consists of

1. Sammā-diṭṭhi (Right View)
2. Sammā-saṅkappa (Right Intention)
3. Sammā-vācā (Right Speech)
4. Sammā-kammanta (Right Action)
5. Sammā-ājīva (Right Livelihood)
6. Sammā-vāyāma (Right Effort)
7. Sammā-sati (Right Mindfulness)
8. Sammā-samādhi (Right Concentration)

This path is an Ariya Dhamma (noble teaching) that transforms ordinary beings into noble ones by overcoming defilements. It is the only path leading to Nibbāna, liberation, and the cessation of all suffering, realized through wisdom and insight taught by the Tathāgata. He emphasized the Right View (Sammā Diṭṭhi) as the foremost insight, likened to a visionary eye capable of decisively eradicating defilements. To elucidate the foundation supporting this Right View, He delivered a discourse on the Four Noble Truths—the sublime truths of dukkha (suffering), samudaya (its origin), nirodha (its cessation), and magga (the path to cessation).

The Buddha illuminated His profound wisdom, insight, and realization of the Four Noble Truths through the three rounds (parivatta) and twelve modes (ākāra) of understanding. Without thoroughly purifying His knowledge of the Four Noble Truths through these three rounds and twelve modes, He could not proclaim supreme, perfect enlightenment (anuttara-sammāsambodhi). However, once His knowledge and vision became utterly pure, the Buddha confidently declared His attainment of supreme enlightenment. At that moment, He realized that His liberation was unshakable and irreversible—rebirth had ceased, the holy life had been fulfilled,

and no further becoming remained. With this realization, the Buddha set the Wheel of the Supreme Dhamma (anuttara-dhammacakka) into motion at Deer Park in Isipatana.

The foundation of Buddhist meditation

Mindfulness is a crucial mental faculty that enables detached observation of the present moment, enhances focus, and prevents distraction. According to the Buddha's teachings, the Noble Eightfold Path comprises eight factors: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. These factors are traditionally grouped into three core components: Moral Conduct (Sīla), Concentration (Samādhi), and Wisdom (Paññā), which together form the foundation of Buddhist meditation and practice.

Moral Conduct (Sīla) is fundamental, cultivating the Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. These practices ensure ethical behavior and contribute to social harmony, fostering a mind free of guilt and conducive to meditation. By adhering to the precepts, practitioners reduce mental impurities, promote community harmony, and prepare themselves for profound spiritual insights and ultimate liberation.

Concentration (Samādhi) cultivates the qualities of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. These elements are essential for mental discipline and the development of meditative states. The stages and techniques of concentration are meticulously detailed, providing practitioners with comprehensive guidance on achieving deep states of meditative absorption. The practice of concentration can be categorized into two main types: Samatha (Calmness Meditation) and Vipassanā (Insight Meditation). Samatha focuses on calming the mind through sustained attention to a single object. Typical objects of Samatha meditation include Ānāpānasati, which involves mindfulness of breathing by concentrating on the sensation of the breath flowing in and out through the nostrils, which requires concentration on visual objects.

Wisdom (Paññā) cultivates Right View and Right Thought, leading to a deep understanding of the Dharma and the nature of existence. Wisdom entails a deep comprehension of the true nature of reality, serving as the pathway to Enlightenment. Its cultivation is systematically addressed, offering practitioners clear guidelines on cultivating insight (Vipassanā) and achieving liberation from suffering.

In Buddhist meditation, Sati (mindfulness) and Samādhi (concentration) function harmoniously, reinforcing and deepening each other. Mindfulness develops present-moment awareness, allowing practitioners to observe thoughts, emotions, and sensations without attachment or aversion. This continuous awareness stabilizes the mind, fostering deep concentration. As concentration strengthens, it refines mental clarity, sharpens perception,

and enhances insight into the nature of reality. Through this interdependent process, practitioners cultivate wisdom, gradually freeing the mind from distractions and delusions, ultimately progressing toward awakening and liberation from suffering.

The key factors of practices

The key practice factors encompass essential elements, including inspiration from the role model, a suitable and appropriate dhamma practice, and the environment contributing to a practical approach. These factors provide a foundation for mindfulness and personal development, ensuring practitioners cultivate inner growth.

1. The influence of the role model

A Role model is essential because they provide inspiration, guidance, and a clear example of values, behaviors, and success. They help shape attitudes, aspirations, and ethical standards by demonstrating what is possible through dedication and discipline. Here are some key reasons why role models matter:

Inspiration and Motivation – Seeing someone succeed despite challenges can encourage others to pursue their goals with determination.

Guidance and Learning – Role models offer practical discipline, perseverance, and decision-making lessons. They provide a reference point for handling life's challenges.

Positive Influence on Behavior – Observing a role model's actions can shape personal values and habits, reinforcing ethical and constructive behaviors.

Confidence and Self-Belief – When individuals relate to a role model, they may gain confidence in their abilities, believing that success is attainable.

Shaping Future Generations – Role models are crucial in mentorship and education, influencing younger individuals in personal and professional development.

The most significant role Models, for instance, the Buddha's life, teachings, and conduct, are the perfect blueprint for cultivating virtues such as compassion, mindfulness, wisdom, and ethical living. The Buddha spent forty-five years preaching the Dhamma as a means for others to attain true happiness. In his first sermon, Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, to the five ascetics, he declared, "Monks, there are two extremes that one who has renounced the world should not follow." He advised them to avoid both indulgence in sensual pleasures,

which is base and unworthy, and self-mortification, which is painful and does not lead to the goal. Instead, he introduced the Middle Way, a balanced approach that steers clear of these extremes, leading to wisdom, inner peace, and liberation from suffering. This teaching marked the beginning of the Buddha's mission to guide others on the path to enlightenment, emphasizing the necessity of following the Noble Eightfold Path to achieve true spiritual fulfillment.

This study includes additional exemplars of role models in Thai Theravāda culture. With a distinct approach to practice, particularly emphasizing Dhammakaya meditation, participants applied their methods within the framework recommended by their community's revered teachers. The esteemed figures include Venerable Phramongkolthepmuni (Luang Pu Sodh), Venerable Luang Por Dhammajayo, known as 'whose dream has become a big inspiration of millions,' Venerable Luang Por Dattajeevo, recognized as 'The teacher of knowledge' and Master Nun Chand Khonnokyoong, revered as 'The Founder of Wat Phra Dhammakaya.' These figures are distinguished by their unique contributions, as acknowledged by Dhammakaya communities worldwide.

2. Dhamma Practice: The path leads to the center of the body

As the first sermon delivered by the Buddha, the sutta encapsulates the core principles of Buddhism, namely the Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*), the Noble Eightfold Path, and the Four Noble Truths. These teachings offer a framework for resolving suffering and achieving Enlightenment, which remain relevant in addressing modern societal challenges.

The Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*), as the Buddha recommended, is an approach that avoids the extremes of indulgence and self-mortification. It is a balanced approach that leads to cultivating the mind and attaining the highest knowledge. It is embodied in the Noble Eightfold Path, which includes the right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. This path leads to deeper understanding, tranquillity, insight, and Nibbāna.

The study aligns with the knowledge of Dhamma practice by Venerable Phramongkolthepmuni (Luang Pu Sodh). An influential Thai Theravada monk devoted the rest of his life to teaching and furthering the depth of knowledge of Dhammakaya meditation, a meditation method called "Vijja Dhammakaya," 'the direct knowledge of the Dhammakaya.' Temples in the tradition of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen, called the Dhammakaya Movement, believe that this method was the method the Buddha originally used to attain enlightenment but was lost five hundred years after the Buddha passed away.

From a practical standpoint, Majjhimā Paṭipadā can be explained through meditation, particularly Vipassana meditation, which involves observing all forms of experience calmly and mindfully. This practice encourages viewing experiences through the "Dhamma Sphere" reflective lens, a meditation technique taught by Venerable Phramongkolthepmuni (Luang Pu Sodh), also known as Luang Por Wat Paknam. Based on his teaching, all humans, both men and women, possess a "Dhamma sphere" at the center of the body—a pure, luminous essence comparable to the yolk of an egg. If one can still the mind at this central point through meditation, they will experience deep tranquility and gain insight into the true nature of the Dhamma body (Dhammakaya). This stilling of the mind is key to spiritual success, as it aligns with the Middle Way (Majjhima Patipada) and leads to the realization of the first stage of the path (Pathama Magga), which embodies the core virtues of moral conduct. Through this method, we can examine and provide insights from the practitioners' perspectives on their experience of cultivating mindfulness and inner peace.

This approach leads to the body's center, characterized by wisdom that discerns, speaks, strives, acts, lives, and embodies the Noble Eightfold Path, which begins with the right view and culminates in the right concentration. This path can be condensed into the principles of morality, concentration, and wisdom, with morality as the foundation. These virtues converge to form a clear sphere at the body's center. Noble ones focus on this clear sphere, remaining still and undisturbed by lust, anger, delusion, greed, or ill-will. As the mind clears, like a mirror reflecting one's true self, they enter deep concentration, leading to the emergence of wisdom. By maintaining this stillness at the seventh base, they ultimately attain the state of Dhammakaya.

The Seven Bases of the Mind within the Body

- First Base: Positioned at the edge of the nostril—on the right side for men and the left for women.
- Second Base: Situated at the bridge of the nose, near the corner of the eye, on the right side for men and the left side for women.
- Third Base: Positioned at the center of the head.
- Fourth Base: The fourth base is found at the roof of the mouth
- Fifth Base: Located at the center of the throat, just above the Adam's apple.
- Sixth Base: It is located at the body's center, where an imaginary line from the navel intersects with a line drawn through the back and between the sides.

- Seventh Base: Two finger-widths above the sixth base, this is the most crucial point in the body. It represents the exact center where the mind can achieve stillness.

3. Environment of practice

According to Serene Atmosphere, this program embodies key factors for its success, which align with the Buddha's teachings on the four wheels—residing in a suitable place, associating with good people, having firm intentions, and reaping the benefits of past good deeds—in the Cakkavagga of the Anguttara Nikaya (AN 4.31).

Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto (Buddhadhamma: 2021) outlines the concept of *Sappāya*, which refers to conducive conditions and supportive factors for meditation practice. These factors are derived from various sections of the Tipitaka and grouped into seven key elements: 1) Dwelling place (āvāsa/senāsana), 2) Source of alms (gocara), 3) Speech and listening to the Dhamma (pasa/dhammasavana), 4) Companions (puggala), 5) Food (bhojana/āhāra), 6) Climate and environment (utu), and 7) Posture (iriyā-patha).

This study examined a Dhamma practice conducted in a meditation setting that fostered a serene and disciplined environment, guided by dedicated staff committed to daily meditation and chanting. The training program instilled Buddhist values by deepening participants' understanding of the Buddha's teachings through Dhamma study and practical activities. Participants observed the Eight Precepts while integrating self-development through virtues such as cleanliness, orderliness, and mindfulness. The program also emphasized health, discipline, and teamwork through structured activities like group formations, cleaning, and merit-making. Spiritual growth was nurtured through extended meditation, journaling, and documenting insights, particularly on Uposatha days.

The meditation environment

The study includes observations on the overall environment of the retreat program, where they completed the rigorous, roughly 3 weeks of practice. During the program, participants integrated various activities into their daily routines, including living arrangements and merit activities, observing moral precepts, chanting, and practicing meditation according to a structured schedule. Meditation sessions are held in the morning, afternoon, and evening, with durations determined by the program's meditation experts. The meditation sessions span two hours, with the most extended sessions lasting up to six continuous hours, tailored to the participants' conditions and readiness.

Serene Atmosphere: The meditation village exudes tranquility, warmth, and freshness. Dedicated and cheerful meditation guides cultivate this peaceful environment, and attentive staff meticulously maintain the facilities and have a collective commitment to daily meditation and chanting.

Instilling Buddhist Values: The training program fosters a deep love for Buddhism and a comprehensive understanding of living according to the Buddha's teachings. Participants can listen to Dhamma teachings, gain valuable knowledge, and engage in practical activities that enrich their daily lives.

Observance of the Precepts: Participants adhere to the Eight Precepts, which include consuming only two meals daily.

Integrated Self-Development: The program combines Dhamma practice with personal development, encouraging participants to embody five universal virtues: cleanliness, orderliness, politeness, punctuality, and mindfulness.

Health and Well-being: The training program also emphasizes the importance of health, ensuring that all participants learn practical methods for maintaining their physical well-being.

Discipline and Orderliness: Group Formations and Discipline: Participants practice discipline and orderliness through organized group formations, reinforcing the importance of structure and teamwork.

Maintenance and Cleaning Activities: The development activities include cleaning and meticulously maintaining the meditation hall, ensuring it is spotless inside and out, from the rooftop to the area beneath the building.

Merit-Making Activities: Participants are trained to organize and lead almsgiving rituals, releasing fish, arranging flowers, and fostering genuine respect and humility.

Dhamma Practice and Spiritual Development: Participants deepen their commitment to Dhamma practice through prolonged meditation sessions, particularly on Uposatha days.

Daily Journaling and Meditation Documentation: Encourages capturing key insights and positive perspectives through daily writing and documenting meditation experiences.

Dhamma practice in Daily life

A spiritual development based on mindfulness provides a transformative method for comprehending and overcoming human suffering. Central to the Theravada understanding of mindfulness is its integration into everyday life, not confined to solitary meditation but permeating all actions and interactions. The Noble Eightfold Path, characterized by morality, concentration, and wisdom, provides a comprehensive framework for ethical living and spiritual development.

Human life consists of two essential components: the body and the mind, forming our existence together. Living a balanced and fulfilling life requires nurturing both the body and the mind. Individuals can achieve harmony daily by maintaining physical health and cultivating mental well-being. It is crucial to keep both the body and mind in good condition. Although we often strive for life to align with our desires, the body inevitably undergoes deterioration as part of the natural process. Just as the body changes, so does the mind, subject to various thoughts and emotions. The mind is sometimes swayed by greed, anger, and delusion, leading to internal turmoil and discontent.

Maintaining both physical and mental health is essential in navigating the challenges of modern society. Just as we must regularly cleanse our bodies to maintain hygiene, individuals must also clear their minds of stress and negativity to preserve mental well-being. When unresolved issues or negative emotions accumulate, they can hinder our potential and stifle creativity. A healthy, clean, disciplined body contributes to a positive mental state, fostering wholesome qualities. When the mind is virtuous, it leads to kind thoughts, a clear and joyful heart, and a sense of happiness. During such times, virtues like compassion, kindness towards others, faith in the Triple Gem, and good deeds naturally arise. However, as the body changes, so does the mind, reflecting various states of being.

The foundation of Buddhist practice lies in Sila (morality), Samadhi (concentration), and Panna (wisdom). In modern society, these principles can be applied to daily life and evolve with the practice of "Universal Goodness" (UG5), which comprises orderliness, cleanliness, politeness, timeliness, and meditation. Those who practice seriously and consistently until it becomes a habit, virtue, and morality in life will experience happiness and prosperity because practicing universal goodness will make the mind clear, which is a condition that leads to happiness.

Cleanliness: Maintaining personal hygiene and a clean environment reflects respect for oneself and others. Engaging in activities such as maintaining personal and environmental cleanliness, including bathing, brushing

teeth, sweeping, and cleaning bedrooms and bathrooms, is integral to daily life activities. By performing these tasks, participants develop a heightened awareness of cleanliness, which helps instill lasting good habits. This attention to cleanliness also contributes to a clear, calm mind, reducing conflicts in communal living.

Orderliness: Being organized in physical and mental spaces leads to efficiency and peace of mind. The training engages in activities that promote organization and orderliness. It involves systematically arranging personal belongings and ensuring everything is in its proper place, whether organizing items from large to small or small to large. In some cases, the "first in, first out" principle is applied, emphasizing the importance of maintaining order in spaces such as rooms or offices. These practices instill a sense of order in one's thoughts and enhance attention to detail, leading to a deeper understanding of one's surroundings and fostering lasting good habits.

Politeness: a reflection of one's inner discipline and respect for others, manifesting in how we carry ourselves and interact with the world. It extends beyond words to include how we sit, stand, walk, and manage our surroundings. When our personal space and belongings are orderly, it creates a conducive environment for clear thinking and respectful behavior. This orderliness is mirrored in our speech, where choosing the right words for different situations signifies politeness and mindfulness. By cultivating these habits, we improve our well-being and contribute to a more harmonious and respectful society.

Punctuality: Being on time shows respect for others' time and reflects discipline. In communal living, everyone is encouraged to contribute through assigned duties, which fosters a sense of responsibility and discipline. The tasks from waking up until time to bed include sweeping the grounds and garden, cleaning living quarters, tidying the meditation hall, preparing meals, setting the dining table, and cleaning up afterward. This structure teaches time management and instills the habit of punctuality and cooperation, as each person learns to carry out their responsibilities to benefit the whole community.

Meditation: The path to liberation, as outlined in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, is grounded in the Noble Eightfold Path, divided into morality, concentration, and wisdom. Morality starts with non-harm and extends into daily life through universal goodness by practicing cleanliness, orderliness, politeness, and punctuality. These traits foster discipline, diligence, and respect, aligning actions with the correct view, intention, and speech. Politeness in conduct and punctuality in actions reinforce the right livelihood, effort, and mindfulness, clearing the way for meditation concentration. Regular meditation allows individuals to manage stress, make better decisions, and improve overall mental health.

Integrating the five universal principles of goodness into daily life makes this practice easier and fosters mindfulness and self-awareness. These principles benefit both the practitioner and those around them. Consistent practice leads to happiness, prosperity, goodwill, and inner clarity, ultimately paving the way toward Nibbana. The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta emphasizes the inner experience as vision, knowledge, wisdom, and light—the initial steps on the journey to Nibbana.

The Respondents' Engagement with Dhamma Practice

A 21-day transformative retreat at a serene meditation village in Pathum Thani, Thailand, offers an immersive environment for individuals aged 18-65 pursuing or completing a bachelor's degree or higher, particularly those dedicated to Dhamma practice and self-improvement. The program emphasizes discipline, universal virtues, and collective Dhamma practice in daily life, with participants observing the Eight Precepts to cultivate a profound and enriching experience. Through consistent practice, these virtues become ingrained habits that extend beyond the retreat. This study examines participants' engagement with Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta chanting and the Noble Eightfold Path, focusing on its integration into daily routines through "Universal Goodness" (UG5), which includes orderliness, cleanliness, politeness, timeliness, and meditation, leading to the following results.

The study found that most respondents (93.3%) consistently practiced according to the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, while a small percentage engaged only occasionally. This contrast highlights varying levels of commitment and accessibility to Dhamma practice. Additionally, the survey revealed that the majority (80%) gained knowledge of Buddhist philosophy through this practice. The findings emphasize that respondents developed a deeper understanding of Buddhist teachings through their engagement. The Dhammacakka serves as a fundamental basis for comprehending key principles of Buddhism.

Furthermore, all respondents perceive the practice as beneficial, reporting its effectiveness in addressing personal challenges and enhancing their daily lives. Moreover, all participants acknowledged that practicing the sutta has deepened their understanding of suffering and its cessation, reinforcing its significance in their spiritual journey.

Most respondents have integrated the sutta into their regular meditation routine, reflecting a strong commitment to the practice. However, some find it challenging to maintain consistency, citing difficulties in sustaining a structured practice. A smaller portion engages only occasionally, suggesting that external factors may influence their ability to establish a steady routine.

The interviews revealed consistent engagement in meditation and chanting and noticeable mental transformation, such as increased calmness, mindfulness, and reduced anxiety. Practitioners use effective techniques like chanting or visualizations to deepen their meditation, leading to emotional and spiritual growth. They also accumulate merit, experience inner peace, and maintain a strong connection with the Dhamma community, contributing to personal improvement and life satisfaction.

The regularly practiced meditation and chanting of Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta is not exclusive to monks but is beneficial for every Buddhist layperson. Through the practice, practitioners gained a deeper understanding of the suffering inherent in the cycle of birth. The practitioners have experienced significant benefits, including good fortune, financial success, and positive connections with others. The practice has dramatically enhanced their happiness, helping them accumulate merit and maintain a positive, pure, wholesome, and calm mind. Most of them have seen a clear improvement in their mental state, with reduced distractions and anxiety, leading to greater mental clarity and tranquility.

conclusion

The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta remains a cornerstone of Buddhist practice, providing a structured path toward ethical conduct, mental cultivation, and wisdom. This study highlights the varying levels of engagement with the sutta among practitioners, revealing that while a majority incorporate its teachings into their daily lives, others engage with it more ritualistically. Despite these differences, the sutta is a guiding principle for spiritual development, fostering mindfulness, discipline, and deeper insight into Buddhist philosophy.

The findings indicate that chanting, meditation, and ethical observance play crucial roles in reinforcing the teachings of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, shaping both individual transformation and communal harmony. The high percentage of practitioners actively engaging with the sutta suggests its enduring relevance in contemporary Thai Buddhist practice. Moreover, the study underscores how traditional teachings can adapt to modern lifestyles, ensuring their continued influence amid changing social and cultural dynamics.

Ultimately, this research reaffirms the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta's role as a living tradition that bridges historical wisdom with present-day practice. By deepening their understanding and applying this teaching, practitioners cultivate inner peace and contribute to a more mindful and ethically conscious society. Future studies could further explore how different demographic groups interpret and integrate this sutta, expanding our understanding of its impact across diverse Buddhist communities.

References:

1. Buddhaghosa, "The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)", trans. Bhikkhu Nanamoli, Seattle: Buddhist Publication Society, 1991.
2. Somdet Phra Ariyavamsagatañāṇa (Sa Pussadeva), author. and Somdet Phra Maha Samana Chao Krommaphraya Vajirañāṇavarorasa, compiler. "Dhammasampatti" Volume 1: Phra Pathom Somphot, Dhammayut Edition. (R.S. 125) 1906.
3. Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya (P. A. Payutto). "Buddhism in Asia", Bangkok: Dhammasapa, 2024.
4. Payutto, Bhikkhu P. A. (Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya). *Buddhadhamma: The Laws of Nature and Their Benefits to Life*. 4th ed., Buddhadhamma Foundation, 2021.
5. Analayo. *Satipatthana: The Direct Path to Realization*. Windhorse Publications. (2003).
6. Bodhi, Bhikkhu. "The Noble eightfold path way to the end of suffering". BPS Pariyatti Editions, WA. (2010) ISBN:978-1-92870682-3
7. Bodhi, Bhikkhu (trans.) *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Boston: Wisdom Publications. (2000). ISBN 0-86171-331-1
8. Bodhi, B. *The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering*. Buddhist Publication Society. (2011).
9. Bodhi, Bhikkhu, translator. *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya*. Wisdom Publications, 2012.
10. Bhikkhu Nanamoli(trans.).*"The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya"*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995, ISBN 0-86171-072-X
11. PramahaThammasathidand his team.ความสุข *Memory...คิดถึงสมาธิแก้ว*, Dhammakaya Foundation, Pathum Thani, ISBN 978-616-478-771-1
12. Ajahn Sucitto. *Turning the Wheel of Truth: Commentary on the Buddha's First Teaching*. Boston: Shambhala Publications. 2010.
13. Phramongkolthepmuni, *Visuddhivaca* (volume II). Bangkok, Graphic Art Printing, Bangkok, 2008. ISBN 978-974-349-815-2
14. Phra Phadet Dattajeevo, *The Buddha's First Teaching*. 2002. ISBN 974-90587-3-9
15. Phra Phadet Dattajeevo, "Universal Goodness." 1st ed., Dhammakaya Foundation, 2016.
16. I.B. Horner (tr.), *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings (Majjhimanikāya)*, vol I, (Oxford: PTS, 1993).
17. Harvey, P. "An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History, and Practices." Cambridge University Press. 2013.