

BUDDHIST MEDITATION AND WESTERN SCIENCE: PROGRESS TOWARDS MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

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ABSTRACT

What we now call Buddhist meditation grew up as a body of techniques and practices to assist in cultivating the central Buddhist goal of liberation from suffering. Over the succeeding centuries, many meditation techniques were developed in particular regions and traditions. While retaining their central orientation towards liberation and Buddhahood, today's Buddhist traditions have developed a great variety and richness of different approaches to assist in following the Buddhist path. The recent adoption of modified and secularized versions of Buddhist techniques within Western medicine and psychiatry, and the development of new approaches in neuroscience, has led to a growing interest in scientific understanding of Buddhist meditation, and an ongoing dialogue between Buddhist practice and Western science. This chapter examines one aspect of this encounter between meditation and contemporary science, the ongoing attempts to classify and make sense of meditation techniques in scientific terms.

KEYWORDS

Meditation, Mindfulness, Neuroscience, Stress, Tantra

⁴¹ This is a revised version of 'Western Science and Asian Practice: Is the Terminological Confusion Beginning to Clear?,' a paper presented at the International Conference on Buddhist Meditation Across Traditions and Disciplines: Theories and Practices, organized by the Centre for the Study of Chan Buddhism and Human Civilization, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 19-21 May 2017.