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Doctoral Dissertation (Supervisor: Professor Takako Inoue)

Mindfulness in Japan
From Acceptance to Expansion

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Summary of the Dissertation

In the 19th century, the interactions between East and West brought the teachings of Buddhism and Yoga to the United States. These diverse teachings, combined with American culture, gave birth to several movements. The mindfulness movement is one such movement. It has roots in Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions of Buddhism and some yoga traditions. Many Buddhist monks and Western advocates of Buddhism and yoga contributed to its development.

One of the leading figures in the mindfulness movement is Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn (1944–). He created a stress reduction program called Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR), which consists of hatha yoga and mindfulness meditations. MBSR led to several psychological interventions and programs that use mindfulness practice. Such interventions and programs are promoted as scientific and secular. They are practiced in medicine, education, business, and other fields to reduce stress, increase productivity, and many other physical and mental benefits. Over the past few decades, mindfulness programs have rapidly grown in the United States and other countries.

Japan is one of the countries where mindfulness programs are spreading rapidly. Following the pattern of the American mindfulness movement, mindfulness programs in Japan are promoted as secular and scientific. However, Japan's sociocultural aspects play an essential role in accepting and expanding mindfulness programs. What are those factors? How are mindfulness programs conducted in Japan, where Buddhism has been practiced for hundreds of years? This dissertation aims to study the development and practice of mindfulness programs in Japan. It identifies the role of Japan's sociocultural aspects in the acceptance and expansion of mindfulness programs.

This dissertation's primary challenge is to determine the definition and scope of mindfulness. The word "mindfulness" has become too ambiguous and broad to define. This dissertation primarily focuses on the two types of mindfulness programs. First, the mindfulness-based interventions and programs that came to Japan from western countries and that are promoted as secular and scientific. Second, the mindfulness programs developed in Japan. They are occasionally referred to as "modern mindfulness" in this dissertation to distinguish them from the mindfulness that has been traditionally practiced.

There are several studies on mindfulness. They can be broadly classified into three categories. First, clinical studies that prove the efficacy or inefficacy of mindfulness programs. Second is sociological studies that show its development or criticize its expansion. The third is

religious studies that explain mindfulness from a Buddhist perspective and compare current mindfulness practices with traditional ones. This dissertation comes under the second and third categories.

This research is conducted in three stages. In the first stage, I gathered information on the mindfulness movement and its manifestations in Japan. In the second stage, I was a participant observer in mindfulness programs, especially those conducted in Japan. In the third stage, I conducted an extensive interview survey in Japan with mindfulness instructors, academics, and Buddhist monks. I asked them about their current mindfulness-related activities, mindfulness's connection with religion, the development of mindfulness programs, and the future of those programs in Japan. An analysis is done based on the data collected from the interview survey. The interview survey was not targeted to the participants of the mindfulness programs to maintain the confidentiality of their personal information and mental illnesses, if any. In addition, it was challenging to contact the participants and arrange interviews with them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part focused on the development of mindfulness in the United States and Japan. The second part discussed the results of the interview survey focusing on mindfulness's relation with religion, teaching and promotion strategies of mindfulness programs in Japan, concerns regarding the current practice of mindfulness programs, and the future of mindfulness programs in Japan.

Chapter one briefly explained how mindfulness, a religious practice, turned into a secular practice and became mainstream. When mindfulness teachings reached the United States, they were adapted to the requirements of American society. Systematic and structured programs were designed with selective elements from Buddhism and yoga. Scientific evidence was attached to prove their efficacy. Religious and mystical elements were removed from them. Elites and professionals promoted such programs through their networks of organizations. They were also promoted by popular media. As a result, mindfulness reached many audiences as a stress-reducing method.

Chapter two focused on the influence of Hindu spiritual teachers on the formation of MBSR. Four Hindu spiritual teachers, Swami Vivekananda, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, and Sri Ramana Maharshi, were considered in this chapter. It was found that Kabat-Zinn used similar strategies that Vivekananda and Maharishi used to promote their teachings—for example, focusing on the practical benefits of yoga and meditation and simplifying traditional concepts with modern science and English vocabulary. With Nisargadatta Maharaj and Ramana Maharshi, similarities were identified in terms of practice.

In this way, MBSR and mindfulness, in general, are not limited to Buddhism; they are also associated with the teachings of Hindu spiritual teachers.

Chapter three summarized the criticism mindfulness programs have received in the past few years. Mindfulness programs are criticized for capitalizing on religious practices, inaccurate scientific evidence, adverse effects of meditation, and inadequate knowledge to overcome the adverse effects. The criticism has led to revisions in mindfulness programs by adding spiritual and Buddhist elements. Thus, the secular aspect of mindfulness programs remains questionable.

Chapter four focused on the developments and trends of mindfulness identified in Japanese society. Mindfulness spread in Japan with several interpretations. More than MBSR and other Western mindfulness programs, locally designed programs cater to many people. The reach of the programs increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the American pattern, it grew in various directions. Therefore, mindfulness and meditation, limited to Buddhist monks in Japan, have broken their boundaries.

Chapter five discussed the relationship of mindfulness with religion. Even though Buddhism has been practiced in Japan for many years, it is limited to a group of people. In addition, Religion and meditation have a negative image in Japan due to the anti-social activities carried out by religious groups such as AUM Shinrikyo. Therefore, mindfulness is mainly presented as Western, scientific, and secular. However, mindfulness has roots in Buddhism and Yoga. Presenting it in a secular way is paradoxical.

Chapter six examined how mindfulness is taught in Japan. The sociocultural aspects play an essential role. Mindfulness is already present in Japanese culture as Zen, Japanese art, and many other forms. When mindfulness is explained using cultural elements, it is easy for some individuals to relate to it. It creates a positive effect on the acceptance of mindfulness. Some instructors use Buddhist quotes, poems, and terminologies familiar to the Japanese. However, their usage depends on the requirements of the target audience.

Chapter seven analyzed a few aspects regarding the development and proliferation of mindfulness. From the responses received in the interview survey, it is clear that one of the reasons that mindfulness was accepted in Japan is because it has come from the United States. The growth of mindfulness in Japan led to several concerns similar to the United States. Such concerns should be addressed for the future development of mindfulness.

The practice of mindfulness has undergone several adaptations in the United States and other Western countries. In the 20th century, spiritual movements based on Hindu and Buddhist ideologies expanded in American society. However, many of them were labeled as cultic.

Mindfulness leaders were aware of the social situation in the United States. Therefore, they disassociated mindfulness with religion and highlighted its scientific evidence. Through various professionals, media, and a network of organizations, they spread mindfulness as a stress-reducing practice.

Mindfulness-based interventions and programs reached Japan at the end of the 20th century. They received considerable attention in the 21st century. Initially, they became popular among psychiatrists, psychologists, and Buddhist monks. After 2016, they spread among common Japanese when they were introduced on NHK's Television program. From 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, mindfulness spread widely through online programs and social media. Even after the relaxation of the pandemic restrictions, mindfulness is expanding. It is growing parallelly in several fields. Collectively they are contributing to the development of mindfulness in Japan.

Mindfulness organizations initially offered Western programs. However, after 2016, with the increased number of organizations, new mindfulness programs that cater to Japanese audiences were introduced. Such programs are greater in number compared to Western programs such as MBSR, MBCT, and SIY. Some organizations offer teachers' training courses based on Western curriculum, while others have self-designed curricula. There is no standardization for mindfulness instructors and programs. The word "mindfulness" is attached to Zen meditation, yoga, psychotherapy, corporate training, etc. It has become too ambiguous to create standards.

The Japanese tend to be interested in Western culture; therefore, mindfulness programs are promoted under the names of Western companies, personalities, and universities. Scientific evidence is highlighted to prove disassociation from religion. It is because religion and meditation have a negative image in Japan. However, with the expansion of mindfulness programs, the negative image associated with meditation has changed to a certain extent. Today, mindfulness is primarily associated with meditation and is often called "*Maindofurunesu Meisō*" (mindfulness meditation). Meditation studios are growing. Buddhist temples also offer Zen and other meditation programs.

There are Japan-specific promotion strategies for mindfulness. Some mindfulness organizations and Buddhist monks explain the similarities between mindfulness and Japanese culture. They usually use examples of Japanese art, such as tea ceremonies, Judo, etc. In addition, they use quotes and poems from Japanese Zen masters and philosophers. They also make necessary explanations to remove the negative image of meditation. They conduct

interactive sessions to encourage participants to share their meditation experiences and opinions.

The secular and scientific mindfulness programs have received a mixed response from Japanese Buddhist monks. According to some monks, mindfulness programs reconstructed in the United States are not required in Japan because the Japanese practice mindfulness daily as a part of their culture. They sometimes deny the association of mindfulness with Buddhism. On the other hand, some monks emphasize the benefits of mindfulness programs and assert that mindfulness will help rediscover Japanese culture and Buddhism. They sometimes refer to Zen and other Buddhist contemplative practices as mindfulness. Those who advocate mindfulness programs point out the drawbacks of such programs. They suggest revisions to current programs by adding Buddhist values to them.

I believe mindfulness will create an opportunity for Japan to rediscover its culture and roots. It will create an opportunity for Buddhist monks and mindfulness instructors to collaborate and develop sustainable programs that benefit society. In this way, Japan can contribute to the global mindfulness movement. Though the scale of mindfulness in Japan is smaller compared to the United States and Europe, its growth is evident.

There is a need for further research to understand mindfulness's growth and analyze its trends in Japan. There is a need to examine, in greater detail, how Buddhist monks and mindfulness instructors can come together and develop mindfulness programs where each of them can use their expertise for the benefit of society. Creating reliable instructors and standardization of teaching methods are other factors that need attention. There is a great scope to study whether the awareness and expansion of mindfulness programs bring any changes to Buddhism in Japan. Apart from Japan, countries like India, where Buddhism and Yoga are practiced, can be interesting areas for further research.

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Explanatory Notes

Abbreviations

Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction	MBSR
Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy	MBCT
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy	CBT
Search Inside Yourself	SIY
Insight Meditation Society	IMS
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	MIT
Mindfulness Institute of Leadership	MiLI
Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity	VUCA
Mindfulness-based Relapse Prevention	MBRP
Mindfulness-based Cancer Recovery	MBCR
Mindfulness-based Eating Awareness Training	MB-EAT
Dialectical Behavior Therapy	DBT
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy	ACT
Mindfulness in Schools Project	MiSP
Transcendental Meditation	TM
Students' international meditation society	SIMS
Science of Creative Intelligence	SCI
Second-generation mindfulness-based interventions	SG-MBIs
Japanese Association Of Mindfulness Psychotherapy	JAMP
Japan Mindfulness Promotion Organization	JMPO
International Mindfulness Center Japan	IMCJ
Japan Mindfulness Training Institute	JMTI
Mindful Self Compassion	MSC
Self-Insight Meditation Technology Therapy	SIMT
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	PTSD
The Institute for Mindfulness-Based Approaches	IMA
Mindfulness-based Compassionate Living	MBCL
Mindfulness for Health Professionals Building Resilience and Compassion	MEHALO

World Health Organization	WHO
United Nations	UN
American Psychological Association	APA
United Nations Children's Fund	UNICEF
Social Networking Site	SNS
Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists	JNEB
Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness	TSM
University of California, Los Angeles	UCLA
Mindful Awareness Research Center	MARC

Translations

The official English translation is followed if available. All other text in Japanese, for example, transcription of interviews, titles of books and Journals, website content, etc., is translated into English by the author.

Romanization of Japanese Text

Japanese text is romanized with the Hepburn romanization method.

1. For long vowels and hyphens ‘ā, ī, ū ē ō’ (macrons) are used.

For example: Dōgen (どうげん), Kenkyū (けんきゅう), Gūguru (グーグル).

2. Letters with small や, ゆ, and よ are written with a combination of consonants and ya, yu, yo.

For example: kyo (きよ) hya (ひゃ), byo (びよ)

The exception are as follows.

ja (じゃ), ju (じゅ), jo (じょ),

sha (しゃ), shu (しゅ) sho (しよ)

cha (ちゃ), chu (ちゅ), cho (ちよ)

3. Letter づ is written as ‘zu’.

For example; kizuki (きづき)

4. Double consonants with a small っ, are indicated with doubling the English consonant letter.

For example: Budda (ブツダ)

5. Letter ん is written as 'n' and 'm' as per the pronunciation.

Nihon (にほん), Sampo (さんぽ)

6. Particle を is written as 'o', and particle へ is written as 'e'.

For example: Maindofurunesu o (マインドフルネスを),

Maindofurunesu e (マインドフルネスへ)

7. When there is a double vowel combination, the vowel letter is repeated instead of using a macron.

For example: Chiiki (ちいき)

Introduction

Background

Mindfulness has been an integral part of many cultures and religions worldwide for thousands of years. It is practiced in the form of prayers, contemplation, meditation, and many other forms. Today, mindfulness is considered as a secular and scientific method that is used with various connotations. It is practiced for stress reduction, to improve health, to increase productivity, and many other physical and mental benefits. Over the past few decades, mindfulness has rapidly grown in the United States and other countries. It has been moving towards healthcare to deal with our daily life. It is practiced in medicine, fitness, education, business and other fields. The promoters of mindfulness emphasize its three characteristics. First, the efficacy of mindfulness is proven by science. Second, it can be practiced by anyone without a barrier of religion. Third, it can be practiced in daily life.

According to report¹ published by Harvard University in 2018, clinical studies on mindfulness increased from 1 in 1995-97 to 216 in 2013-15. According to information² published in 2021 by the American Mindfulness Research Association, the number of articles published with “Mindfulness” in the title was 1,362 in 2020. The promoters of mindfulness succeeded in marketing it to become a billion-dollar industry. How did the practice of mindfulness spread in the United States?

It began when Buddhist and Hindu practices spread in the United States. Their diverse teachings mixed with the American culture and gave birth to several movements. The mindfulness movement is one such movement. It developed from Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions of Buddhism and Yoga. One of its major turning points is a stress reduction program designed by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1944–) and his colleagues in the late 1970s. The program is called “Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR)”. It consists of Haṭha Yoga, meditation practices inspired by Buddhism, and Yoga. With the development of MBSR, mindfulness, which is traditionally practiced as a part of religion, gained recognition in the fields of psychiatry and psychology. Over the past few decades, MBSR has led to several mindfulness-based interventions. For example, one of the leading and widely known mindfulness-based

¹ Powell, Alvin, 2018, ‘When science meets mindfulness’, *The Harvard Gazette*, (<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/04/harvard-researchers-study-how-mindfulness-may-change-the-brain-in-depressed-patients/>).

² The report is available on the website of American Mindfulness Research Association, (<https://goamra.org/Library> accessed 5 July 2021).

interventions is Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). It is considered a third-generation cognitive behavioral therapy³ that uses mindfulness practice. It was developed by Zindel Segal (1956-) and the team in 2002.

Mindfulness is not limited to psychology and psychiatry. In 2007, a Google engineer Chade-Meng Tan (1971-), developed a mindfulness-based program called “Search Inside Yourself (SIY)” for the employees of Google. It was to improve their emotional intelligence and leadership skills. This program became widely popular in the corporate world, where volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) are the essential factors.

Today, mindfulness programs are conducted in many companies across the world. They are also taught in schools, fitness studios, and even in prisons. Professionals in various fields promote them. The word mindfulness has reached the level where it is attached to anything and everything that is done with moment-to-moment attention, from mindful walking, and mindful eating, to mindful driving and mindful sex. In this transition, the original meaning and nuance of the word are getting lost. The nature of mindfulness has become too complex; its scope is too broad to define (Wilson 2014: 11).

Critics of Mindfulness question many of its aspects. For example, the accuracy and quality of scientific studies on mindfulness are questioned due to conceptual and methodical issues, such as varied measuring parameters, methods of analysis, and subjects of research (Davidson and Kaszniak 2015). It is criticized for cutting off the essential aspects of religious practices. Furthermore, it is criticized for commodifying and capitalizing on religious practices. Critics often use the term “McMindfulness” because mindfulness provides a quick solution to daily problems, like fast food does at McDonald’s; however, it does not provide a long-term solution (Purser 2019). Despite such criticism, mindfulness continued to spread worldwide, even in Asia, where it originated.

Japan is one of the Asian countries where it is spreading rapidly. Japanese media, health professionals, Yoga teachers, and Buddhist monks promote mindfulness individually or through organizations. Some of them are trained in the United States, while others have learned mindfulness through books, videos, and studios in Japan. Buddhist monks promote it based on their own experience and training. The mindfulness practice in the clinical field reached Japan

³ Third-generation cognitive behavioral therapy is a new version of widely recognized treatment called Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). It consists of a set of new behavioral and cognitive approaches that are focused more on the individual’s relationship to thought and emotion than on their content. Mindfulness is one the practices that are used in the Third-generation Cognitive Behavioral Therapies (Hayes and Hofmann 2017: 245).

in the 1990s. Yutaka Haruki (1933-2019), a professor of psychology from Waseda University, identified the potential opportunities for mindfulness and other contemplative practices in psychiatry and psychology. In 1993, he invited facilitators of various meditation techniques, including Kabat-Zin, to Japan for a symposium (Koshikawa 2014: 48).

Mindfulness began growing in Japan in the 21st century. The number of books on mindfulness increased gradually. Initially, the translations of English books became popular. *Full Catastrophe Living* (1990) by Kabat-Zinn and *Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy for Depression* (2002) by Zindel V. Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale were translated into Japanese in 2007. They drew the attention of professionals in the clinical field. After 2010, the number of books and research increased significantly. According to the database of the National Diet Library, Japan, the number of books on mindfulness was 10 from 2001 to 2010. It increased to 268 from 2011 to 2020. According to the database of CiNii, a navigator for academic information, the number of research articles on mindfulness was 83 from 2001 to 2010. It increased to 1,213 from 2011 to 2020.

Mindfulness spread among common Japanese through television and newspapers. Articles on mindfulness were published in Yomiuri, Mainichi, and Asahi newspapers and in popular magazines. They featured mindfulness as stress-reducing, performance-increasing technique. In 2016, a television program called “Killer Stress” was aired on NHK for two weeks. In this program, Professor Hiroaki Kumano (1960-) from Waseda University introduced mindfulness meditation.

In 2012, the Mindfulness Forum was held in Japan, where Kabat-Zin was invited as a special guest. A symposium and workshop were held. The executive committee of the Mindfulness Forum established the Japanese Association of Mindfulness in 2013 (Koshikawa 2014: 49). After the Japanese Association of Mindfulness, several other organizations and studios were established to spread mindfulness. During the COVID-19 pandemic⁴, online mindfulness classes increased. Mindfulness studios and online classes in Japan offer mindfulness interventions, seminars, workshops, and retreats in the fields of healthcare, education, and business. Some mindfulness studios are dedicated to one area, while most work in multiple areas. Some offer American mindfulness interventions and programs, while others

⁴ According to the website of World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 is the disease caused by a new coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. It originated in Wuhan, People’s Republic of China and recognized by WHO on 31 December 2019. The virus can spread from an infected person’s mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe (WHO 2021). To prevent the infection, it was advised to stay at home.

offer newly developed mindfulness programs catering to Japanese healthcare, education, and corporate sectors.

Mindfulness in Japan is following the footsteps of the American mindfulness movement in terms of promotion and expansion; however, Japan's sociocultural aspects play an essential role in the proliferation of mindfulness. What are those factors? How is mindfulness accepted in Japan? How is it spreading in Japan?

Purpose and Scope

In order to study the development of mindfulness in Japanese society, it is essential to address such questions. This dissertation aims to study the development of mindfulness in Japan. It identifies the role of Japan's sociocultural aspects in the acceptance and practice of mindfulness.

The primary challenge for this dissertation is to determine the definition and scope of mindfulness. The ambiguity of the word has made it complex and too broad to define. In the case of Japan, mindfulness has already been practiced for hundreds of years in the form of Zen and other Buddhist traditions. In the 1990s, a new form of mindfulness was introduced by Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022), a Vietnamese Zen master and one of the leading teachers of mindfulness. Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings are a combination of Zen and Theravāda traditions. He has disciples in Japan.

For the past few decades, mindfulness in the form of Vipassanā and other Theravāda practices has been taught by Rev. Alubomulle Sumanasara Thero and various other Buddhist masters from Theravāda traditions. Rev. Sumanasara founded the "Japan Theravada Buddhist Association"⁵ in 1994. He has written over a hundred books on applying Buddhist teachings in daily life. He has a broad following in Japan. His teachings emphasize the practical aspects of Buddhism, which common people understand and practice to face day-to-day challenges.

This dissertation does not entirely exclude the mindfulness practice followed in various Buddhist traditions and with the guidance of Buddhist teachers. However, it primarily focuses on the two types of mindfulness. First, the mindfulness-based interventions and programs that came to Japan from the United States and other Western countries and that are promoted as secular and scientific. Second, mindfulness programs are designed in Japan. Both are occasionally referred to as "modern mindfulness" in this dissertation to distinguish them from

⁵ The detailed information of Alubomulle Sumanasara and Japan Theravada Buddhist Association is available on their official website (<http://www.j-theravada.net>).

the mindfulness that has been traditionally followed. It does not imply that the mindfulness taught in a traditional way is not modern, secular, and scientific.

Previous Studies

There are several studies on mindfulness. They can be broadly classified into three categories. First, clinical studies that prove the efficacy or inefficacy of mindfulness programs. Second is sociological studies that show its development or criticize its expansion. The third is religious studies that explain mindfulness from a Buddhist perspective and compare current mindfulness practices with traditional Buddhist practices. This dissertation comes under the second and third categories. In this section, I first discuss the sociological and religious studies on mindfulness in the United States. Second, I consider the sociological and religious studies on mindfulness in Japan. I identify the gaps they have and aim to cover them in this dissertation.

There are numerous clinical studies on mindfulness that proves its benefits in various fields. The number of such studies is growing rapidly all over the world. However, there are very few studies that examine the mindfulness movement from a sociological perspective. Among such studies, I discuss three books that examine various angles of mindfulness movement in the United States and other Western countries.

First is *Mindful America: The Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture* (2014) by Jeff Wilson. Wilson is a professor of religious studies and East Asian studies for Renison University College, at the University of Waterloo, Canada. *Mindful America* (2014) is the first comprehensive book that shows the origins of the mindfulness movement in Buddhism in the United States and the development of the mindfulness movement. Dr. Wilson examined in detail the social climate of the United States pre- and post-mindfulness movement. He also analyzed the factors that gave rise to the mindfulness movement and explained its effects on American society.

Another book that explains the role and strategies of mindfulness leaders in promoting mindfulness in the United States is *Mindful Elite: Mobilizing inside out* (2019) by Jamie Kucinkas. Kucinkas studies meditation movements in the United States. She refers to them as a contemplative movement.⁶ In *Mindful Elite* (2019) she focuses on the strategies used by

⁶ In the book *Mindful Elite: Mobilizing inside out* (2019), Jamie Kucinkas refers the meditation movement as contemplative movement because the word “contemplative” is used by the prominent organizations that include mindfulness and mind training programs. Mindfulness as defined and structured by Jon Kabat-Zinn is a central part of this movement (Kucinkas 2019: 4).

contemplative leaders to spread contemplative practices, especially mindfulness. According to Kucinkas's analysis, contemplative leaders used the following strategies. First, they built dedicated organizations and deliberately made contemplative practices secular. Second, they created bodies to research the benefits of meditation and contemplative practices. They used scientific language while teaching mindfulness rather than religious words or references to scriptures and sacred books. Third, they used their professional networks to spread these practices to various organizations, including science, business, education, etc. They developed interventions and programs targeting professionals in multiple fields. Using these strategies, the contemplative leaders and their organizations successfully spread mindfulness and meditation in the United States (Kucinkas 2019).

Another sociological study is *Handbook of Mindfulness: Culture, Context, and Social Engagement* (2016), a collection of articles written by psychiatrists, monks, and professors. It explains the theory and practice of mindfulness in historical and cultural contexts. It focuses on the cultural, social, political, and economic factors that spread mindfulness in healthcare, education, business, etc. The book presents the two sides of mindfulness, traditional and modern, religious and secular, and supporter and critical.

The sociological studies mentioned above examine the factors that caused the development of the mindfulness movement. They further explain the expansion of mindfulness practice and provide a critical view of some of its aspects. They focus primarily on the interpretation and practice of Asian religious practices, particularly Buddhist practices, in American society. They do not cover how the movement is spreading across Asian countries where the teachings of mindfulness originated.

In the group of religious studies, there are articles and books that discuss mindfulness and its connection with various traditions of Buddhism. *Buddhist Foundations of Mindfulness* (2015) is a collection of articles that discuss Buddhist teachings and texts, such as Four Noble Truths, *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, *Samatha*, Vipassanā, and their relationship with mindfulness. The articles in the *Buddhist Foundations of Mindfulness* (2015) are written by scholars in Buddhist studies and clinical studies. They explore the connection between traditional mindfulness and secular mindfulness programs and how Buddhist teachings can contribute more to the current mindfulness programs.

Another study by Ville Husgafvel (2019) explores the roots of MBSR in Mahāyāna traditions of Buddhism. By analyzing Kabat-Zinn's *Full Catastrophe Living* (1990), *Wherever You Go, There You Are* (1994), and *Coming to our senses* (2005), Husgafvel identifies that even though MBSR methods are based on Theravāda Buddhism, especially the Vipassanā

movement, its philosophical foundations differ from the Theravāda teachings. They are rather based on Mahāyāna Buddhism, Zen/Sōn/Thiền⁷, and Tibetan Dzogchen⁸ teachings. In addition, every mindfulness-based program is a combination of several teachings of Buddhism.

In this way, religious studies on mindfulness often discuss its roots and functions in Buddhist teachings. However, Kabat-Zinn, in his article “Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means, and the trouble with maps” (2011), acknowledges that MBSR has roots in certain currents from yogic traditions⁹ (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 289). This side of mindfulness is not yet explored.

This dissertation focuses on the practice of mindfulness in Japanese society. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the studies on mindfulness that are published in Japan, especially from sociological and religious perspectives. In Japan, clinical studies on mindfulness are greater in number. Second, there are studies that explain mindfulness from the Buddhist perspective. There are very few studies that discuss mindfulness from sociological perspective. In the further section, I discuss two articles.

Kwansei Gakuin University’s Journal, *Human Welfare Studies* Vol. 7, No. 1 published a special edition called “*Nihon ni Okeru “Maindofurunesu” no Tenbō* (Future Prospects for “Mindfulness” in Japan)” in 2014. Isshō Fujita, the second head director of the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center, has written an article in it; “*Nihon no maindofurunesu he mukatte* (Towards Mindfulness of Japan).” Fujita touches on several points in this article. He briefly discusses the American mindfulness movement and its impact on Japan. He divides mindfulness in Japan into five categories and briefly explains the development of mindfulness practice in each category. He further identifies the gaps in Western mindfulness programs and how Japan can contribute to filling up the gaps. He emphasizes redefining and renewing mindfulness with the help of Buddhism.

Another study by Shuhei Fujii (2017) explains mindfulness’s history and the present situation in the United States and Japan. Fujii in his article, ‘*Maindofurunesu no Yurai to*

⁷ Zen/Sōn/Thiền are collectively referred as Zen Buddhism which is a school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In Japanese it is called Zen, In Korean it is called as Sōn and in Vietnamese, it is Thiền.

⁸ Dzogchen is a tradition of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.

⁹ The word “yogic” is found in the works of Indian philosophers and spiritual Gurus like Vimala Thakar (1921-2009), J. Krishnamurti (1895-1986), and in the translated works of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897-1981) to describe the practices, exercises and terms related to the ancient practice of Yoga. In “Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means, and the trouble with maps”, Kabat-Zinn mentions that, the roots of MBSR are in certain currents from the “yogic traditions” and he mentions the names of Hindu spiritual teachers (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 289). Therefore, the meaning of yogic traditions for him might be the works of Hindu spiritual teachers, which are based on their interpretations of the ancient practice of Yoga.

Tenkai: Gendai ni Okeru Bukkyō to Shinrigaku no Musubitsuki no Rei toshite (The Origin and Development of the “Mindfulness Movement”: An Example of the Connection between Buddhism and Psychology)’ indicated the characteristics of the American Mindfulness movement as “standardization” and “elimination of religion” (Fujii 2017: 76). At the end of the articles Fujii raised questions on the paradox that mindfulness programs have because they are associated with religion; but presented as secular.

The studies by Fujita and Fujii provide an overview of the spread of mindfulness in the United States and Japanese society. However, their articles are published in 2014 and 2017 respectively. Therefore, they do not discuss in detail the recent developments and expansion of mindfulness programs in Japan; especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, they do not cover how mindfulness programs are accepted in Japan where Buddhism is rooted in the culture.

Since Japan is closely connected with Buddhism, many studies compare mindfulness with various traditions of Buddhism and explain its roots and meaning in Buddhist texts. A special edition, “*Tokushū Maindofurunesu to Zazen Meisō*” (Special Edition Mindfulness and Zazen Meditation) was published in *Daihōrin* periodical in April 2017. It has a special section, ‘*Dentō Bukkyō to Maindofurunesu* (Traditional Buddhism and Mindfulness)’ where scholars compare Western interpretation of mindfulness with transitional Buddhism. They identify the similarities and differences between them.

There are dialogues that analyze mindfulness program from the perspective of Zen. For example, there is a dialogue¹⁰ between Masaki Matsubara, a Zen scholar from Cornell University and a priest in the San Francisco Zen Center, and Kimiko Bokura, a founder of the Mindfulness Institute of Leadership (MiLI).¹¹ They discuss the differences between American Mindfulness and Japanese Zen by sharing their own experiences. Another dialogue¹² is between Hiroaki Kumano, a professor of clinical psychology at Waseda University, and Nanrei Yokota, a chief priest of the Rinzai division at Engaku-Ji temple. It is published in the bulletin (2020) of the Hanazono University Counselling Center. They discuss the ways of meditating

¹⁰ Matsubara, Masaki and Kimiko Bokura-Shafe, 2016, *Zen to Maindofurunesu no Chigai tte nan Desu ka?* ‘~Amerika kara Mita, Raifusutairu toshite no Meditēshon no Kanōsei (What is the difference between Zen and Mindfulness? – Possibilities of Meditation as a Lifestyle Seen from America)’, *Mark*, (<https://markmag.jp/2016/12/zenandmindfulness/99621>).

¹¹ The website link for Mindfulness Institute of Leadership (MiLI) is provided in Appendix 1.

¹² Kumano, Hiroaki, and Nanrei, Yokota, 2020, ‘*Zen kara Mita Kokoro, Maindofurunesu kara mita Kokoro*’ (Mind from Zen Perspective, Mind from the Mindfulness Perspective), *Counselling Center bulletin*, Vol 14, Hanazono University.

with mindfulness and with Zen. These studies compare American Mindfulness and other Buddhist practices. The studies that compare mindfulness programs with Buddhism or explain mindfulness practice from the Buddhist perspective do not examine whether the influence of Buddhism on the Japanese plays any role in the acceptance of mindfulness programs.

This dissertation first aims to understand the development and proliferation of mindfulness programs in the United States with the help of previous studies. Second, it explores the roots of mindfulness in the teachings of Hindu spiritual teachers whose teachings are mentioned by Kabat-Zinn in his books. Third, it aims to understand how mindfulness programs are accepted in a society that is closely connected with Buddhism. Fourth, it examines the growth of mindfulness programs in Japan and their local adaptations.

Research Methodology

This research is conducted in three stages. In the first stage, I gathered information on mindfulness; from its practice in various traditions of Buddhism to its dissemination in the West as secular and structured programs. In order to understand the practice of mindfulness in Buddhism, I read books and articles that explain mindfulness from a Buddhist perspective. I also read commentaries on *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in order to understand the significance of mindfulness practice. Next, I gathered information about Buddhism in the United States, spiritual movements in the United States, and the mindfulness movement through books, articles, videos, and podcasts. The focus was on the factors and individuals that played a crucial role in the development of the mindfulness movement; for example, the social climate of the United States in the 19th century when most of the spiritual movements evolved, mindfulness leaders, their background, and the strategies used to spread mindfulness programs. Third, I took an overview of how mindfulness programs are spreading in other countries.

After studying the American mindfulness movement and the growth of mindfulness programs in various countries, the focus was moved to Japan. First, I learned the history of Buddhism in Japan and the fundamentals of Zen meditation. Next, I read books and articles on mindfulness written by Japanese scholars and Buddhist monks. They helped me understand the individuals and organizations that made efforts to expand mindfulness programs in Japan. Lastly, I did an in-depth search on the internet about mindfulness and yoga organizations, the programs they offer, their views on mindfulness programs, and their strategies to promote their mindfulness programs. From the information gathered through various sources, the plan of research was prepared. Websites of the mindfulness and yoga organizations were a great source

to understand the nature of mindfulness programs. I tracked and studied media articles and interviews on mindfulness that are available on the internet.

In the second stage, participant observation was done. I attended Zen meditation sessions, mindfulness programs, mindfulness events, and conferences in the United States and Japan. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the sessions and events I participated in were online. First, I attended online mindfulness courses conducted by Western mindfulness instructors. I observed the program contents, words, and expressions used by mindfulness instructors. Second, I attended Zen meditation sessions where I learned the rules of Zen meditation and the focused attention technique that is used in mindfulness meditation. Third, I attended many mindfulness programs, conferences, and events in Japan. The mindfulness programs that I participated in were conducted by Buddhist monks and mindfulness instructors in fitness and corporate fields. I took detailed notes on the contents of each program and observed the words and expressions used by the instructors in different fields. Other than, mindfulness sessions, I participated in the annual conferences of the Japanese Association of Mindfulness and other worldwide and Japanese conferences on mindfulness. They deepened my understanding of mindfulness in terms of its application and development for future growth.

In the third stage, an extensive interview survey is conducted in Japan from October 16, 2020, to June 28, 2021. In the beginning, I sought publicly known organizations that offer mindfulness programs. I first selected the well-established organizations that offer Western mindfulness-based programs and are connected with Western mindfulness organizations. I further contacted organizations that offer locally developed mindfulness programs. The initial plan was to conduct interviews with all the founders of the organizations. I requested the staff of the organizations whether they could connect me to the founders. Some of them connected me to their founders and allowed me to conduct interviews with them; while others selected the individuals who would represent their organization and who agreed to participate in the interview survey. The total number of respondents from mindfulness organizations was 19. I conducted in-depth interviews with them.

While connecting with the mindfulness organizations, I also contacted individuals who conduct mindfulness programs and write articles on mindfulness. The individuals I contacted were mainly academics and Buddhist monks. Some of them conduct mindfulness programs individually or through organizations. I came to know about them while collecting information on mindfulness. I conducted in-depth interviews with them. Through their networks, I contacted other academics and Buddhist monks. The total number of respondents from mindfulness organizations was 15.

The interview survey was conducted based on the guidelines written in the research promotion rules of Daito Bunka University.¹³ The purpose, content, and schedule of the interview survey were shared with the organizations and individuals via email prior to the interviews (See Appendix 4). After their written agreement and no objection to the purpose and the content, the interviews were scheduled with them. All the respondents participated voluntarily in the interview survey. In every interview, permission was taken to do an audio-visual recording of the interview. The respondents were also assured that their personal information, their opinions, and audio-visual recordings would not be shared with a third party or on social platforms.

Many respondents were public figures and some of them often speak about their work publicly. They expressed that their names can be used while including their opinions in the dissertation. For those who did not provide permission to disclose their names or their organizations' names and opinions they provided in the interview survey, every care was taken to maintain confidentiality.

The interview schedule was determined based on the availability of the respondent. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most interviews were conducted online. Only four interviews were conducted in person because the respondents allowed me to conduct interviews in that manner. Three of them were conducted in Tokyo; while one of them was conducted in Saitama prefecture. Most of the interviews are individual interviews. Only two interviews were conducted with a group of 2 individuals because they belonged to the same organization. The length of the interviews was between 38 minutes to 2.5 hours. language of the interview was primarily Japanese, and only two interviews were conducted in both languages; English and Japanese.

The number of individuals who participated in the interview survey was 34. They are mindfulness instructors, Buddhist monks, academics, yoga teachers, psychiatrists, and psychologists. Many respondents belong to more than one profession. For example, a Buddhist monk who also works as a psychiatrist or an academic. A yoga teacher who works as a mindfulness instructor. The reason behind selecting respondents from various backgrounds is to understand the views on mindfulness programs from various angles. In order to understand the holistic growth of mindfulness in Japanese society, it was necessary to involve individuals

¹³ For more details of the research promotion rules of Daito Bunka University, please refer (https://www.daito.ac.jp/research/promotion/human_morals.html).

who work in various fields. The details of the interview survey are provided in Part 2 of this dissertation.

All the interviews were semi-structured interviews. The first half of every interview was dedicated to understanding the respondent and their activities. The second half was dedicated to understanding the respondents' views on mindfulness and its connection with religion, its acceptance and expansion in Japanese society, and its future. Before every interview, I gathered information via the internet and published material about the respondents' organizations (if applicable), expertise, qualifications, and activities regarding teaching mindfulness. At the beginning of every interview, I asked every respondent how they came to know about Western mindfulness programs. Second, I asked about their qualifications, their activities in general and related to teaching mindfulness programs, the organizations they are associated with and their role in those organizations.

For Buddhist monks, I mainly asked about their sects, the organizations they work with, their views on Western mindfulness programs, and their experience in teaching mindfulness programs. From the information, I gathered prior to the interview, I identified that some Buddhist monks have a specific view on Western mindfulness programs. I asked them in detail about the reasons for having a such view. For mindfulness instructors, I asked about their qualifications and their teaching experience. For those who work with mindfulness or yoga organizations, I asked about how their organizations were founded, their goals, the programs they offer, their association with Western mindfulness organizations and mindfulness leaders, strategies for promoting mindfulness programs, etc.

In the second half of the interview, I first asked about the difference between Zen and Western mindfulness programs, the reasons that mindfulness programs were not born in Japan, and whether religion can be disassociated from mindfulness. Next, I asked about the role of sociocultural aspects in accepting mindfulness and teaching methods. Finally, I asked about standardization for teaching methods, concerns regarding the current practice of mindfulness, and the future of mindfulness in Japan. Buddhist Monks who teach mindfulness programs were asked about the reasons for teaching such programs and their teaching styles. Yoga teachers were asked about their program content and the reasons to take an interest in mindfulness programs.

The interview survey was not targeted to any particular organization or individual and their activities. In addition, it did not intend to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of mindfulness practice. Its aim was to understand the role and view of mindfulness organizations and individuals on mindfulness programs. Therefore, the interviews were conducted with

individuals who teach and promote mindfulness programs, Academics and Buddhist monks who study mindfulness and have shared their views on mindfulness programs through articles, blogs, and interviews. The information of respondents and their organizations was mostly available on the internet.

The interview survey did not target the participants of the mindfulness programs for the following reasons. First, the participants of mindfulness programs may include patients with mental illnesses. Due to ethical issues, it is challenging to conduct interviews with them. Second, Mindfulness and yoga organizations maintain the confidentiality of the personal information of the participants. Therefore, they could not connect me to them. Lastly, it was challenging to contact the participants through other channels and arrange interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thus, the interview survey does not present the views of all individuals in Japan who are engaged in mindfulness practices. In order to understand awareness about mindfulness programs and their participation in those programs, market research, social platforms, and media content were analyzed. Through the interview survey, the varieties of mindfulness programs, teaching styles, and views of Buddhist monks and academics were analyzed.

Structure of Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into two parts. Part one contains four chapters that shed light on the development and proliferation of mindfulness in the United States and Japan. Part two consists of three chapters that draw upon the results of the interview survey conducted by the author. The chapters in this part cover mindfulness and its relationship with religion, teaching strategies of mindfulness, its flaws, and future growth.

The first chapter is dedicated to the development of mindfulness in the United States. First, it explains American encounters with Hindu and Buddhist philosophy and spiritual teachings. Second, it discusses the interpretation and conceptual development of modern mindfulness. Third, it focuses on Jon Kabat-Zinn and the formation of MBSR. Fourth, it discusses mindfulness-based interventions and programs in various fields.

The second chapter explains the influence of Hindu spiritual teachers on the mindfulness movement. Mindfulness is primarily associated with Buddhism because the word ‘Mindfulness’ was first used in English translations of Buddhist texts. The people, including Jon Kabat-Zinn, who spread mindfulness in the United States, are trained in Buddhism. However, mindfulness has roots in certain currents from Yoga. In this chapter four Hindu spiritual teachers are

considered. First, the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and their influence on Kabat-Zinn is explained. Second, the teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and their influence on Kabat-Zinn is explained. Third, the teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj are explored and their influence on Kabat-Zinn is explained. Fourth, the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi are explored and their influence on Kabat-Zinn is explained.

The Third chapter briefly reviews the criticism that mindfulness has been receiving in the West. First, it summarizes the critical points. In recent years, mindfulness has proliferated in psychology, business, education, and many other fields. However, there are aspects of mindfulness that are unclear and uncountable. Critics often argue that mindfulness programs have limited scientific evidence, they do not bring long-term effects, and sometimes they lead to a narcissistic attitude. In addition, they are criticized for capitalizing on religious practices and unethical practices. In the end, the chapter discusses the Second-generation mindfulness-based interventions (SG-MBIs) which are the revised versions of mindfulness-based interventions.

The fourth chapter first explains the popularization of mindfulness in Japan. Second, it sheds light on the acceptance and practice of mindfulness in Buddhism, corporate sector, health care sector, sports, and education. Third, it provides an overview of mindfulness studios and Yoga studios that offer mindfulness programs in Japan. Fourth, it discusses how the COVID-19 pandemic has elevated the growth of mindfulness in Japan.

The fifth chapter examines the relationship of mindfulness with religion, especially Buddhism. It first examines how mindfulness is presented by the Japanese studios. Second, it explains the similarities and difference between Zen and mindfulness. Third, it identifies the reasons why mindfulness programs were not born in Japan. Fourth, it presents the views shared in the interview survey on the removal of religion from mindfulness. Further, it briefly discusses the response of Japanese monks to the popularization of mindfulness in Japan.

The sixth chapter examines the teaching methods that are used in Japan by mindfulness instructors. First, it examines why it is necessary to make changes in teaching styles and what changes are made. Second, it explores how mindfulness instructors respond to religion-related questions. Third, it examines whether cultural aspects play any role in the acceptance of mindfulness. Fourth, it briefly analyses how mindfulness spreads in the Yoga industry and why Yoga teachers are interested in mindfulness. Fifth, it analyzes whether there should be standardization of teaching methods.

The seventh chapter mainly discusses three aspects of mindfulness and Japanese society. First, it analyzes if mindfulness programs are necessary in Japan. Second, it discusses whether

mindfulness would grow on the future. Third, it explores the problems that the proliferation of mindfulness has brought. Fourth, it discusses the aspects that need to be taken into account for the future growth of mindfulness.

The outcome of this dissertation will shed light on the transition of mindfulness from Asia to the United States and from there its return to Asia. It will explore the practice of mindfulness in Japan and identify the effects of sociocultural factors in accepting and expansion of mindfulness. It might provide an opportunity for Japan to rediscover its culture and roots. I hope that this dissertation will open avenues for numerous sociological studies to examine the contributions that other countries are making to the Global mindfulness movement.

PART 1

Development and Proliferation of Mindfulness in the United States and Japan

Mindfulness has become a widely recognized practice in health care in the last couple of decades. It is attached to anything that is done with full attention and awareness. Even though its practice and philosophy are closely associated with religion, mindfulness programs are promoted as scientific and secular. They have succeeded in the United States as a healthcare practice and they are making their mark in the Asian countries where the mindfulness practice originated. Part one focuses on the development of mindfulness programs in the United States and Japan. It examines the Western interpretation of mindfulness practice through the mindfulness movement. It further analyzes how Western mindfulness programs are accepted and practiced in Japan.

Part one is divided into four chapters that cover several aspects of mindfulness. Chapter one briefly summarizes the transition of mindfulness from religious practice to a fastest-growing health trend. Chapter two explores the roots of mindfulness in the teachings of Hindu spiritual teachers. There is a burgeoning discussion on mindfulness's association with Buddhism. However, the concept and philosophy of mindfulness are also identified in the teachings of Hindu spiritual teachers. Chapter two discusses the influence of Hindu spiritual teachers on Kabat-Zinn and the formation of MBSR. It focuses on the teachings of four Hindu spiritual teachers; Swami Vivekananda, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Sri Ramana Maharshi, and Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj. It examines how some elements of their teachings are incorporated into MBSR by Kabat-Zinn. Chapter three discusses the criticism that mindfulness is facing. It also sheds light on the revised version of mindfulness-based interventions that is SG-MBIs. The last chapter of part one focuses on the expansion and practice of mindfulness in Japan.

Chapter 1: Development and Proliferation of Mindfulness in the United States

1.1. American Encounter with Hindu and Buddhist Philosophy and Spiritual Teachings

Early interactions between East and West in terms of religion and philosophy have a history of hundreds of years. In the 18th century, when the trade between Europe and India started, Europeans came across Indian scriptures and texts. Many authors and poets were fascinated by Hindu and Buddhist philosophies and the idealism of these religions. Buddhism was often confused with Hinduism. It is obvious because Gautama Buddha was born in a Hindu family, and Buddhism that developed after Buddha was related to Hindu religious and spiritual teachings. According to Thomas Tweed, a professor of religious studies, the knowledge about Buddhism in the Western world increased slightly during the second, third, and fourth decades of the 19th century. At that time, Buddhism often overlapped with Hinduism. Buddhism became widely known to the Western world only at the end of the 19th century (Tweed [1992] 2000: xxx-xxxii).

In the 19th century, Americans came across the translations of Hindu scriptures - Upanishads and Bhagavad-Gita. They also came across books and articles written on Buddhism by European writers. One of the best examples that created a solid and immediate impact on Americans was a book, *The Light of Asia* (1879), written by Edwin Arnold (1832-1904) that describes Gautama Buddha's life (Tweed [1992] 2000: 29). Such books lead Americans to take an interest in Hinduism and Buddhism.

Another source for Americans to get acquainted with the Hindu and Buddhist philosophy is the essays, books, and poems written by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1802-1882), Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), and Walt Whitman (1819-1892). They were members of the Transcendental Club, which was highly influenced by Indian philosophy. Though the club did not continue its activities after some years, authors like Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman inspired many Americans. Philip Goldberg, an American author has stated in his book, *American Veda: from Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation; How Indian Spirituality Changed the West* (2010) that, "The Transcendentalist Club that Emerson and his comrades founded lasted less than twenty years, but its footprint has never been erased. Its core perspective, shaped by Vedic precepts, has permeated the culture" (Goldberg 2010: 43).

Even though the Transcendental club could not continue its activities, the admirers of Emerson and founders of the New Thought Movement¹⁴ continued to spread Asian philosophies, especially Vedic teachings, through their writings and speeches. The tenets of the New Thought Movement are that every human being is divine in nature, the ability of God's power to avail peace, health, happiness, and prosperity to every human being, and all illnesses reside in the mind and spiritual nature of the universe (Williamson 2010: 32). New thought Movement emphasizes on applying these principles to address mental and physical problems.

The Theosophical Society also played an essential role in spreading Hindu and Buddhist teachings. It was founded by Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), and Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907) succeeded. Both took refuge in Buddha and declared themselves Buddhist. The articles and books published by the Theosophical society became extremely popular in American society. Blavatsky and Olcott also visited India several times. During their visit, they found a boy named Jiddu Krishnamurthi (1895-1986). Krishnamurti's teachings have influenced Mindfulness teachings that are mainstreamed in the United States.

In this way, the interactions between East and West flourished in the 19th century. Many adherents of Hindu and Buddhist philosophies translated the texts, wrote articles and books, and made the knowledge available to Americans. It later helped Asian spiritual teachers to spread their teachings in the United States. The first significant impact made by Asian spiritual teachers was in the World's Parliament of Religion held in 1893 in Chicago. In the following chapter, the influence of Hindu spiritual teachers is discussed.

1.2. Interpretations of Buddhist Texts and Development of Mindfulness Movement

Mindfulness is an English translation of the Pali word *Sati*. *Sati* comes from the Sanskrit word *Smriti*, which means 'memory' or 'remembrance' (Wilson 2014: 15; Kucinkas 2019: 26). Buddhist scholars used various words to translate *Sati* into English. The word "mindfulness" for *Sati* mainly occurred in the translations of the Pali Text Society founded by Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843-1922)¹⁵. At the beginning of the 20th century, it became the preferred translation for *Sati*. The authors of Pali Text Society continued using mindfulness,

¹⁴ The New Thought movement is a diverse movement that consists of various religious communities that share an theology, a positive worldview, and practices for personal well-being, and material success. The movement emerged in the United States in the 19th century. It is the largest movement which contained Christian Science, Theosophy, and Spiritualism.

¹⁵ Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843-1922) is a scholar who founded The Pali Text Society in 1881. The society aimed to promote the study of Pali texts and publish English translations of them.

spreading it among the Western Buddhist community throughout the 20th century (Wilson 2014: 17-19). The historical development of the concept of mindfulness is explained in detail by Jeff Wilson in his book *Mindful America: The Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture* (2014). Wilson is a professor of religious studies and East Asian studies for Renison University College, at the University of Waterloo, Canada. *Mindful America* (2014) is the first comprehensive study that shows the origins of the mindfulness movement in Buddhism in the United States and its manifestation into mindfulness movement. Wilson examines in detail the social climate of the United States pre and post the mindfulness movement. He stated that the turning point for the mindfulness movement in the United States was in the 1970s. (Wilson 2014: 23). Section 1.2.1. and 1.2.2. summarizes the development of the mindfulness movement in the United States. Section 1.2.1. is based on Wilson's book *Mindful America: The Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture* (2014).

1.2.1. Concept of Mindfulness before 1970

Before the 1970s, the practice of mindfulness was spread by Buddhist Associations, Asian and Western monks, especially of the Theravāda tradition. Pali Text Society and Maha Bodhi Society¹⁶ contributed significantly in translating Buddhist texts. By reading the texts published by these societies, many Westerners went to Asia to get trained in Buddhism. (Wilson 2014: 23).

Another important source that spread *Sati* related texts in Western society is the disciples of Myanmar monks Ledi Sayadaw (1846-1923) and Mahasi Sayadaw (1904–1982). These texts were translated into English, and other languages, and *Sati* or Mindfulness was passed on to the general public (Wilson 2014: 24).

The usage of the word mindfulness unfolded in the books by Buddhist scholars and monks. Sri Lankan monk Soma Thera (1898-1960) mentioned mindfulness as a practice in *The Way of Mindfulness: The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and Commentary* (1941). A German monk trained in Sri Lanka, Nyanaponica Thera emphasizes the development of correct mindfulness in his book *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation: A Handbook of Mental Training Based on the Buddha's way of mindfulness* (1962). He shows the effectiveness of mindfulness for daily work and problem-solving. However, he states that mindfulness is very difficult and needs to be practiced

¹⁶ Maha Bodhi Society is a Buddhist society that was founded by Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), a Sri Lankan Buddhist leader. The society was established to bring back Buddhism in India. It has several branches worldwide. One of them is established in Chicago.

in a quiet environment by renouncing modern life (Wilson 2014: 23-26). Walpola Rahula, in his book *What the Buddha Taught* (1959), describes the practical benefits of mindfulness, such as health and relaxation. His approach resembles modern mindfulness; however, he does not remove Buddhism from it. (Wilson 2014: 26-27). Thus, before the 1970s, mindfulness was used as a Buddhist term in the United States, and mindfulness training was also a part of Buddhism (Wilson 2014: 26-28).

Wilson stated that before the 1970s, the social situations in the United States contributed to the mindfulness movement. In 1965, American education laws were amended to allow many Americans to receive higher education at college. The number of universities with departments of religious studies increased. In 1965, the Immigration Control Law increased the number of Asian immigrants. They created their religious groups and communities. Psychology and psychiatry developed in the middle of the 20th century because of which mindfulness movement flourished since the 1970s. (Wilson 2014: 29-30).

1.2.2. Concept of Mindfulness after 1970

After 1970, mindfulness in the United States was shaped by the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022), Vipassanā Movement and Kabat-Zinn's MBSR (Wilson 2014: 31).

1) Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022)

Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh has significant contribution to the mindfulness movement. His journey from a novice monk in Vietnam's Tu Hieu Temple to one of the world's Buddhist leaders and a nominee for the Nobel peace prize is remarkable. He established a monastery called "Plum Village" in the southWest of France. The journey of Thich Nhat Hanh and his contribution to the mindfulness movement is summarized below. The information is based on the official website of Plum Village¹⁷.

From a young age, Thich Nhat Hanh actively participated in the movement to renew Vietnamese Buddhism. At the time of the Vietnam war, when Vietnam was suffering from the bombing, monasteries in Vietnam were questioned about their secluded life. Thich Nhat Hanh's initiated a movement to serve society. He named it "Engaged Buddhism"¹⁸ in his book

¹⁷ The official website of Plum Village is (<http://www.plumvillage.org>).

¹⁸ In Engaged Buddhism, Buddhist practitioners use their wisdom, teachings, and insights from meditation into the real-world situations such as social, political, environmental and economic suffering and injustice. (Reshel n.d.).

Lotus in a Sea of Fire (1967). According to Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhist teachings are not only for self-transformation but also to remove societal suffering.

Thich Nhat Hanh traveled to the United States and Europe in 1966 to appeal for peace in Vietnam. He met Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968) in the United States, who nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. Despite his social work and efforts for peace in Vietnam, communist and noncommunist governments banned him and made him live in exile for over 40 years. During these years, he shifted his focus to being in the moment, which later became famous as mindfulness (Schedneck, 2022). At the beginning of the 1970s, he was a lecturer and researcher of Buddhism at the University of Sorbonne, Paris. In 1982, Plum Village was established.

In the 1970s, Thich Nhat Hanh's mindfulness teachings reached the United States, primarily through his book *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (1976). The book explains that mindfulness can be practiced through daily activities. The famous passage in his book is about doing dishes mindfully or with full attention. Thich Nhat Hanh's mindfulness practice begins with mindful breathing, an observation of inhaling and exhaling breaths. There are various other meditations, such as walking, sitting, and eating,¹⁹ in which every activity is done with full awareness. Another practice is resting. In order to restore oneself, it is necessary to rest and relax. It is done through a body scan²⁰. In this meditation, the individual lies down on the back and moves the mind through different body parts.

Thich Nhat Hanh's practices are simple and can be done daily. His teachings emphasize becoming aware of the breath and the present moment. When one pays full attention to the here and now, stress, tension, and anxiety disappear. When one continues this practice, qualities such as kindness and compassion emerge. Using mindfulness in day-to-day life appealed the Westerners because there is no bondage of religion. However, Thich Nhat Hanh did not deny the ties of mindfulness with Buddhism. His suggested practices include chanting *sutra*, commentaries on Buddha's teachings, showing gratitude to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, etc.

Thich Nhat Hanh's plum village has grown into a big monastery with over 200 resident monastics and more than 10,000 visitors every year. Other monasteries exist in the United States, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Australia. Thich Nhat Hanh passed away in

¹⁹ Eating meditation is paying attention to eating and way of eating.

²⁰ Body scan is a meditation practice to reestablish contact with the body. In this meditation, the individual lies down on the back and moves the mind through different body parts.

January 2022. However, his mindfulness practices are continued by his monastic disciples, teachers, and followers worldwide. They conduct retreats, tours, and activities in many countries (Plum Village n.d.).

2) Vipassanā Movement

In the 1970s, the Vipassanā movement became widespread in the United States. Following is the overview of the Vipassanā movement. It is based on the article ‘How colonialism sparked the global Vipassanā movement’ by Erik Braun. According to Braun, the roots of mindfulness are found in the Buddhist revival movements of Burma. During colonial times, the British destroyed the Buddhist kingdom of Burma. With British rule, Christianity entered Burma, and Buddhism came into danger. In order to protect Buddhism, the Burmese united and began studying Buddhist scriptures. They reached the masses and began simply explaining Buddha’s teachings. Meditation practice was also reappraised and became the means to protect Buddhism.

In this process, certain Buddhist teachers came into the limelight. Ledi Sayadaw (1846–1923) is one of them. Prior to Ledi Sayadaw, the practice of insight meditation required deep states of concentration called *samadhi*. However, Ledi Sayadaw emphasized the practice of a minimal level of concentration or momentary concentration, which allowed the meditators to return and continue to concentrate on the object of contemplation. Moreover, he explained that meditators are not required to go into forests or mountains to practice it. This approach increased the number of meditators. After Ledi Sayadaw, Mingun Sayadaw (1868–1955) promoted the practice of momentary concentration. Mingun Sayadaw’s teachings also emphasized recording every moment of perception as it arises. He became the first teacher to conduct meditation for lay people.

Another factor that brought a revolution in Burmese Buddhism was lay teachers who taught insight meditation. Teachers such as Saya Thetgyi (1873–1945) and U Ba Khin (1899–1971) were taught by Ledi Sayadaw but were not ordained monks who devoted themselves to spreading Vipassanā. Mahasi Sayadaw (1904-1982), another disciple of Ledi Sayadaw, contributed to this movement. The meditation centers started by U Ba Khin and Mahasi Sayadaw spread the Vipassanā worldwide. Mahasi Sayadaw traveled in Asia and to the West, promoting Vipassanā. Students of U Ba Khin became influential Vipassanā teachers in the West. For example, S. N. Goenka (1924-2013), Ruth Denison (1922-2015) (Braun n.d.).

Other influential Vipassanā teachers such as Joseph Goldstein (1945-), Jack Kornfield (1945-), and Sharon Salzberg (1952-) encountered the teachings of Ledi Sayadaw and Mingun Sayadaw. They founded the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) in 1975 in Massachusetts. After

that, Jack Kornfield moved to California and opened a meditation center with a group of meditators, which they later named “Spirit Rock Meditation Center”.²¹ Vipassanā workshops and retreats were conducted in these meditation centers.

3) Jon Kabat-Zinn and Formation of MBSR

Jon Kabat-Zinn is an alumnus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He holds Ph.D. in Molecular Biology. From a young age, he began practicing Buddhism and Haṭha Yoga. He was first exposed to Buddhism in 1966 (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 286). There are many references of his formal training in Buddhism. When Kabat-Zinn was a student at MIT, he attended a talk given by Philip Kapleau (1912-2004), a Zen monk trained in the *Sambō Kyōdan*²² sect of Japanese Zen. There are references to Philip Kapleau and his famous book *The Three Pillars of Zen* (1965) in Kabat-Zinn’s work, especially when discussing Japanese Zen. The influence of Kapleau’s work on the formation of MBSR is discussed in chapter three.

Kabat-Zinn took formal training in Buddhism under Korean Zen master Seung Sahn (1927-2004) (Brown 2016: 75; Kabat-Zinn 2011:286-287; Wilson 2014: 35) at Cambridge Zen Center. He also served as a director of the Cambridge Zen Center (Kabat-Zinn 2011:286-287). Kabat-Zinn cited many Zen teachers, including Thich Nhat Hanh. He stated that he was impressed by the simplicity of the book *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (1975) by Thich Nhat Hanh (Kabat-Zinn 2011:282). The preface of his first book, *Full Catastrophe Living* (1990), is written by Thich Nhat Hanh. In this way, Kabat-Zinn was inspired by Zen teachers of various traditions. He considers the development of MBSR as his “karmic assignment,”²³ which came through his search. He refers to that search as “personal *kōan*”²⁴ (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 286).

Kabat-Zinn was associated with the IMS. He often attended their retreats. He was also teaching in IMS. In one of his papers, he mentions that he had a ten-second vision or flash during the ten-day Vipassanā retreat of IMS. After a flood of thoughts, he had the idea of implementing dharma²⁵ in a clinical environment rather than focusing on its cultural or

²¹ The official website of Spirit Rock Meditation Center is (<https://www.spiritrock.org>).

²² *Sambō Kyōdan* sect is a Buddhist sect founded by Hakuun Yasutani (1885-1973) which combines both Soto and Rinzai traditions of Buddhism.

²³ Kabat-Zinn believes that MBSR is a task assigned to him through his Karma. That is why he refers to it as his Karmic assignment.

²⁴ *Kōan* is training practice in Zen Buddhism where the Zen master gives a paradoxical word or dialogue, or question to the disciples. Contemplation on that word or dialogue, or question leads to awakening. For Kabat-Zinn, his search to form a program like MBSR was similar to *Kōan*. It was assigned to him by his Karma.

²⁵ Kabat-Zinn refers the teachings of Buddha as dharma in his articles and books.

traditional aspects. He foresaw those cultural or traditional aspects of dharma as an unnecessary impediment for people suffering from stress, illnesses, and pain (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 287).

Regarding Haṭha Yoga, he mentions in one of his articles that he met with Haṭha Yoga in 1967 when a young Vietnam veteran did it as a warm-up in a Karate class in Boston (Kabat-Zinn 2003b). There are almost no references to his formal training in Haṭha Yoga, but in *Full Catastrophe Living* (1990), he mentions that he tried to learn it from a Yoga book (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2013: 108). He saw that Haṭha Yoga has excellent potential to improve pain and chronic illness.

At that time, Haṭha Yoga and meditation were separate practices. Kabat-Zinn combined both techniques, which resulted in mindful Haṭha Yoga or mindful Yoga. Kabat-Zinn mentioned that he had a definite sense that the meditators would be benefited from paying more attention to their bodies. On the other hand, Haṭha Yoga practitioners would be benefited from observing the rising and passing away of moment-to-moment attention in mind and body in one sitting posture (Kabat-Zinn 2003b). Mindful Yoga consists of gentle stretching, strengthening, and balancing exercises done slowly and with moment-to-moment awareness of breathing and attention in the body that arise from the postures (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2013: 100). Kabat-Zinn considers mindful Yoga as one of the meditation practices in MBSR. Kabat-Zinn opened a Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in 1979. He designed a stress reduction and relaxation program, which he later named as “Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR)” program.

MBSR is a program with intensive meditation training based on Vipassanā, Zen traditions, and Haṭha Yoga, done with moment-to-moment attention to body and mind. It is an eight-week program that consists of 2.5-3.5 hours of classes, 7.5 hours of retreat, and personal practice at home (Brown 2016: 80). The program provides systematic training of mindful Yoga, body scan, mindful walking, mindful eating, and sitting meditations. Interactive sessions are also conducted in the classes. After every class, participants are given various exercises to do at home. They are also given CDs for meditation instructions.

As per the curriculum of MBSR offered by Kabat-Zinn, a body scan is practiced in the first two weeks of MBSR. In the third and fourth weeks, body scans and mindful Haṭha Yoga are practiced on alternate days. The body scan is replaced with sitting meditation in the fifth and sixth weeks. The participants usually practice with CDs until the sixth week. In week seven, participants are encouraged to practice body scan, mindful Haṭha Yoga, and sitting meditation for forty-five minutes without CDs. In week eight, the participants are again asked to practice with CDs (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2013: 159-165). There are two types of meditation techniques

taught in MBSR. First is ‘Focused attention,’ which is paying attention to an object, for example, breath. The other technique is ‘Open Monitoring,’ which is the moment-to-moment observation or monitoring without reacting (Chihara 2018: 4; Lutz et al., 2008:163).

Kabat-Zinn presents MBSR as a scientific and secular program but does not deny its roots in Buddhism and yogic traditions. Kabat Zinn states that his purpose in taking mindfulness out of the religious context is not to exploit Buddhist or other religious practices but to make them available for everyone who might not get acquainted with them if they are in the frame of religion. He calls it a recontextualization of selective religious practices (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 288). Kabat-Zinn chose the word “mindfulness” because it has diverse meanings. According to Kabat-Zinn, it is an Umbrella term, and skillful means²⁶ to bring the dharma and medicine together (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 288, 290).

Kabat-Zinn’s efforts encouraged other Westerners to explore mindfulness and contemplative practices. Kabat-Zinn and mindfulness were featured on several media platforms. In 1993, he was featured in Bill Moyers’ Public Broadcasting System series “Healing and the Mind with Bill Moyers.”²⁷ In 2014, he was featured in an article in TIME magazine²⁸. His books became best sellers which became one of the reasons for making mindfulness practice mainstream.²⁹

1.3. Mindfulness-based Interventions and Programs Worldwide

After MBSR, several mindfulness-based interventions and programs developed in the United States and globally. One widely known intervention is MBCT, developed by Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale in 2002 for panic disorders, depression, etc. Other interventions are based on a mindfulness practice. For example, Mindfulness-based Relapse Prevention (MBRP) is for alcohol addiction, Mindfulness-based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT) is for eating disorders, and Mindfulness-based Cancer Recovery (MBCR) is for cancer recovery (Takeo 2018: 57).

²⁶ Skillful means (*Upaya*) is a Buddhist principle described in the Lotus Sutra, which means the action that helps people realize enlightenment. Skillful means can also be used for a conscious action that is helpful for others, and that is correct at that time.

²⁷ The conversation between Bill Moyers and Jon Kabat-Zinn in the “Healing and the Mind with Bill Moyers” is available on (<https://www.mindfulnesscds.com/pages/bill-moyers-special>).

²⁸ The article is available on the website of the TIME magazine (<https://time.com/1556/the-mindful-revolution/>).

²⁹ A part of Point 3) in the section 1.2.2. is previously published by the author in the International Journal of South Asian Studies (Wagh-Gumate 2022: 1-18).

The above are mindfulness based-interventions. Some interventions are not entirely based on mindfulness, but some mindfulness practice is included in them. In the 1970s, Marsha Linehan developed Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) with the aid of certain Western and Eastern spiritual influences. Mindfulness practice is a part of DBT. It was developed for borderline personality disorders because mindfulness improves responses to emotional experiences and situations. Another intervention that consists of mindfulness practice is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). It was introduced in the late 1980s by Steven Hayes, Kelly Wilson, and Kirk Strosahl (Takeo 2018: 57).

In 2007, a Google engineer, Chade-Meng Tan, developed a mindfulness-based program called Search Inside Yourself (SIY) for Google employees with a team of experts. SIY became a leading mindfulness-based program in Business. It is an efficiency-building program that combines mindfulness, neuroscience, and emotional intelligence to bring out an individual's leadership skills and help employees cope with uncertain situations that usually arise in their professional and personal lives.

For mindfulness in education, there are mindfulness-based programs like dots, Paws b, .breath (dot-breath) .b (dot-be) curriculum offered by Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP)³⁰ for children from the age of 3 to 18. The programs are designed to use in school classrooms and engage children's minds.

In this way, the contemporary and secularized application of mindfulness did not limit to MBSR and the clinical field, but it spread to Business and education. Mindfulness-based programs are also conducted for prisoners and the Military.

1.4. Research on Mindfulness

Before mindfulness became mainstream, meditation was considered mystical, religious, and a practice for hippies, Asian immigrants, and new age spiritual people³¹ (Kucisniskas 2019: 8,

³⁰ Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) is a non-profit organization based in the United Kingdom that design mindfulness-based curriculum for schools. The detailed information of the organization is available on (<https://mindfulnessinschools.org>).

³¹ New Age spiritual people are the individuals who believe in ideologies created in the New Age movement. New Age movement is a spiritual movement that spread in the United States in the 1970s and 80s through the occult and metaphysical religious communities. The idea of New Age Movement is developed by an American theosophist, David Spangler (1945-) in 1970. He believed that the New Age has been initiated by the release of waves of spiritual energy through certain astrological changes. He further suggested to use this energy to create the New Age. The New Age movement united a large number of audience who believed that the energies in the New Age will help them in self-transformation. In addition, they will bring international peace and remove problems like racism, poverty, and war (Britannica 2022).

28). However, in the development of the mindfulness movement, professionals from various fields began taking an interest in mindfulness meditation. In order to present it as secular, Kabat-Zinn and mindfulness leaders took the help of science. They encouraged the scientific research of MBSR and other mindfulness interventions and programs. In the past two decades, there is an exceptional growth in the scientific research of mindfulness. A recent study by Anuradha Baminiwatta and Indrajith Solangaarachchi identified the trends and developments in mindfulness research in the last five decades using a bibliometric analysis of publications available on the Web of Science.³² According to their analysis, 16,581 publications on mindfulness were found from 1966 to 2021 (Baminiwatta and Solangaarachchi 2021).

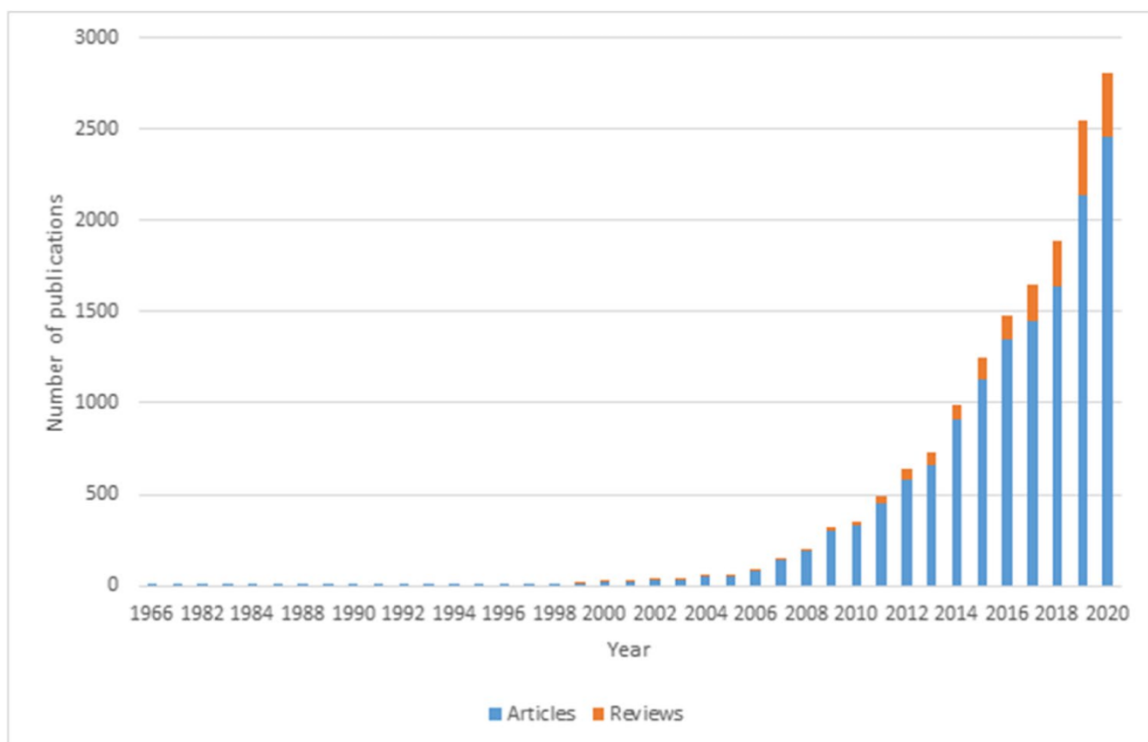


Figure 1. Publications on Mindfulness

Source: Baminiwatta, Anuradha and Indrajith Solangaarachchi, 2021, ‘Trends and Developments in Mindfulness Research over 55 Years: A Bibliometric Analysis of Publications Indexed in Web of Science’, *Mindfulness* 12, 2099–2116 (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-021-01681-x>).

The New Age movement received a huge criticism mainly from Western media and Christians. Media criticized it for lack of scientific evidence and taking people towards spirituality. Christians criticized it because the ideology of the New Age was against their religious faith because it places the humans before God (Heelas and Woodhead 2005).

³² Web of Science is (WoS) is a platform to access various database of academic journals and other academic documents (clarivate.com/webofsciencegroup/solutions/web-of-science).

Figure 1. shows the growth in the number of mindfulness-related publications. The first publication on mindfulness was identified in 1966. It was in the Japanese Journal named ‘Psychologia.’ Since 2006, there has been a significant increase in the number of articles. From 2010 to 2020, there was an average increase of 23.5% per year in the number of articles. Similarly, the number of reviews also increased. It reached 405 in 2019. The primary research areas for mindfulness from 1966 to 2021 are psychology, psychiatry, neurology, and education (Baminiwatta and Solangaarachchi 2021).

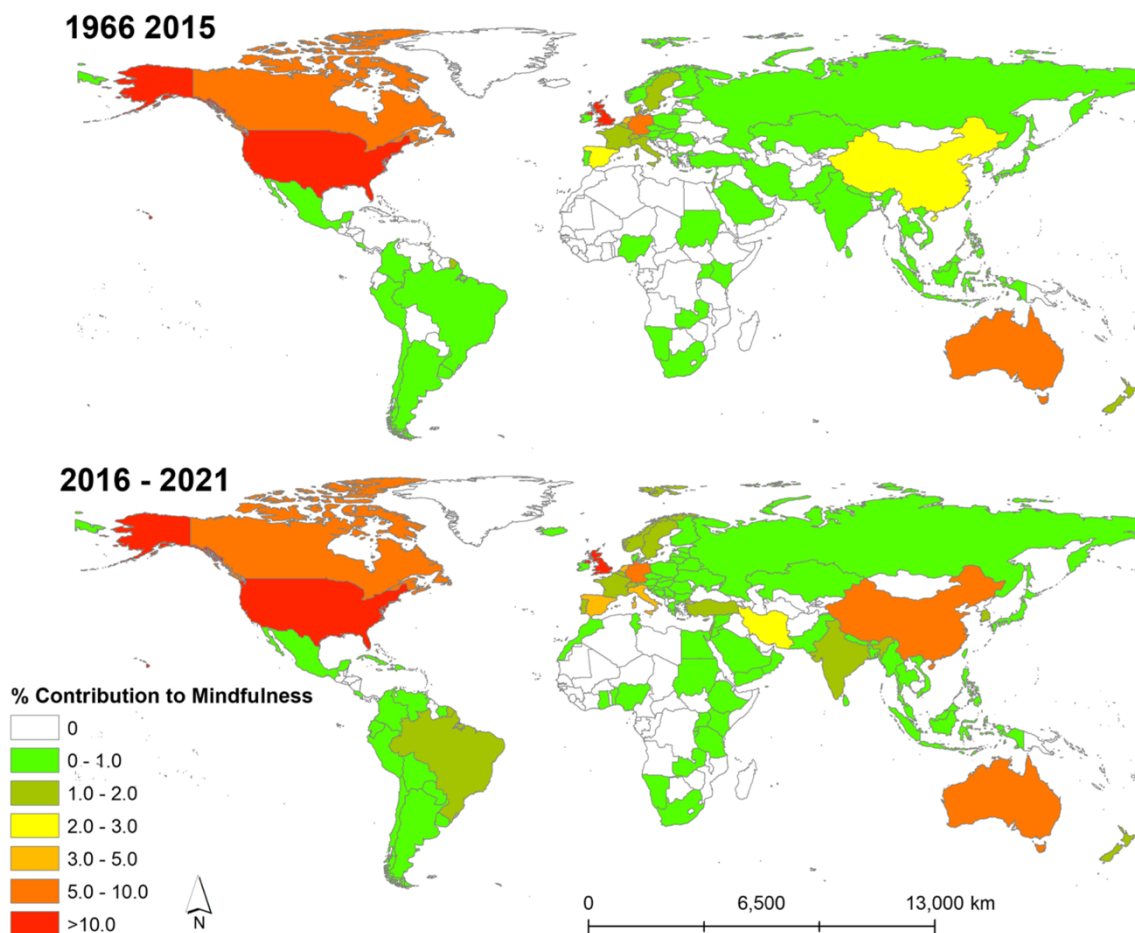


Figure 2. Worldwide Contribution to Mindfulness Research

Source: Baminiwatta, Anuradha and Indrajith Solangaarachchi, 2021, ‘Trends and Developments in Mindfulness Research over 55 Years: A Bibliometric Analysis of Publications Indexed in Web of Science’, *Mindfulness* 12, 2099–2116. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-021-01681-x>.

Figure 2 shows the contributions of various countries to mindfulness research. The contribution shows the percentage of research done in various countries from 1966 to 2015 and 2016 to 2021. Figure 2 shows that mindfulness-related research is increasing in Asian countries,

especially in China, India, and Iran. Contributions from China increased to 5.9% from 2.7%; Iran, to 2.1% from 0.6%, and India, to 1.8% from 0.7% (Baminiwatta and Solangaarachchi 2021). Surprisingly, research on mindfulness is growing in countries with different religious backgrounds and policies. India and China are still associated with Buddhism; however, it was not anticipated that Iran would be on this list. For countries such as Japan, Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, the percentage of research is not changed over the years, even though mindfulness practice originated in these countries.

The figures above show that there is burgeoning research on mindfulness worldwide. Mindfulness's secular nature and scientific evidence have created trust among the common people that mindfulness practice can bring significant changes in mental and physical health. Many religious and spiritual movements took place in the United States. It is interesting to study why the mindfulness movement reached a vast audience worldwide. Some reasons are discussed below.

1.5. Features of Mindfulness Movement

When the trade between Europe and India started, Europeans came across Indian scriptures. They translated the Hindu and Buddhist texts into English. Those texts reached the United States at the beginning of the 19th century and gave birth to transcendentalist authors who inspired many Americans through their writings on Hinduism and Buddhism. Later, New thought and Theosophical society played an important role in spreading Hindu and Buddhist teachings. After transcendentalists, Asian Immigration played an important role. At the end of the 19th century, the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago allowed some Hindu and Buddhist representatives to present their religions.

The major shift happened in 1965 when Congress passed an Immigration law that increased Asian immigration in the United States. Due to the law, many Hindu spiritual teachers, Buddhist scholars, and monks went to the United States to spread their teachings. Their diverse teachings, mixed with the American culture, gave birth to several movements. The mindfulness movement is also a product of several such movements.

The word mindfulness first appeared in Buddhist texts as a translation of the Pali word *Sati*. The practice of mindfulness was done as a Buddhist practice. However, With the development of the MBSR program, mindfulness practice turned into structured and secular programs. The mindfulness movement is not limited to Jon Kabat-Zinn and his stress reduction clinic. The other mindfulness leaders also worked to spread mindfulness. Therefore, the

structure of the movement is flat, and there is no hierarchy like in other spiritual movements. The mindfulness leaders sought a different path to cultural change than typical protest-oriented social movements. They recruited and trained people in their meditation practices in groups within or contiguous to esteemed professional institutions. They used consensus-based mobilization by collaborating with professionals (Kucinkas 2019: 188).

The mindfulness movement has the following features. 1. Mindfulness programs are systematic and structured 2. Scientific evidence to support the benefits of mindfulness 3. No barrier of religion 4. Elites and professionals in various fields supported them. The movement flourished after it received media attention. Kabat-Zinn and other mindfulness leaders appeared on TV, in newspapers, in magazines, etc. In this way, the scope of mindfulness became wider. It resulted in the development of various mindfulness-based interventions and programs.

Chapter 2: Influence of Hindu Spiritual Teachers on Modern Mindfulness

2.1. Influence of Hindu Spiritual Teachers on MBSR and Modern Mindfulness

MBSR and mindfulness are primarily associated with Buddhism because the word ‘Mindfulness’ was first used in English translations of Buddhist texts. The people, including Jon Kabat-Zinn, who spread mindfulness in the United States, are trained in Buddhism. There are many references to Buddhism in Kabat-Zinn’s work. He acknowledges that the roots of MBSR are in the Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions of Buddhism (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 289). The methods of MBSR are derived from the Theravāda-based meditation of Vipassanā (Insight meditation) and its approaches from Mahāyāna traditions (Husgafvel 2019).

Kabat-Zinn, in his article “Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means, and the trouble with maps” (2011), acknowledges that MBSR has roots in certain currents from yogic traditions. He mentions four teachers, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897-1981), Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986), and Vimala Thakar (1921-2009) (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 289). There are other Hindu spiritual teachers whose strategies are similar to those of Kabat-Zinn and MBSR promoters. This side of MBSR is not yet explored. Therefore, this chapter aims to identify the influence of Hindu spiritual teachers on Jon Kabat Zinn’s MBSR.

There is no room to consider all Hindu spiritual teachers. Therefore, I consider four Hindu spiritual teachers. First, I explore the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi because the strategies used by Kabat-Zinn and other mindfulness leaders have similarities with the strategies used by both Hindu spiritual teachers. Second, I explore the teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Sri Ramana Maharshi. A part of their teachings is included in MBSR. Moreover, there are Ideological Similarities. Vivekananda and Maharishi went to the United States to spread their teachings. On the other hand, Nisargadatta Maharaj and Ramana Maharshi did not go to the United States but became popular through the books that are compilations of their teachings in English.³³

³³ Section 2.1 is adapted from the article previously published by the author in *International Journal of South Asian Studies* (Wagh-Gumaste 2022: 1-18).

2.2. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

2.2.1. Teachings of Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda was born in 1863 in Calcutta (today known as Kolkata). At a young age, he was highly influenced by Brahma Samaj – a movement started in 1828 in Bengal by a reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833). The Brahma Samaj spread across India and inspired many people. The objective of the organization was to reorganize the nation's ideologies through its spiritual roots. Members of Brahma Samaj opposed the caste system, Idol worship, and many anti-social traditions of Hinduism.

People of Brahma Samaj adored Vedas and Upanishads. They were a part of India's freedom movement, but they admired Western development of science and social reforms in the West. Swami Vivekananda participated in the activities of Brahma Samaj for some time, but his quest to know God's existence was not satisfied. In 1881, he met his guru, Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886). His spiritual life was enhanced in the presence of Ramakrishna. After Ramakrishna's death, Swami Vivekananda traveled across India when he saw a poor, ignorant, and superstitious society. He felt a great urge to do something for the people and the country's problems. He began giving speeches to mobilize the masses. During one of his speeches in Madras, people urged him to present his thoughts in the World's Parliament of religion.

In 1893, he went to the United States to give a speech on Hinduism at the World's Parliament of religion in Chicago. Starting from his first speech and referring to the audience as "Sisters and Brothers of America," he was highly applauded and appreciated by the Westerners in every speech he gave. In one of his speeches, he stated, "I am proud to belong to a religion that has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal tolerance, but we accept all religions to be true" (Vivekananda 1993: 20). He admired Jesus the same as Krishna and Buddha (Goldberg 2010: 78), but he showed the bitter reality of the institutions representing Jesus and asserting that Christianity is the only right way. He denied the conversion rituals of Christianity. Some Christians opposed him due to his bold statements on Christianity, such as "some people devote their whole lives to their idol of a church and never rise higher because with them religion means as intellectual assent to certain doctrines and doing good for their fellows" (Goldberg 2010, 75).

Swami Vivekananda had progressive thinking about religion. He is considered the first representative from the East who presented Vedantic philosophies to the West most rationally and scientifically possible. Swami Vivekananda, through his speeches, inspired many people

who were mainly of the affluent class. His progressive thoughts and concept of universal acceptance have contributed to secularism and modern spirituality in many ways. He started the Vedanta Society in 1894 in New York to create a platform for people interested in studying Vedanta and exchanging knowledge between East and West. Unlike Churches, the purpose of the society is not to convert people to Hinduism but to acquire Vedanta knowledge and apply it to daily life. It grew substantially in the early 20th century, establishing a few centers and retreats across the United States.

Swami Vivekananda's teachings are based on Shanakaracharya's Advaita-Vedanta. Advaita-Vedanta is the realization of the unity of *Atman* (Soul) and *Brahman* (Universe). This is the teaching of Upanishads. Swami Vivekananda treated Vedanta as a science of being. To support this, he emphasized self-experience. He stated, "Believe nothing until you find it out for yourself" (Vivekananda 2020, 11). His teachings on *Rāja Yoga*³⁴ were based on his selective readings of the Patanjali Yoga Sutras³⁵ (Jain 2015, 32).

According to the famous book, *Raja Yoga* (1896) by Swami Vivekananda, *Rāja Yoga* has eight limbs and they are as follows. *Yama* is non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-receiving of gifts. *Niyama* is cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study, and surrender to God. *Asana*, the postures. *Pranayama*, control of breath. *Pratyahara* is the resistance of the senses to their objects. *Dharana* is to fix the mind on one spot. *Dhyana* is meditation, and *Samadhi* is super-consciousness or absolute state of meditation (Vivekananda 2003). Meditation is an integral part of *Rāja Yoga*. *Pratyahara* is to sit and let the monkey mind wander with thoughts. After some time, the thoughts get lesser and lesser. The next step is to practice *Dharana*, which is holding the mind on body parts. After the practice of *Dharana*, the mind attains the meditative state called *dhyana*. Through the teachings of Advaita Vedanta, Swami Vivekananda created a foundation for further Hindu spiritual teachers to spread Indian teaching in the United States. Vivekananda developed the concept of Universal Religion to show the inclusiveness of all religions. It was later followed by other Hindu spiritual teachers.

2.2.2. Similarities with Modern Mindfulness

This section discusses the similarities between Vivekananda's and Kabat-Zinn's strategies to promote their respective ideologies.

³⁴ *Rāja Yoga* is one of the schools of Yoga.

³⁵ Patanjali Yoga Sutras is a collection of Sanskrit *sutra* about the theory and practice of Yoga.

Category	Swami Vivekananda	Jon Kabat-Zinn
Religious texts and teachings	Interpretation of Upanishadas and Patanjali Yoga Sutra. Creation of a new ideology based on Vedanta philosophy.	Interpreted and extracted selective elements from Buddhism and yogic traditions.
Concept of religion	Concept of universal religion. Not to take up a particular religious system. Teachings are available to everyone.	He explains the universal character and applicability of dharma. Mindfulness is available to everyone.
Rituals, worship	Inner experience.	Inner experience.
Devotion	Focussed on the practical aspects rather than devotion.	Focussed on the practical aspects rather than devotion.
Renunciation	One does not have to renounce. One can practice meditation in daily life.	Mindfulness is also practiced in daily life without giving up daily activities.
Language	English Vocabulary; e.g., Non-dualism. The language that is easy to understand for Westerners. Translations.	The language that is easy to understand for Westerners.
Tantra and mystical side	Avoided speaking about the mystical side of the religion.	Avoided speaking about the religious and mystical side of mindfulness.
Agenda	Delivered speeches and lectures in front of Western elites.	Promoted mindfulness with the help of professionals in various fields.
Modern science and technology	Explained Yoga in a scientific way. Experimenting with oneself, the science of consciousness.	With the help of science and technology, he promoted mindfulness as a scientific technique.

Institutions	Established Ramakrishna Mission and Vedanta society to teach Vedanta and for humanitarian work.	Established a stress-reduction clinic to teach mindfulness.
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Table 1: Strategical Similarities between Vivekananda and Kabat-Zinn

Source: Author

Table 1 shows the strategic similarities between Vivekananda and Kabat-Zinn. First, Vivekananda interpreted Upanishads and Patanjali Yoga Sutra to make them easy to understand for Westerners. He created a new ideology. Similarly, Kabat-Zinn extracted selective elements from Buddhism and yogic traditions to create a new ideology of mindfulness. In order to remove discrimination and competition among religions, Vivekananda presented a concept of a “universal religion” that anyone can practice. Kabat-Zinn also explains dharma’s universal character and applicability to secularize mindfulness teachings. Both of them emphasized the inner experience that one gets from practicing Yoga or mindfulness rather than rituals or worship. In addition, they focused on practice rather than devotion. Vivekananda proposed to practice Yoga in daily life without renouncing them. Similarly, Kabat-Zinn’s mindfulness can also be practiced in daily life without giving up daily activities.

Vivekananda introduced Yoga to the Western world in a language that is easy to understand for Westerners. He used English translations for traditional concepts that were originally in Sanskrit. Kabat-Zinn also used simple vocabulary that is easy to understand for common people. Vivekananda deliberately avoided presenting the mystical side of Yoga. Kabat-Zinn also did not discuss the mystical experiences that mindfulness brings. In order to spread the teachings of Yoga, Vivekananda delivered speeches and lectures in front of Western elites, a well-educated audience. Kabat-Zinn also promoted mindfulness with the help of professionals in various fields such as psychiatry and medicine. Vivekananda scientifically explained Yoga. He emphasized experimenting with oneself, the science of consciousness. Kabat-Zinn encouraged scientific research on mindfulness. Lastly, Vivekananda established Ramakrishna Mission and Vedanta society to teach Vedanta and for humanitarian work. Similarly, Kabat-Zinn began teaching mindfulness by establishing a stress reduction clinic. In this way, although there are differences between Vivekananda and Kabat-Zinn in terms of ideology, the strategies they used to spread their ideologies in Western society have similarities.

2.3. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1918-2008)

2.3.1. Teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi was born in 1918 in Jabalpur, India. In his college days, he met his Guru Swami Brahmananda Saraswati (1871-1953), a Shankaracharya of Jyotir Math³⁶. Like Yogananda, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi was also told by his Guru to finish college before becoming his disciple. He traveled within India from 1955 to 1957 to spread the teachings of his Guru. During a religious festival in Madras, he announced that he would start a “Spiritual regeneration movement”³⁷ to spread the teachings of Shankaracharya (Humes 2005: 62). Maharishi was interested in Western science, especially combining Vedic teachings and science. TM is a meditation technique that he received from his Guru as (Mason [2015] 2017: 269).

TM is a technique generally practiced twice a day with a chant or Mantra given by the TM teacher. An initiation ritual is done before taking the Mantra. The teacher also explains how to meditate with the Mantra. The student is not expected to concentrate on the Mantra and block the thoughts coming into the mind. The student should think about the Mantra effortlessly. Any changes in the rhythm, pronunciation, and speed should not be resisted or anticipated. In short, the meditator should witness the process (Mason [2015] 2017: 15-17). The student should maintain secrecy for the Mantra, but some of the TM students did not follow this, and later, the technique and Mantras became available in the media. Maharishi also developed some Yoga courses.

In 1959 he began his world tours. He first went to the United States in 1959 and taught TM to a few people. In one of his talks, he mentioned the reason for going to the United States. “I must go to the most advance country because I thought – the country is the most advance because the people of that country would try something new” (Mason [2015] 2017: 209). As he was continuously traveling around the world, his followers grew steadily. In the mid of 1960s, he had reached the world’s most important cities and opened meditation centers there. In the United States, he especially became popular among college students. In 1966 he founded

³⁶ Jyotir Math is one of the *mathas* (Institutes) established by Sri Ādi Shankaracharya. The Shankaracharya is the head of *math* (Institutes).

³⁷ Spiritual regeneration movement is started by Maharishi in 1959 to teach the technique of TM in a systematic manner. The detailed information about the Spiritual regeneration movement is available on (<https://indiatm.org/tm-profile>).

“Students’ international meditation society” (SIMS), which had branches in many famous universities in the United States, including Harvard and Yale (Goldberg 2010, 163).

In 1967, he became a Guru of the members of “The Beatles” rock band, which increased his popularity. Understanding the increasing demand in the U.S. and worldwide, he trained several teachers systematically. He used language that was appealing and understandable to the public. He also used methodological procedures for meditation instructions (Goldberg 2010, 163). Maharishi promoted the scientific study of meditation. He knew that this method was going to help him mainstream TM. Many scientific studies proved that practicing TM can reduce stress and be used for relaxation. TM was presented as a scientific technique for relaxation without a religious barrier and without making changes in day-to-day life. The scientific language was used to explain Vedantic teachings, which Maharishi called as Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI). Maharishi International University was also established in 1973 in the United States. Many intellectuals, celebrities, and affluents helped the TM movement grow in the West. During his initial years in the West, he continued the traditional way of teaching meditation, but to mainstream TM, he changed some of his methods. Talks about enlightenment changed to effects of meditation for stress reduction and relaxation (Humes 2005: 57). Rituals, sitting postures, and times of meditation were changed for Westerners. To Satisfy the increasing demand, Maharishi started mass initiations (Mason [2015] 2017: 273, 276).

The popularity of the TM movement started diminishing with a program called the “TM Sidhi program”. It is a companion program of TM technique when the student meditates and listens to some sutras or verses which make him levitate and hope like a frog in crossed leg position (called yogic flying). Lola Williamson has given details of the TM Sidhi technique in her book. She writes, “The technique involves repeating chosen sutras mentally every fifteen seconds. Each sutra is repeated twice. There are eighteen of these sutras, each repeated with a different goal in mind...Levitation and flying come after the eighteenth sutra” (Williamson 2010: 96-97). Sidhi program disappointed many TM followers. Maharishi presented his teachings in scientific ways, but the flying power, called *Sidhi*, was based on Tantric practices. Though there was a positive response from some of the participants of the TM Sidhi program, claiming that it is a deeper and more relaxing technique than the TM program, the popularity of the TM movement started declining due to the mystic nature of the Sidhi program.

2.3.2. Similarities with Modern Mindfulness

This section discusses the similarities between Maharishi’s and Kabat-Zinn’s strategies.

Category	Maharishi Mahesh Yogi	Jon Kabat-Zinn
Systematic program	Created meditation and Yoga programs for common people.	Created meditation and Yoga program called MBSR.
Institution for health	Opened Ayurvedic clinics.	Opened a Stress reduction clinic.
Teachers	People who became Teachers through TM Teacher Training Course include Westerners. They do not belong to any particular caste or religion.	People of any religion, tradition, and field can become MBSR Teachers.
Renunciation	One does not have to renounce. One can practice meditation twice a day for 20 minutes as a routine.	One does not have to renounce. Mindfulness and Haṭha Yoga are also practiced in daily life for 45 min.
Agenda	Appearance in TV shows and association with celebrities and elites. Maharishi was known as 'Beatles Guru'.	Appeared on TV news and wrote papers on mindfulness.
Health benefits	He gradually promoted the health benefits of meditation. He stated that TM as a stress reduction and relaxation technique.	MBSR is a program that reduces mental and physical stress.
Strategy	He established educational organizations and brought TM into the education field, where he taught liberal arts, business etc.	Mindfulness is also brought into the field of education.
Scientific Research	He encouraged scientific research on TM. He named	MBSR is promoted as a scientific program, and

	his teachings as Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI).	research on MBSR is encouraged.
Spirituality and Science	He avoided calling TM as Hinduism or religious. However, he used words like Maharishi, yogi, which question its disassociation with religion or Hinduism.	To secularize MBSR, he avoided its connection with religion. However, he uses words like dharma, Karma, and <i>Dukkha</i> , which show its connection with Buddhism and yogic traditions.

Table 2: Strategical Similarities between Maharishi and Kabat-Zinn

Source: Author

Table 2 shows the strategical similarities between Maharishi and Kabat-Zinn. Maharishi created meditation and Yoga programs for common people. Similarly, Kabat-Zinn created a program for mindfulness which he named a Mindfulness-based stress reduction program. Maharishi opened centers to teach TM. He also opened ayurvedic clinics to spread the importance of Ayurveda. Kabat-Zinn also opened a stress-reduction clinic to use mindfulness for patients. People who became Teachers through TM Teacher Training Course include Westerners. They do not belong to any particular caste or religion.

Similarly, people of any religion, tradition, and field can become MBSR teachers. For TM and other practices taught by Maharishi, one does not have to renounce. One can practice meditation twice a day for 20 minutes as a routine. To practice mindfulness, one does not have to renounce. It can be practiced in daily life for a few minutes.

Maharishi promoted TM as a stress reduction and relaxation technique. He emphasized the health benefits that meditation brings. MBSR also promotes the mental and physical benefits that mindfulness brings. Maharishi established educational organizations and brought TM into the education field, where he taught liberal arts, business etc.. Mindfulness is also taught in schools. Maharishi encouraged scientific research on TM. He named his teachings as Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI). MBSR is promoted as a scientific program, and research on MBSR is encouraged. Maharishi avoided calling TM as Hinduism or religious. However, he used words like Maharishi and yogi, which question its disassociation with religion or Hinduism. Similarly, to secularize MBSR, Kabat-Zinn avoided its connection with religion. However, he uses words like dharma, Karma, and *Dukkha*, which show its connection

with Buddhism and yogic traditions. Thus, the strategies used by Maharishi and Kabat-Zinn share many similarities.

2.4. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897-1981)

2.4.1. Teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj was born in 1897 in a Maharashtrian family as Maruti Kambli. According to the material available on his life and journey, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj did not have spiritual experience or Guru until his middle age. He was a shopkeeper and looked after his family as an ordinary man. He met his Guru Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj (1888-1936) in 1933. Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, a sage from Navanath Sampradaya³⁸, gave him a Mantra and meditation instructions, which awakened something within him. When asked about Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, Nisargadatta Maharaj said,

I trusted my Guru. What he told me to do, I did. He told me to concentrate on ‘I am’ — I did...I gave him my heart and soul, my entire attention, and the whole of my spare time...As a result of faith and earnest application, I realized my self (*swarupa*) within three years (Nisargadatta Maharaj [1973] 1992: 52).

After the death of Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj renounced his family and business. He made pilgrimages to many sacred places across India and later returned to Mumbai. His interpretations of the absolute truth are from his own experiences. They serve as guidelines for the seekers.

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj did not travel out of India but became known to the world through the English book *I am That*, which was first published in 1973. The book is a

³⁸ Navanath Sampradaya (Nath Sampradaya) is a sect in India which include nine Gurus. The sect came to be known as Navnath Sampradaya when the followers of the sect chose nine of their early Gurus as main gurus of their creed. Some scholars state that this sect originated with the teachings of the Rishi Dattatreya, who is believed to be an incarnation of the trinity -Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha. The teachings of the Nath Sampradaya are complex and have assumed different forms in different parts of India. The teachings of Nath Sampradaya offers the path to liberation.

Among the nine Gurus, Revananath is said to have founded a sub-sect of his own. He chose Kadasiddha as his chief disciple and successor who initiated Bhausahib Maharaj (1843-1914). Bhausahib Maharaj later established Incheheri Sampradaya, a new movement within the traditional fold. His disciple was Siddharameshwar Maharaj. Nisargadatta Maharaj is the direct disciple and successor of Siddharameshwar Maharaj (Nisargadatta 1992:539).

compilation and translation of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj's answers to his followers' questions. The question answers are in Marathi, and they were recorded in audiotapes. The audiotapes were translated into English by Maurice Frydman (1901-1976). Maurice Frydman was an engineer by profession. He was associated with many well-known figures in India. He was a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi and lived in his ashram. He was influenced by Sri Ramana Maharshi and J. Krishnamurti. He was also associated with Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj referred to him as a friend. Maurice Frydman mentioned in the book that he was impressed with the spontaneous simplicity of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj's appearance and behavior and his deep and genuine earnestness in expounding his experience (Nisargadatta Maharaj [1973] 1992). He summarized the teachings of Nisargadatta Maharaj at the end of the book as Nisarga (Natural) Yoga.

The book became a bestseller and was translated into several Indian and European languages. The title of the Hindi book is "*Aham Brahmasmi*", which means "I am *Brahman*". The title "I am That" denotes the same. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj's teachings suggest not to get attached to 'this' and 'that' (body, mind, worldly things, etc.). The word "That" in I am That does not refer to worldly things but to the *Brahman* (absolute).³⁹

The way Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj showed to become one with the absolute is by contemplating or dwelling on 'I am'. According to Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, *Atman* (the self) is devoid of all attachments, whether to the body, human beings, possessions, and many other things. The attachments are impediments to understanding the true nature. When one lets go of all the identities and attachments to worldly things, what remains is 'I am', which is free from bondage. "I am" does not mean focusing on the 'I'. It means focusing on the 'being' and realizing who one is. Even "I am" is not ultimate. When one attains pure awareness, 'I am' does not remain. Thus, nothing remains when one becomes one with the *Brahman* (absolute), which is beyond words and experiences. The absolute cannot be attained, or one cannot reach the absolute; it is already present. Through *Sadhana* (practice), one can realize that is already present. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj was devoted to his Guru, Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj. His teachings include devotion to the Guru, not only to a human Guru but also to the inner self, which acts as a Guru on the path of realization.

³⁹ 'Absolute' is the translation of "*Brahman*" used in the glossary (Appendix III) of *I am That* (Nisargadatta 1992).

2.4.2. Influence on Kabat-Zinn and MBSR

To examine the teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, I focus on the book *I am That* (1973). Kabat-Zinn has referred to this book in his writings. He has quoted some lines from the book in the workbook of MBSR (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 300). I discuss why he has included those lines in the workbook of MBSR. The ‘non-doing’ approach suggested by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Kabat-Zinn is also analyzed in this section.

Kabat-Zinn’s article “In Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means, and the trouble with maps” (2011) explains the journey of creating MBSR. At the end of the paper, he quotes some lines from the book *I am that* (1973). He also mentions that those lines are quoted on the last page of the MBSR workbook (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 300). The quote is as follows.

...by watching yourself in your daily life with alert interest with the intention to understand rather than to judge, in full acceptance of whatever may emerge, because it is here, you encourage the deep to come to the surface and enrich your life and consciousness with its captive energies. This is the great work of awareness; it removes obstacles and releases energies by understanding the nature of life and mind. Intelligence is the door to freedom and alert attention is the mother of intelligence (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 300; Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj [1973] 1992: 278).

The lines that Kabat-Zinn has quoted are stated by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj as an answer to the question, “How can I set right a tangle which is entirely below the level of my consciousness?” (Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj [1973] 1992: 278). It does not have any background or link with the previous and further questions. The reason Kabat-Zinn has quoted these lines in the workbook of MBSR is because they convey the same meaning that he wants to convey through mindfulness. Kabat-Zinn’s mindfulness practice also emphasizes watching oneself without judging and the awareness created by it.

However, Kabat-Zinn has omitted the first part of the quote. The actual quote of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj starts with the words, “By being with yourself, the ‘I am’;...”. Kabat-Zinn must have omitted this part because it conveys to dwell on ‘I am’, the core teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj. Kabat-Zinn has focused only on the part that is relevant to his definition of mindfulness.

In some sections of *I am that* (1973), translator Maurice Frydman uses the word “Mindfulness” a few times when Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj speaks about self-awareness and mind awareness. Mindfulness denotes the “total awareness” of oneself and one’s mind (Sri

Nisargadatta Maharaj [1973] 1992: 219, 324). One has to simply watch, witness, or be attentive to whatever comes. One does not have to react to it. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj's teachings include awareness of oneself by watching or witnessing the mind and whatever comes into the mind. Kabat-Zinn uses similar words while giving instructions of meditation, "...Practice being completely open and receptive to whatever comes into the field of awareness, letting it all come and go, watching, witnessing, attending in stillness" (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2013: 74). It is difficult to trace why Maurice Frydman used the word mindfulness for witnessing and watching, but the context of the word matches Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness.

According to Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, Man is not the doer. When the sense of 'I' is dissolved, *sadhana* (practice) becomes effortless. Things just happen, and there is no sense of doing or doer (Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj [1973] 1992: 480-483). Kabat-Zinn also writes about the non-doing approach. It does not mean doing nothing, but it means effortless activity. Effortless activity happens when one lets things be and allows them to unfold in their way. In such activities, there is no sense of 'I' 'me', or 'mine' (Kabat-Zinn 1994 [2005]: 40, 44). According to Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, *Gnani*⁴⁰ is a non-doer, and God does everything for him. Nevertheless, he negates that God is a doer, as things simply happen by their nature (Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj [1973] 1992: 87). Kabat-Zinn does not explain it in the same way, but he discusses the effortlessness and dissolution of 'I' that comes from non-doing (Kabat-Zinn 1994 [2005]: 40, 44).

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj speaks about patience and practice. He states, "The mind will rebel in the beginning, but with patience and perseverance, it will yield and keep quiet" (Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj [1973] 1992: 18). For Kabat-Zinn, "Patience can be a particularly helpful quality to invoke when the mind is agitated" (Kabat-Zinn [1990] 2013: 23-24). Patience is one of the significant attitudes taught in MBSR. While speaking about how to keep the mind steady, both emphasize patience to calm the mind.

The core teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness are not the same. However, Kabat-Zinn has extracted some parts of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj's teachings and applied them in MBSR.

⁴⁰ *Gnani* means a knowledgeable person.

2.5. Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950)

2.5.1. Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi

Sri Ramana Maharshi was born in Tiruchuli, Tamil Nadu, in 1879. When he was sixteen years old, he suddenly had an extreme fear of death, followed by an experience of death. This was an awakening for him that he is not body and mind. After his awakening, he went to Arunachal hill, a sacred hill in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu. He lived there for several decades until his death in 1950. His charisma attracted people. One of them named him “Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi”. Initially, Sri Ramana Maharshi did not speak in front of his followers. He transmitted his knowledge in silence, but later, he started giving verbal instructions. Sri Ramana Maharshi did not receive formal training from any Guru. His teachings come from his own experiences. He lived a simple life and was always available for people.

Sri Ramana Maharshi spent most of his life in Arunachal Hill. He never left India, but he reached Western countries through English translations of his teachings. His followers compiled his teachings and translated them into English. There are many books on Sri Ramana Maharshi’s teachings. He got first known to the West through the famous book *A Search in Secret India* (1934) by Paul Brunton (1898-1981). Brunton is a British author who met Ramana Maharshi in 1931 and wrote about his experience with him in his book. Many of Sri Ramana Maharshi’s Western disciples collected his teachings and translated them into English. Two of them are Arthur Osborne (1906-1970) and David Godman (1953-). Both are British. They became disciples of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Osborne is the first editor of the Journal called ‘Mountain Path’, which was published by Ramanasramam.⁴¹ He compiled Sri Ramana Maharshi’s teachings and published a book, *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, in 1959. Godman was also working in Ramanasramam. He has been translating Sri Ramana Maharshi’s teachings for many years. He is the author or editor of sixteen books on Ramana Maharshi. One of his books is *Be as You Are*, published in 1985.

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Sri Ramana Maharshi have similarities in their teachings. Sri Ramana Maharshi also taught that the self is pure and devoid of attachments. When one lets go of the sense of “I am this” and “I am that”, what remains is the pure being ‘I am’. However, the “I” thought (ego or *aham-vritti*) becomes an impediment and keeps one away from realizing the true nature of the self. He suggested two ways. The first way is self-surrender,

⁴¹ Ramanasramam is an ashram (hermitage) of Sri Ramana Maharshi that is located at the base of the Arunachala hill, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, India. It was a living place of Sri Ramana Maharshi until his death.

where one surrenders to God or Guru. Surrender means dropping all the desires and wills and acting according to God or Guru. This method removes the ego that is the 'I' thought. This method sounds simple, but difficult to implement, as the mind is usually clung to 'I thought'. Ramana Maharshi suggested a devotional way, that is by chanting God's name or visualizing him. With constant practice of this, the 'I thought' is reduced.

Another way Sri Ramana Maharshi suggested is the practice of self-inquiry. In this practice, Sri Ramana Maharshi taught to focus on 'I' and dwell on that feeling. If any thoughts come, take the attention back to the 'I'. This 'I' does not mean 'mine' or 'me', but once existence or being. To deepen the practice, he suggested asking the questions such as "Who am I?", "Where does this I come from?". By continuously practicing this, one can emerge in the 'I', and this state of being removes mental tendencies (*vasana*). Sri Ramana Maharshi never suggested renouncing daily activities and sitting long hours in meditation. Though he gave ultimate importance to practice, he suggested continuing it while doing daily activities.

2.5.2. Influence on Kabat-Zinn and MBSR

To examine the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi, I focus on *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi* (1959), as Kabat-Zinn has cited it in his work. I also refer to *Be as You Are* (1985), as it is a collection of Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings and to explore other aspects of his teachings. Self-inquiry is one of the core teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi. It is also used in MBSR. This section deals with the self-inquiry practice and other elements of Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings that are included in MBSR.

The self-inquiry practice suggested by Sri Ramana Maharshi is asking the question, "Who am I?". In *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi* (1959), Sri Ramana Maharshi uses the *neti-neti* approach to explain "Who am I?". *neti-neti* is to negate the identities attached to oneself. Sri Ramana Maharshi explains, "I am not the seven humours (*dhatus*), I am not the five senses, I am not the five sense organs, I am not the mind. He asks if I am not these, then "Who am I?" (Sri Ramana Maharshi 1959).

Kabat-Zinn also suggests asking the question, "Who am I?". He refers to it as an inquiry. He uses the *neti-neti* approach for inquiry. However, the object of negation for Kabat-Zinn is not mind, body or senses, as suggested by Sri Ramana Maharshi. To reach the question "Who am I?", Kabat-Zinn negates the mental and physical problems. For example, "I am not my pain," "I am not my anxiety," "I am not my cancer," and if I am not all these, then "Who am I?" (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 299). Since MBSR is used in clinical settings, mental and physical problems are relatable to the participants. Even if the object of negation is different, the question is the

same. However, the context of the question seems different from the context of the self-inquiry practice suggested by Sri Ramana Maharshi. By negating the bondage of senses, organs, body, and mind, awareness is created. This awareness is the realization of self. In contrast, Kabat-Zinn does not suggest getting free from the bondage of body and mind. His purpose is to create awareness on the level where participants can get rid of pain, diseases, and illnesses.

The inquiry practice in MBSR is not limited to the question, “Who am I?”. Kabat-Zinn also suggests meditating or contemplating on other questions, such as ‘What is my Way?’, “Where am I going?”, “What path I am on?” ‘Is this the right direction for me?’ etc. (Kabat-Zinn 1994 [2005]: 132). These questions are different from “Who am I?”. The practice of “Who am I?” is to realize one’s true nature, while questions like ‘What is my Way?’, ‘Where am I going?’ seem to have a concern with ‘I’. Kabat-Zinn emphasizes on the question ‘What is my Way?’ which according to him leads to a change in understanding.

This approach that is concerned with one’s own experience or bringing change in one’s lifestyle is questioned by some critics of mindfulness (See Brazier 2016; Carrette and King 2005; Purser 2019). On one hand, Kabat-Zinn suggests getting rid of ‘I’ ‘me’ ‘mine’ that is a product of our thinking (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005: 236). On the other hand, he suggests contemplating on ‘my way’, ‘my path’, which is confusing. This identity approach differs from the approach of Sri Ramana Maharshi, because Sri Ramana Maharshi’s approach is to lose all identities. From this perspective, the other questions added by Kabat-Zinn in the inquiry practice lessen the significance of the question “Who am I?”.

Sri Ramana Maharshi suggests not getting an answer to the question “Who am I?”. One simply experiences the state that comes out of such inquiry (Sri Ramana Maharshi [1985] 2017: 70). Kabat-Zinn also does not seek any answers for the inquiry. Kabat-Zinn writes that the intention of this type of inquiry is not knowing. It is not performing or analyzing, but merely relaxing in the not knowing state (Kabat-Zinn 1994 [2005]: 133). This is because the mind constantly gets involved in finding the answer or solution to these questions. The knowledge acquired by the mind has limitations. This part is common in the approach of Sri Ramana Maharshi and Kabat-Zinn.

The practices suggested by Sri Ramana Maharshi and Kabat-Zinn are to be done not only as meditation, but also as part of daily activities. In the self-inquiry practice, to reach the question “Who am I?”, Kabat-Zinn changes the objects of negation, and instead, he uses the pain, diseases that are relevant in MBSR. He also does not limit the inquiry practice to “Who am I?”. Despite such changes, ultimately, he reaches to the not knowing the answers.

According to him, this phenomenon cannot be explained by words, but completely depends on the experience.

2.6. Comparison Chart: Nisargadatta, Ramana Maharshi and Kabat-Zinn

In this section, I compare Kabat-Zinn’s ideology, practice, promotion of MBSR, and its criticism with Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj’s and Ramana Maharshi’s ideology, practice, promotion of teachings, and criticism.

	Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj	Sri Ramana Maharshi	Jon Kabat-Zinn
Primary Ideology	Advaita-Vedanta (Non-dualistic approach)	Advaita-Vedanta (Non-dualistic approach)	Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions of Buddhism, Haṭha Yoga, and teachings of Hindu spiritual teachers.
Practice	Contemplation or dwelling on ‘I am’ to remove ego and to become one with the absolute.	Self-surrender and self-inquiry with “who am I?” to remove ego and to become one with the absolute.	Mindful Haṭha Yoga, Meditations based on Vipassanā, Zen, self-inquiry.
	Teachings are available to everyone.	Teachings are available to everyone.	MBSR is available to everyone.
Promotion	No Institution for health	No Institution for health	Opened a Stress reduction clinic
	He himself did not have an agenda to promote the teachings, but his disciples promoted	He himself did not have an agenda to promote the teachings, but his disciples promoted	Appeared on TV, news, wrote articles, papers on mindfulness.

	his teachings in the West.	his teachings in the West.	
	Health benefits were not the primary purpose of meditation.	Health benefits were not the primary purpose of meditation.	MBSR is a program that reduces mental and physical stress.
	No scientific research was promoted.	No scientific research was promoted.	Scientific research on MBSR is encouraged.
Criticism	Promoters of his teachings received criticism in the West for cutting off the important aspect of Advaita; For example, lack of deep knowledge or experience, omitting practices, etc. (Lucas 2014: 10).	Promoters of his teachings received criticism in the West for cutting off the important aspect of Advaita; For example, lack of deep knowledge or experience, omitting practices, etc. (Lucas 2014: 10).	MBSR is criticized for cutting off the important aspects of religious practices. It is also criticized for the commodification and capitalization of religious practices.

Table 3: Overview of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj’s, Ramana Maharshi’s and Jon Kabat-Zinn’s Ideology, Practice, Promotion, and Criticism

Source: Author

Table 3 shows the ideology, practice of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, Sri Ramana Maharshi, and Jon Kabat-Zinn. It also shows if they have promotion strategies and criticism on their ideologies or strategies.

The teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Sri Ramana Maharshi are based on Advaita-Vedanta. In the 1930s, Paul Brunton (1898-1981) brought Sri Ramana Maharshi’s teachings to the West through his book *A Search in Secret India* (1934). Sri Ramana Maharshi’s teachings were further promoted by Arthur Osborne (1906-1970) and David Godman (1953-). From the 1970s, Ramana Maharshi’s teachings were popularized by H. W. L. Poonja (1910-1997), commonly known as Papaji and his students. His students started the “Neo-Advaita” or

“*Satsang*” movement⁴² in the United States. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj’s teachings were popularized by Maurice Frydman through his book *I am that* (1973). Since Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj’s teachings share similarities with the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi, he is also considered as part of “Neo-Advaita”. Both Hindu spiritual teachers never claimed their teachings as “Neo-Advaita”, but many modern Advaita teachers in the West claim to have been influenced to some degree by them (Lucas 2014: 7), and they categorized their teachings as “Neo-Advaita”. Kabat-Zinn’s ideology is a combination of Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions of Buddhism, Haṭha Yoga, and the teachings of Hindu spiritual teachers.

As explained in the previous sections, the practice Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj suggested is contemplation or dwelling on ‘I am’. It is to remove ego and to become one with the absolute. The practice Sri Ramana Maharshi suggested is either self-surrender or self-inquiry with “who am I?”. It is to remove ego and to become one with the absolute. Kabat-Zinn designed MBSR in which Mindful Haṭha Yoga, and various other meditations are used. Self-inquiry practice is also a part of MBSR. The practices suggested by Kabat-Zinn, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, and Sri Ramana Maharshi are available for everyone.

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Sri Ramana Maharshi did not have any strategies to promote their teachings. However, their disciples promoted their teachings in the West through books, lectures, etc. Kabat-Zinn and promoters of MBSR had strategies to promote MBSR. They promoted MBSR as a scientific and secular program. They appeared on TV and wrote articles and papers about the efficacy of MBSR. Their primary purpose of mindfulness practice is for health benefits. These strategies are similar to the strategies used by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi for the promotion of TM.

The Neo-Advaita movement developed from the teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Sri Ramana Maharshi received criticism for cutting off the important aspect of Advaita; For example, lack of deep knowledge or experience, and moral development for spiritual realization, omitting *Sadhana* etc. (Lucas 2014: 10-15) Similarly, MBSR is criticized for cutting off the important aspects of religious practices. It is also criticized for the commodification and capitalization of religious practices.

⁴² “Neo-Advaita” or “*Satsang*” movement was started by the students of H. W. L. Poonja (1910-1997). In Neo-advaita, the emphasis is on self-inquiry and the direct recognition of self and non-existence of the “I” or ego. The practice can be done by anyone without any prerequisites.

2.7. Contribution of Hindu Spiritual Teachers to Mindfulness Movement

Mindfulness is primarily associated with Buddhism. However, the thoughts, ideologies, and strategies behind mindfulness, especially MBSR, are also found in the teachings of Hindu spiritual teachers. In this chapter, I focused on the teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Swami Vivekananda, and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. I discussed the ideological and strategical similarities and differences between their and Kabat-Zinn's ideologies and strategies.

The Hindu spiritual movements by Vivekananda and Maharishi became popular in the United States for spreading Vedantic teachings. Vivekananda and Maharishi explained them with modern science. They used English vocabulary to describe the traditional concepts. They abstracted selective Vedantic teachings and made them applicable in the daily lives of common people. Vivekananda impacted Kabat-Zinn in terms of secularizing meditation and presenting the ideology rationally. Vivekananda created a foundation to promote Yoga and meditation in Western society.

Since Maharishi and Kabat Zinn are from the same generation, Maharishi impacted Kabat-Zinn in many ways. Both encouraged Scientific research on meditation. They spread it in various fields. They used it for relaxation. Thus, Maharishi's way of teaching and Kabat-Zinn's way of teaching have commonalities; however, in Maharishi's teachings, the spiritual side was maintained, especially in the Sidhi program. The authority of the Guru and disciples was also followed.

Despite the criticism Vivekananda and Maharishi received in the United States, their contribution to mainstreaming meditation is evident. Maharishi's teachings are similar to Swami Vivekananda. According to Goldberg, the three central points of their teachings are; India needs to revive its spiritual tradition, Spiritual development is for everyone, not just renunciates, and Vedanta is compatible with science (Goldberg 2010, 154-155). Meditation, postural Yoga, and breathing techniques were part of religious practices, but Vivekananda and Maharishi did not promote Hinduism or ask Americans to convert to Hinduism; instead, they promoted some Vedanta teachings that could be suitable for the masses and could be easily practiced in daily life. During Maharishi's period, meditation was popularized as a relaxation technique. Kabat-Zinn and other mindfulness leaders used similar strategies. Advancements in modern science encouraged research on mindfulness.

The practices suggested by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Sri Ramana Maharshi are for self-realization. Whereas the practices suggested by Kabat-Zinn, including inquiry practice and

meditation, are for reducing mental and physical stress in daily life. Continuing those practices might open new avenues or profound realizations, but on a general level, especially in medicine and health care, the primary purpose is to cope with mental and physical problems. MBSR does not focus on devotion, surrender, faith, and many such aspects that are part of the teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Sri Ramana Maharshi. They did not make an effort to authenticate and validate their teachings in society. They did not market their teachings; instead, people were attracted to them to gain knowledge of life. Despite these differences, the ideology in Nisargadatta and Ramana's teachings has impacted Kabat-Zinn to a certain extent.

Kabat-Zinn took one step further and presented mindfulness as secular. He also removed the authority of the Guru or spiritual leader. However, there are ambiguities in the presentation of mindfulness. Due to this, removing the religious ties entirely is not possible.

Kabat-Zinn states that the roots of MBSR are in yogic traditions, but he does not refer to ancient scriptures of Yoga. He cites teachers like Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Sri Ramana Maharshi, whose teachings are based on Advaita Vedanta and who became known in the United States through the English translations of their teachings. Therefore, it is appropriate to say that MBSR has roots in the teachings of Hindu spiritual teachers, especially those who became popular in the United States.

In this chapter, only four Hindu spiritual teachers and their influence on Kabat-Zinn are discussed. Only a few aspects of the teachings of the Hindu spiritual teachers are covered. Further research is necessary to cover other Hindu spiritual teachers that Kabat-Zinn has cited and their impact on MBSR. It is necessary to consider every aspect of their teachings that Kabat-Zinn has included in the MBSR. In addition, a further investigation is necessary to understand how they have affected MBSR compared to Buddhist teachings.⁴³

⁴³ Most of the part in sections 2.4 to 2.7 are previously published by the author in the International Journal of South Asian Studies (Wagh-Gumate 2022: 1-18).

Chapter 3: Criticism of Mindfulness

3.1. Issues regarding the Practice of Mindfulness

In recent years, mindfulness has spread widely in several fields. Considering its popularity, it has made a positive difference in many lives. Nonetheless, it would be incorrect to assume that mindfulness can only be beneficial. Mindfulness is receiving criticism for various reasons; for capitalizing on religious practices, inaccurate scientific evidence, side effects of mindfulness meditation, inadequate knowledge and support for people affected by adverse effects of mindfulness, etc. The criticism has given rise to the revision of mindfulness-based interventions and programs.

3.1.1. Whether MBSR is a Scientific and Secular Program or not

MBSR is promoted as a scientific program. The primary curriculum of MBSR is constant to examine its effect on the participants. The experiments are conducted in various fields, including neurology, psychology, psychiatry, etc. For example, neuroscientists of Harvard Medical School published a study that showed the changes in the brain after participating in MBSR. They used MR images to prove that mindfulness increases regional brain gray matter density (Hölzel et al. 2011). With such scientific evidence, MBSR is promoted as a treatment or therapy that reduces stress, anxiety, and pain. It claims it is beneficial for various conditions, such as high blood pressure, skin disorders, sleep disorders, etc. Scientific results are published in books, journals, and media to reach professionals and common people. However, is MBSR a scientific program?

Practices of Haṭha Yoga and meditation have been known for thousands of years. However, when their effects are discovered and confirmed by science, they gain wide attention (Brazier 2016: 64). The physical and mental benefits, for example, improvement in health conditions, increase in productivity, etc., are common byproducts of meditation or mindfulness practices, but when they are confirmed by science, people get attracted. However, critics of MBSR question the accuracy and quality of scientific evidence due to conceptual and methodical issues, such as varied measuring parameters, methods of analysis, and subjects of research (Davidson and Kaszniak 2015). Such studies are lesser than those showing the benefits of MBSR and other mindfulness programs.

MBSR is promoted as a secular program. People from any religious background, or even those with no religious background, can participate in MBSR. MBSR teachers usually avoid using religious vocabulary in Buddhism and Hinduism during the program. Not only religious vocabulary but also words like ‘spiritual’ are avoided because they have various connotations that might be misleading in the fields of medicine, education, etc. (Kabat-Zinn [1994] 2005: 263-264).

However, Kabat-Zinn uses the word ‘dharma.’ The word dharma is explicitly used in Buddhism and Hinduism. While using the word dharma, Kabat-Zinn mostly writes it with lowercase “d” to show its universal character and applicability (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 300 n. 1). Traditionally, dharma is used in various contexts. It is used as laws, right behavior, and sometimes even religion. Irrespective of its different contexts, it is used for the development of human beings. Writing it with lowercase d or upper-case d, the meaning it conveys does not change. Also, it does not remove its religious ties. Kabat-Zinn might have used dharma several times to naturalize it in American society like the words Karma, Guru, Mantra, etc.

In the initial days of MBSR, when Kabat-Zinn gave lectures at medical centers, he prepared slides to explain how mindfulness meditation has little to do with Buddhism and religion. According to him, “Mindfulness has everything to do with wakefulness, compassion, and wisdom,” “these are universal qualities,” and “dharma points out the qualities of being human” (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 283) that are not restricted to any religion. In short, Kabat-Zinn does not want to label Mindfulness or MBSR as Buddhist or religious but wants to use the values or ideologies that are developed in the Eastern cultures. On the one hand, he uses the word dharma and explains the qualities that dharma practice brings, but on the other hand, he states that mindfulness is not Buddhist or religious.

Kabat-Zinn changed the meaning and removed the values and nuances of the word’s traditional meaning. For example, if mindfulness is a translation of *Sati* (memory), it deals with bringing something from the past to the present. However, the new use of the word only deals with the present and immediate experience (Brazier 2016: 63). If the seventh step of the Noble Eightfold Path is Right Mindfulness, six steps are involved before reaching the seventh step. The new usage of mindfulness does not consider these steps.

The reason for marketing MBSR as secular and scientific practice lies in the social climate of the United States. In the 19th and 20th centuries, many Westerners started taking an interest in Asian religions. The Western converts focused on meditation and adopted the teachings that suited the Western population. They kept rituals to a minimum and focused on the practical benefits of the practices. (Seager 1999: 137). Kabat-Zinn also removed the rituals and

devotional aspects of mindfulness practices. One step further, he associated mindfulness with science to validate its efficacy.

Kabat-Zinn stated that he wanted to avoid the risk of MBSR being regarded as “new age,” “Eastern mysticism,” or just plain “flakey” (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 282). In the 1960s and 70s, many Hindu and Buddhist religious leaders and spiritual movements were active in the United States. Many Americans became their followers and adopted their teachings, but later these movements were considered mystical and cultic.

One example of such movement is the TM movement. It played an essential role in spreading meditation in the United States. As discussed in the previous chapter, the strategies used by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi to promote TM and Kabat-Zinn to promote MBSR have similarities. Maharishi made his teachings available to everyone. He encouraged the scientific research of TM to present it as a scientific and non-religious technique. He used TM for relaxation and other health benefits. He also developed Haṭha Yoga courses. Celebrities and elites of various professions were associated with TM. Through educational organizations, he brought TM into the education field.

However, in the 1970s, the popularity of the TM movement began declining due to the TM Sidhi program. It is a companion program of the TM technique where the practitioner meditates and listens to some *sutra* or verses which make him levitate and hop like a frog in crossed leg position (called yogic flying). It disappointed many TM followers (Goldberg 2010: 170). Maharishi presented his teachings scientifically, but the flying power (Sidhi) technique was based on Tantric practices (Goldberg 2010; Williamson 2010). The popularity of the TM movement started declining due to the mystic nature of the Sidhi program (Goldberg 2010; Wilson 2014). American media also portrayed it as the dark side of TM and Maharishi as a cult leader. Although TM was promoted as scientific, the religious and spiritual side was still prominent.

Kabat-Zinn and other mindfulness leaders were aware of these social situations in the United States (Kucinkas 2019: 43). They did not want to present mindfulness as cultic. They did not include chanting and rituals in mindfulness programs. They did not focus on the mystical and occult experiences that meditation practices bring. With the help of extensive scientific research, they drew people’s attention to the practical benefits of MBSR rather than its connections with religion. Being aware of American culture and society, they changed the ways of promoting mindfulness.

Despite the promotion strategies, the religious ties of MBSR cannot be removed. Even if scientific evidence is provided, even if religious words are substituted, MBSR provides a

worldview and reveals the laws that are part of religion. Practices in MBSR, such as meditation, contemplation, and self-inquiry are followed in Buddhism and other religions for thousands of years. Therefore, referring to MBSR as a secular program creates a contradiction.

The question arises whether MBSR and Mindfulness can be separated from religion. Brown addresses the question by discussing definitions of religion, spirituality, and secular. By analyzing the tactics that mindfulness promoters used to promote MBSR and mindfulness-related programs, she concludes, “Mindfulness might be understood as secular if one reduces religion to rhetoric and secularity to this-worldly effects. However, if one means by secular the absence of religious and spiritual beliefs and practices, this is harder to make” (Brown 2016: 90-91). One can present MBSR as a secular program, but it does not mean that the ideology taught in it has no connection with any religion.⁴⁴

In order to analyze the relationship between Zen and MBSR, I analyzed two books by Philip Kapleau and two by Kabat-Zinn to understand their approach toward Buddhist practices. The analysis is based on, *The Three Pillars of Zen* (1965) and *Zen Dawn in the West* (1979) by Philip Kapleau, and *Full Catastrophe Living* (1990), and *Wherever You Go, There You Are* (1994) by Kabat-Zinn. These books are best sellers of their times and are still used worldwide. They are the initial and essential works of Kapleau and Kabat-Zinn. They are translated into several languages.

Both authors have several similarities in their writings. Being born and brought up in the United States and knowing Eastern culture, they create a bridge between East and West. Their writing style is inspirational, engaging, and easy to understand, especially for Westerners. Examples and illustrations make it easier to understand their teachings based primarily on Buddhism. They have given Stories about Philosophers, Saints, and Zen masters. They have also given details of the programs held at their respective centers and shared the experiences of the students/Participants. Small exercises to practice meditation and other techniques are given in the books for readers to practice at home.

Awareness and attention have been given primary importance in the practice of Zen and mindfulness. They both discuss the Buddhist principles such as compassion, non-dualism, non-doing, patience, letting go, Non-judging, trust, simplicity, practice, concentration, and emptiness in some way or another. They also discuss anger and how to respond to anger. Kapleau calls anger the most destructive emotion. One needs to learn to control it. To respond

⁴⁴ Section 3.1.1. is adapted from the article previously published by the author in *International Journal of South Asian Studies* (Wagh-Gumaste 2022: 1-18).

to anger, breath slowly and deeply from the bottom of the belly. Anger is something that is created by humans so that they can ride it. Kabat-Zinn also stated,

Without care and awareness, small-minded feeling states can dominate the moment. It happens all the time. The collective pain we cause others, and ourselves bleed our souls. Hard as it is for us to admit, especially about ourselves, self-tinged anger may be something we indulge in and surrender to far too often (Kabat-Zinn 2005: 242).

Kabat-Zinn also explains the relationship between anger and blood pressure. There are also descriptions of karma. Karma is one of the basic principles, a continuous process of cause and effect.

The way of practicing Zen and Mindfulness have similar factors, such as sitting in a particular position, focusing on the breath, counting the breaths and following the inhalations and exhalations, walking, eating, and doing all the actions with awareness, etc. 1) Sitting in a Particular position: sitting on the floor with legs crossed or sitting on the floor with placing something (cushion or low wooden bench) in between the legs or sitting on the straight back chair. 2) Posture: the sitting posture should be straight with the back, neck, and head aligned vertically and relaxing the shoulders. 3) Breathing: In Zazen and Mindfulness meditation, one breathes from the belly or lower abdomen and observes the inhalations and exhalations. 4) Walking: walking Zazen or Mindful walking is a practice when one walks with full awareness. 5) Everyday practice: Kapleau states that

Those who sit devotedly in Zazen every day, their minds free of discriminating thoughts, and it easier to relate themselves wholeheartedly to their daily tasks, and those who perform every act with total attention and clear awareness and it less difficult to achieve emptiness of mind during sitting periods (Kapleau 1967, II).

Similarly, Kabat-Zinn stated that a consistent practice of mindfulness is necessary. It should become a part of one's life (Kabat-Zinn 2000, 575). In this way, both the authors emphasize the application of Zen and Mindfulness in daily life.

With the analysis of Kapleau's and Kabat-Zinn's books, it is clear that Zen and Mindfulness have similarities in terms of Philosophy and practice. From their writings, it is clear that Zen and Mindfulness can be practiced with any religious background or no religious background. However, the contradiction arises when Kapleau states that Zen is a religious

practice. He also emphasizes the religious aspects of Zen, such as rituals, chants, *Kōan*, stories of Zen masters, etc. He also states that one must not be Buddhist to practice Zen. He instead simplifies the concepts and practices for Westerners.

On the other hand, Kabat-Zinn emphasizes the secular and non-religious nature of mindfulness but never denies its Buddhist roots. If Zen inspires Mindfulness practice, why is it considered a secular and non-religious practice? Kapleau and Kabat-Zinn do not answer such fundamental questions, and some of their statements are paradoxical.

In *The Three Pillars of Zen* (1965), Kapleau explains five types of Zen. 1. Ordinary Zen (*Bompu*). It is accessible to anybody and everybody. One can learn to concentrate and control the mind. 2. An outside way (*Gedō*). Zen is related to other religious practices such as Yoga, quietest sitting in Confucianism, etc. 3. Small vehicle (*Shojō*). It is to achieve peace of mind. 4. Great vehicle or Mahāyāna (*Daijō*), which is awakening one's true nature. 5. Highest vehicle (*Saijōjō*) is practiced once one achieves Buddhahood (Kapleau 1967: 67). Mindfulness practice can come under the first three types of Zen because it is for anybody and everybody, it uses Hindu-inspired practices such as Yoga and one can achieve peace of mind by practicing it. Kapleau also explains the four aspirations to do Zazen. 1. Shallowest level where the one has no faith in Zen nor understanding it. They come to Zen with fortunate Karmic circumstances. 2. A desire to do Zazen to improve physical and mental health. 3. A desire to walk Buddha's path and have faith in enlightenment. 4. A determination to realize one's true nature (Kapleau 1967: 89). Among these, Mindfulness aspirations can be the first two.

However, mindfulness does not cover all of Zen. MBSR and other mindfulness-based programs do not discuss notions of rebirth, devotional practices, etc., which are the critical aspects of Zen (Husgafvel 2019: 42). mindfulness is influenced by many Buddhist and yogic traditions. In one of the papers, Kabat-Zinn explains

After all, mainstreaming dharma through mindfulness is prima facie a positive and healing occurrence and a tremendous opportunity for addressing some of the most fundamental sources of pain and suffering in our world at this moment in time" (Kabat-Zinn 2017: sec. 1, para. 6).

Kabat-Zinn considers mindfulness as an opportunity to spread Buddha's teachings but not within the frame of religion. Kabat-Zinn's contribution is commendable, and the benefits of mindfulness are evident, but Zen is more than reducing stress and physical and mental problems.

They have similarities in terms of writing style, usage of illustration, and examples. Buddhist principles of non-duality, practice, patience, karma, etc., are the foundations of Zen and mindfulness. However, they have fundamental differences in their purpose and some practices.

As per the explanations given in the books, Zen is for people who are interested in training with Zen masters, learning rituals and texts, and attaining enlightenment. Mindfulness is a practice for well-being and to improve your mental and physical state. Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness may meet the needs of modern society or provide a quick and easy solution to practical problems, but it is also essential to check its validity.

The practices they have mentioned in their books are Buddhist or inspired by Buddhism. However, while mainstreaming them in American society, they focus on simplifying and clarifying the ancient concepts with Western vocabulary. Kapleau still sticks to the formal practice of Zen, but Kabat-Zinn oversimplifies and structures it so that they look secular and non-religious. He also takes the help of science to prove the reliability of Mindfulness practice. His strategies and efforts have worked, and meditation has now been available and accessible to anyone and everyone. But, the fundamental concept of religion remains ambiguous and paradoxical.⁴⁵

3.1.2. McMindfulness

McMindfulness is the term coined by Miles Neale, a Buddhist teacher, and psychotherapist. Neale states that mindfulness provides a quick solution to daily problems like fast food does in McDonald's, but it does not give a long-term solution. Ronald Purser, a Professor of Management at the Lam Family College of Business, elaborates on the concept of McMindfulness in his book *McMindfulness- How Mindfulness Became the New Capitalist Spirituality* (2019). Purser appreciates mindfulness promoters' efforts in helping people cope with their problems; however, his focus is on the limitations of mindfulness practice. Purser states, "I have no doubt their hearts are in the right place. But that isn't the issue here. The problem is the product they're selling, and how it's been packaged" (Purser 2019: 8).

Purser compares Kabat-Zinn and Ray Kroc (1902-1984), who expanded McDonald's business. Kroc created a chain of restaurants and provided fast food for busy Americans. He made sure that the products sold by all franchisees did not differ in quality and content.

⁴⁵ Section 3.1.2. is adapted from the article previously published by the author in *The Journal of Daito Asian Studies* (Wagh 2021: 38-56).

Similarly, Kabat-Zinn created a program that provides easy solutions to cope with daily stress (Purser 2019: 15-17).

Purser argues that the causes of stress do not always lie in the individual. They might be in the capitalist world that the individuals are part of. However, mindfulness does not aim to change the social, political, or economic structure that builds our lives. It instead teaches us not to judge and cope with the present situation. Purser explains,

A truly revolutionary mindfulness would challenge the Western sense of entitlement to happiness irrespective of ethical conduct. However, mindfulness programs do not ask executives to examine how their managerial decisions and corporate policies have institutionalized greed, ill will, and delusion, which Buddhist mindfulness seeks to eradicate (Purser 2019: 20).

In other words, mindfulness does not aim to reduce the fundamental issues of the corporate world. It instead focuses on coping. Purser further explains,

Instead, the practice is being sold to executives as a way to de-stress, improve productivity and focus, and bounce back from eighty-hour work weeks. They may well be “meditating,” but it works like taking an aspirin for a headache. Once the pain goes away, it is business as usual (Purser 2019: 20).

Thus, mindfulness has become fast food that satisfies hunger for a limited time; but may not produce sound and long-term effects on health. Purser exposes the superficiality of Mindfulness programs.

Another argument by Purser is that elimination of religion and religious values; mindfulness has made mindfulness a self-help technique that provides a false idea of self. It leads to ego and narcissism. The focus is always on how one manages or adjusts to the circumstances that he or she is surrounded with. It deals with only self-experience and does not consider the peripheral aspects of the circumstances. Other critics of mindfulness assert the same.

Edo Shonin and William Van Gordon, in their article “Second-Generation Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Toward More Authentic Mindfulness Practice and Teaching,” states,

The essence of the McMindfulness assertion appears to be that some modern renderings of mindfulness have contributed to the creation of a ‘mindfulness-ego’ that enables cliques of mindfulness teachers and stakeholders to profit from the integration of (what they claim to constitute) mindfulness into a range of life and work contexts...In other words, the McMindfulness initiative, despite no doubt having intentions of seeking to raise awareness of the inadequacies of some current approaches to mindfulness practice and teaching, could easily become misguided due to seeking to establish and propagate its legitimacy. In the event such a ‘McMindfulness ego’ were to emerge, it would only serve to foster additional superficiality and confusion in terms of what constitutes authentic mindfulness practice (Van Gordon, Shonin 2019).

In his article “Mindfulness: Traditional and Utilitarian,” David Brazier mentions,

In the current utilitarian version, we are often told that only here and now exists. This is an assertion of extreme solipsism. If taken literally, it would mean discarding awareness of whatever is not present to one’s immediate awareness...The implication is that only oneself is important, and even, only oneself and one’s experience-nothing else- is worthy of the status of being considered to exist (Brazier 2016: 66).

This aspect of mindfulness and ego is discussed in chapter 2, section 1.2.2. Initially, mindfulness aims to eliminate ego and attain liberation. However, modern mindfulness instead helps construct the ego.

In this way, McMindfulness shows another side of mindfulness. Though the fast food in McDonald's tastes delicious, it may lead to adverse effects on health. Similarly, mindfulness practiced as a technique may not benefit everyone and may not have long-term benefits. In my opinion, the aspects that Purser and other critics of mindfulness have shed light on are important to update the current practice.

3.1.3. Side Effects of Meditation

One of the side effects of meditation is “Meditation Sickness.” Robert Scharf mentioned this term in the book, *Is mindfulness Buddhist? (and why it matters)* (2015). Scharf stated that Buddhist masters used the term meditation sickness to criticize the practices that are done to achieve inner stillness. Such practices create delusions (Scharf 2015: 476). Usually, this term is used in Buddhism and is considered detrimental to the path of enlightenment. Meditation

sickness can be applicable to mindfulness meditation. It leads to many adverse effects on mental and physical health. The scientific studies that show the adverse effects of meditation are fewer in number.

3.1.4. Lost Essence

As discussed in the previous section, Purser compared Kroc and Kabat-Zinn because of their strategies in selling their products; fast food for Kroc and Mindfulness for Kabat-Zinn. They kept the content and quality of their products the same and created a disciplined market. McMindfulness has also created competition within individuals and organizations.

Each mindfulness instructor and practitioner modifies mindfulness according to his or her interpretation, experience, and belief. Ville Husgafvel raised this point in his article “The ‘Universal Dharma Foundation’ of Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction: Non-duality and Mahāyāna Buddhist Influences in the Work of Jon Kabat-Zinn” (2019). He stated, “In the end, each practitioner frames the meaning of mindfulness practice according to his or her individual needs, goals, and beliefs” (Husgafvel 2019: 41). For example, yoga teachers might teach the same meditation they have been teaching in the yoga course and name it as mindfulness. A Buddhist monk might conduct a Zen meditation session and name it as mindfulness. Due to the popularity of mindfulness, it is attached to any meditation session, yoga session, corporate training, psychotherapy, rehabilitation program, retreats, and health and wellbeing programs. Their purpose and content depend on the interpretation and experience of the instructor. The multiple interpretations have not only created confusion, but also competition among the instructors and organizations.

Another aspect of mindfulness that takes it away from its original purpose is that mindfulness programs are used in the defense sector. MBSR is officially adapted to use for the United States military (Purser 2014; Titmuss 2014). Mindfulness aims to develop compassion and peace; however, using it for war training diminishes its original purpose. An article by Roman Krznaric, “How We Ruined Mindfulness” published in TIME magazine, discusses this point. Krznaric discusses with Matthieu Ricard, a Buddhist monk, author, and translator. In their conversation, Ricard mentioned,

Many people speak about mindfulness, but the risk is that it’s taken too literally — to just ‘be mindful.’ Well, you could have a very mindful sniper and a mindful psychopath. It’s true! A sniper needs to be so focused, never distracted, very calm, and always

bringing back his attention to the present moment. And non-judgmental — just kill people and no judgment. That could happen!” (Krznaric 2017).

In this way, mindfulness can be used for anti-social activities. The multiplicity of the meaning and usage of the word has reached the level where mindfulness is attached to anything and everything that can be done with full attention. Mindful driving, mindful sex, and mindful baby potty are such examples. This way, mindfulness’s original purpose, meaning, and essence have been lost.

3.2. Second Generation Mindfulness

Growing criticism of mindfulness led to reconsidering and reforming mindfulness programs. William Van Gordon, Edo Shonin, and their team introduced the concept of Second-Generation mindfulness-based Interventions (SG-MBIs). Van Gordon and Shonin explain in their article “Second-Generation Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Toward More Authentic Mindfulness Practice and Teaching” (2019),

In response to some of the aforementioned issues, there has been growing interest in an intervention-based form of mindfulness that more closely embodies how the technique was conceptualized by ancient contemplative traditions. Accordingly, various forms of second-generation mindfulness-based interventions (SG-MBIs) have been formulated and subjected to empirical investigation. The precise criteria of what constitutes an SG-MBI is still undergoing refinement, but they are distinct from first-generation mindfulness-based interventions (FG-MBIs) due to typically meeting most or all of the following criteria: (i) being overtly psycho-spiritual or spiritual in nature, (ii) employing a greater range of (normally secularized) meditative techniques, (iii) featuring ethics as a key component of the taught program, and (iv) using an instructor training program that normally requires several years of supervised mindfulness practice (Van Gordon et al. 2015)...The emergence of SG-MBIs appears to be consistent with the wider evolution of Buddhist-inspired contemplative science research. More specifically, as the present authors have noted previously (Van Gordon et al. 2017), an initial phase of empirical investigation began in the early 1980s, which was primarily concerned with understanding the construct and applications of mindfulness as well as related attentional contemplative processes. The next phase of empirical investigation began approximately

25 years later in 2005 and focused on contemplative approaches involving ethical and empathic awareness, such as loving-kindness and compassion meditation. However, in the last six years, a third phase of research appears to have gradually emerged, concerned with investigating Buddhist wisdom-based concepts such as non-attachment, impermanence, non-self and emptiness. Incidentally, this phasic evolution happens to be consistent the Buddhist three trainings (Sanskrit: *trishiksha*) principle, which categories contemplative practices into those focusing on (i) meditation, (ii) ethics, and (iii) wisdom (Van Gordon et al. 2017). Due to emerging during the most recent of the aforementioned evolutionary developments, SG-MBIs have benefitted from being able to integrate evidence-based contemplative techniques from each of the three phases (Van Gordon, Shonin 2019: 1-2).

From this explanation, it is clear that mindfulness is returning to its roots. As described by Gordon and Shonin, the characteristics of SG-MBIs are that they are psycho-spiritual, include more meditation techniques, and teach ethics that are part of Buddhism. SG-MBIs will be used in healthcare fields; therefore, they will remain secular.

The advantage of SG-MBIs is that they have a foundation for first-generation mindfulness-based interventions. After a series of FG- MBIs and other mindfulness programs, the concept is established that mindfulness can be practiced by everyone with or without a religious identity. Therefore, even if Buddhist values or spiritual aspects are added, SG-MBIs can be promoted as secular. Scientific evidence will contribute to it. However, after the wave of SG-MBIs, ethical issues might continue, resulting in adding more Buddhist values to the interventions. What will separate it from religion; Scientific evidence or systematic format?

Ninian Smart explains the seven dimensions of religion. 1. The practical and ritual dimensions 2. Experimental and emotional 3. Narrative and Mythic 4. Doctrinal and Philosophical 5. Ethical and Legal 6. Social and Institutional 7. Material (Smart 1999). The relationship between mindfulness and religion can be examined with this theory. The first dimension is practical, and ritual dimensions include rituals and daily practices. It also includes meditation, Yoga, and prayer. Mindfulness is an everyday practice in which Yoga and meditation are done. The Experimental and emotional dimensions include emotions or experiences felt by the individual. They can be happiness, mystery, anger, etc. Mindfulness creates such emotions. The third-dimension shares stories and ideas about religion. In the case of mindfulness, human values are shared through books, stories, poems, etc. Doctrinal and Philosophical include ideas about the world. In Kabat-Zinn's writings, philosophical

explanations are found. Ethical and Legal dimensions specify the expected behaviors from individuals and communities. Mindfulness also teaches compassionate behavior. The sixth dimension consists of the organization by which religion is institutionalized. Mindfulness also has organizations. The seventh dimension is material. It means buildings, sculptures, artwork, etc. This dimension might not apply to mindfulness. Therefore, mindfulness fits into the six dimensions of religion.

3.3. Reconsidering and Updating Mindfulness

Mindfulness became popular because it was presented as scientific and secular. As it mainstreamed, it faced critical interrogation. First, McMindfulness explains capitalization and the adverse effects it causes. Second, scientific research in this field is limited. Individual differences may lead to differences in the experience of mindfulness. Therefore, mindfulness may not be helpful for everyone. The adverse effects of mindfulness may not be proven or defined correctly due to their subjective nature. Therefore, reconsideration and revision of mindfulness programs is an important topic. SG-MBIs is one such revision. However, On the one hand, Buddhist values are added to the SG-MBIs. On the other hand, SG-MBIs are presented as secular. The dichotomy remains.

Chapter 4: Mindfulness in Japan

4.1. Expansion of Mindfulness in Japanese Society

This section discusses how modern mindfulness spread in Japan. Japanese interest in modern mindfulness began growing in the 21st century. However, modern mindfulness reached Japan in the 1990s. Yutaka Haruki (1933-2019), a professor of psychology from Waseda University, was interested in reconsidering meditation, Yoga, and qigong as behavioral transformation techniques. He built a network to support the development of this research. With the help of Waseda University's Ibuka research funds⁴⁶, he organized a meditation symposium at an international conference of the Japanese Association of Health Psychology. He invited facilitators of various meditation techniques, including Kabat-Zinn (Koshikawa 2014: 47-48). Professor Haruki is one of the leading researchers in Japan who contributed to promoting mindfulness. Another event regarding mindfulness was conducted in 1995 when Thich Nhat Hanh visited Japan. He gave a lecture on mindfulness and conducted a retreat.

4.1.1. Books and Research Articles on Mindfulness

1) Books

Books have a significant contribution to spreading mindfulness across Japan. The publication of mindfulness books began in the 21st century. As of September 2022, 333 books are identified in the online database of the National Diet Library⁴⁷ when searched with the keyword “mindfulness.” From 2001 to 2005, there was only 1 book published. From 2006 to 2010, the number of books published was 11; from 2011 to 2015, it was 59. From 2016 to 2020, 211, and from 2021 to September 2022, 51 books were published.

The only Japanese book published from 2001 to 2005 is *Maindofurunesu & Akuseputansu- Ninchikōdōryōhō no Shinjigen* (2005). It is a translation of *Mindfulness and Acceptance: Expanding the Cognitive-Behavioral Tradition* (2004) by Steven C. Hayes, Victoria M. Follette, and Marsha M. Linehan. From 2006 to 2010, two other translated books were published. First is *Maindofurunesu Teigenhō* (2007). It is a translation of *Full Catastrophe Living* (1990) by Jon Kabat-Zinn. Second is *Maindofurunesu Ninchiryōhō* (2007),

⁴⁶ Ibuka funds are the research funds provided in Waseda University. They are provided through the donation funds of Ibuka Masaru (1908-1997), a founder of Sony Corporation. He developed Japan's first tape recorder. Ibuka was an alumnus of Waseda University.

⁴⁷ Online database of the National Diet Library (<https://ndlonline.ndl.go.jp/#/>).

a translation of *Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy for Depression* (2002) by Zindel V. Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale. Mindfulness researchers like Professor Yutaka Haruki and Professor Fusako Koshikawa played an essential role in translating books.

The books drew the attention of professionals in the clinical field. Most books published from 2006 to 2010 are about mindfulness in psychiatry, psychology, medicine, and nursing care. They discuss mindfulness as a treatment for mental disorders like depression, panic disorders, and insomnia. Only one book has Zen meditation in its title but from the perspective of brain science and psychotherapy. The title of the book is *Maindofurunesu meisō zazen no nō kagaku to seishinryōhō* (Brain science and psychotherapy of mindfulness, meditation, and zazen) (2007).

From 2011 to 2015, books in the clinical field continued to publish. In addition, books such as *Gūguru no maindofurunesu kakumei: Gūguru shain 5 mannin no '10 Nin ni Hitori' ga Jissen Suru Saisentan no Purakutisu* (Google's Mindfulness Revolution: A Cutting-edge Practice practiced by "1 in 10" among 50,000 Google employees) (2015) and *Sekai no Toppu Erīto ga Jissen Suru Shūchūryoku no Kitaekata: Hābādo, Gūguru, Feisubukku ga Torikumu Maindofurunesu Nyūmon* (How to train concentration power: An introduction to mindfulness practiced by the world's top elite; Harvard, Google, and Facebook) (2015) were published. They introduced how the world's leading companies and businessmen practice mindfulness for their and their employees' growth.

Introductory books on mindfulness were also published from 2011 to 2015. More than 8 introductory books were published in this period. Among them, *Maindofurunesu Meisō Nyūmon* (Mindfulness for Beginners) (2015) by Masao Yoshida became the most popular book according to the best-selling rankings on Amazon, Rakuten Ichiba, and Yahoo! Shopping as of January 7, 2022.⁴⁸

In addition to the introductory books, translations of Thich Nhat Hanh's books were published from 2011 to 2015. Some of them are *Budda no Shiawase no Meisō: Maindofurunesu o Ikiru: Tiku Natto Han ga Tsutaeru Puramu Virejji no Jissen* (2013) which is a translation of *Happiness: Essential Mindfulness Practices* (2005), *Daichi ni Fureru Meisō: Maindofurunesu o Ikiru tame no 46 no Mesoddo* (2015), a translation of *Touching the Earth: Guided Meditations for Mindfulness Practice* (2004) and *Budda ga Oshieru 'Ikiruchikara' no Sodatekata: Kodomo to Dekiru Maindofurunesu Meisō* (2015) which is a translation of

⁴⁸ mybest, '[2022-Nen] maindofurunesu hon no osusume ninki rankingu 20-sen ([2022] Recommended Mindfulness books, popularity ranking 20)', <https://my-best.com/5571> (accessed 5 July 2021).

Planting Seeds with Music and Songs: Practicing Mindfulness with Children (2013). Thich Nhat Hanh's books are translated into Japanese mostly by Keisuke Shimada. Shimada is a disciple of Thich Nhat Hanh and a permanent member of Plum Village. He was one of the organizers of Thich Nhat Hanh's Japan tour in 1995. He currently conducts meditation sessions, courses, and lectures online and in the center called "Yutoriya".⁴⁹

From 2016 to 2020, simplified and short mindfulness meditations were introduced through books. For example, *Ipunkan Doko demo Maindofurunesu* (One Minute, Bring Mindfulness Everywhere) (2016), *Inichi 3pun Kiku dake! Kokoro ga Sukkiri Katadzuku Shūkan: Kokoro ga Totonou CD-tsuki* (Just Listening for 3 Minutes a Day! The Habit of Clearing Your Mind: Your Mind will be Organized, comes with a CD) (2016), *Atama o 'Karappo' ni Suru Resson: 10punkan Meisō de Maindofuru ni ikiru* (Lessons for Emptying Your Mind: Live Mindfully with 10 Minutes of Meditation) (2020). In addition, books like *'Wa no Hikiyose' o Kasoku Suru Maindofurunesu Tappingu: Ningen Kankei, Okane, Shigoto, Jishin, Deai... Subete, Anata no Omoinomama!* (Mindfulness Tapping to Accelerate the Attraction of Harmony: Relationships, Money, Jobs, Confidence, Dating... Everything you want!) (2016) that discuss gaining worldly benefits through mindfulness are published.

Another addition to mindfulness books is the introduction of mindfulness through Manga and illustration. *Manga de Wakaru Gūguru no Maindofurunesu Kakumei* (Google's mindfulness revolution through manga) (2017) is one of its examples. Mindfulness coloring books such as *Kokoro o Iyasu e to Kotoba no Maindofurunesu Nuri e* (2016) and *Maindofurunesu Colouring: Nuri e bukku* (2016). It is a translated version of *The Affirmations Colouring Book* (2015). Since 2016, mindfulness began spreading among common Japanese. In order to cater to them, short meditation books and manga were published.

From 2021 to September 2022, there was a constant increase in the number of books. A few books discuss Japanese culture and mindfulness. *Mushin to maindofurunesu: Nipponbunka ni ikiru maindofurunesu* (No mind and mindfulness: Mindfulness Living in Japanese Culture) (2021) and *Meisō to ishiki no tankyū: Hitorihitori no nipponteki maindofurunesu ni mukete* (Quest of Meditation and Consciousness: Toward Japanese-style mindfulness for every individual) (2022) are its examples.

Among the total number of books identified in the National Diet Library Japan's online database, the majority of books are about mindfulness in psychology, psychiatry, and

⁴⁹ The detailed information of Keisuke Shimada and Yutoriya is available on the official website of Yutoriya (www.yutoriya.net).

neurology. As of September 2022, 13 are related to neurology, and 72 are related to psychotherapy, behavioral therapy, and cognitive therapies. Most of them are on the application of mindfulness for various purposes and emotions. For example, some books explain mindfulness coping techniques for anger and depression. Some explain about increasing brain capacity, productivity, performance, interpersonal skills, etc. A couple of books are for a specific group, such as new mothers, teenagers, children, etc. The second category with a more significant number of books is Zen, Buddhism, and Yoga. There are commentaries by Buddhist monks on the efficacy of mindfulness and its application in daily life. They mainly focus on the practical aspects of mindfulness or associate it with Buddhist psychology. In many books, there are discussions between Buddhist monks, philosophers, neurologists, and psychiatrists where they explain mindfulness from various perspectives.

In October 2012, a book fair was held in the Kinokuniya Book store⁵⁰, Shinjuku branch. The name of the book fair was “*Maindofurunesu o Meguru Shinriryōhō- Maindofurunesu to Daisan Sedai no Ninchikōdōryōhō fea* (Psychotherapy around Mindfulness- Mindfulness and Third Generation Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Fair).



Figure 3. and Figure 4. Books Displayed in the Book Fair

Source: Figure 3 and 4 are from Kinokuniya Web Store (<https://www.kinokuniya.co.jp/c/store/Shinjuku-Main-Store/20121002102626.html> accessed on 2 June 2022).

Figures 3 and 4 show the books displayed at the book fair of 2012. Several books on mindfulness in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) were displayed. In addition, books like

⁵⁰ The detailed information of the book fair is available on the website of the Kinokuniya Book store (<https://www.kinokuniya.co.jp/c/store/Shinjuku-Main-Store/20121002102626.html>).

Budda no (kizuki) no Meisōhō (Buddha’s Mindfulness Meditation) (2011) by Thich Nhat Hanh, were displayed.

In this way, books became an important source to spread mindfulness. Today, a wide range of books are available in Japanese books stores. They target a large number of audiences; from professionals to common people, from children to adults.

2) Research Articles

Scientific research is one of the reasons that mindfulness spread among professionals. Research on mindfulness is growing in Japan. If the word “mindfulness” is searched on CiNii⁵¹, a navigator for academic information, 1495 research articles appear as of September 2022. From 2001 to 2005, the number of articles is 8; from 2006 to 2010, it is 75. It increased to 345 from 2011 to 2015 and 868 from 2016 to 2020. From 2021 to September 2022, the number is 198.

The first research article about mindfulness was published in 2002 in the Journal of religious studies by Professor Keneth Tanaka, a Japanese American and a scholar of Buddhist studies. The title of the article is “*Insaito Meditēshon -- Gendai Shakai ni Fusawashii Amerika Bukkyō no Ippa*” (Insight Meditation--A sect of American Buddhism suitable for modern society). After 2002, there was a significant increase in the number of articles. Some Japanese journals and the number of articles published are listed below.

Journal Name	Number of Articles
Samgha Japan	42
Japanese Journal of Mindfulness	34
Japanese Psychological Review	32
Daihōrin	28
Japanese Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine	28
Japanese Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies	28
Japanese Journal of Psychotherapy	17
Japanese Journal of Clinical Psychology	15
Annual Convention of the Japanese Association for Cognitive Therapy	15
Japanese Journal of Clinical Psychiatry	13

⁵¹ CiNii is a free online database for academic information of articles, Books, Journals & Dissertations (<https://cir.nii.ac.jp>).

Japanese Journal of Human Welfare Studies	13
Chiiki Rihabiriteshon	11
Hōmon Kango to Kaigo	11

Table 4: Number of Research Articles in Japanese Journals

Source: Author

Note: The number of articles mentioned in Table 4 are as of September 2022.

Table 4 shows a list of Japanese journals having more than 10 research articles on mindfulness. The number of articles is as of September 2022. Samgha Japan has published the highest number of articles. samgha Publishing Inc. is an organization that published books, and periodicals mainly on Buddhism. They also publish articles on religious studies and mindfulness. They published an extra edition, *‘Maindofurunesu: Bukkyō Meisō to Kindai Kagaku ga Umidasu, Kokoro no Kagaku no Genzai Katachi (Bessatsu Samga Japan; 3’* (Mindfulness: The present tense of the science of mind created by Buddhist meditation and modern science (Separate Volume Sanga Japan; 3)) (2016) that contained articles of mindfulness professionals from the perspective of Buddhism and modern science. According to the website of samgha Publishing Inc., their aim is to create content that considers Buddhism as a “Science of mind” rather than a “religion” (samgha Japan Online n.d.).

After Samgha Japan, the Japanese Journal of Mindfulness and Japanese Psychological Review has more than 30 articles. Japanese Journal of Mindfulness is a journal published by the Japanese association of mindfulness, while the Society of Japanese Psychological Review publishes the Japanese Psychological Review.

From table 4, it is clear that the majority of research articles are published in Psychology and Psychiatry related journals. However, the Daihōrin, a Buddhist journal, is fourth on the list of Journals. It has published 28 articles on mindfulness as of September 2022. Daihōrin has been publishing a comprehensive Buddhist magazine every month since 1934. It includes introductory articles to technical articles on Buddhism. As mentioned in the introduction, a special edition called *‘Tokushū Maindofurunesu to Zazen Meisō’* (Special Edition Mindfulness and Zazen and Meditation) was published in April 2017’s Daihōrin. It included a special section, *‘Dentō Bukkyō to Maindofurunesu (Traditional Buddhism and Mindfulness),’* that compares mindfulness and various traditions of Buddhism.

Apart from journals, the word mindfulness appeared in the proceeding of annual conferences of various academic societies and associations. There are 166 proceedings of annual conferences listed on CiNii as of September 2022. It means mindfulness is gradually

becoming a topic for academic presentations in annual conferences. The conference presentations on mindfulness began in 2006.

In this way, the growth in the number of research articles proves that mindfulness has become an area of research in Japan. The number of articles increased significantly from 2011. In 2011, the number of articles was 44; in 2015, it became 117. The majority of the articles are published in psychology and psychiatric journals. However, mindfulness has also been a topic of interest for Buddhist journals.

As seen in section 1.4., Figure 2, Japan's contribution to mindfulness research is between 0 to 1.0%. This range has not changed till 2021. The contribution is small compared to other Asian countries such as China, India, and Iran. However, with the growing interest in mindfulness, there is a possibility that the contribution percentage will increase in the future.

3) Other

Mindfulness spread among common people through television, newspapers, and other forms of media. News articles on mindfulness appeared in Japanese Newspapers, including Nihon Keizai newspaper, Asahi newspaper, Yomiuri newspaper, and Mainichi newspaper. When the word "mindfulness" was searched on the online database of Nihon Keizai newspaper, the total number of news articles that appeared was 155 as of July 2022. On the online database of Asahi newspaper, the total number of news articles was 93 as of July 2022. The growth in the number of news articles was significant after 2016.

The reason for the sudden increase in the number of news articles is perhaps the NHK's television program called "Killer Stress," which was aired in 2016. Professor Hiroaki Kumano from Waseda University explained mindfulness meditation and its effects on health. Mindfulness-related articles appeared in Japanese magazines such as PRESIDENT, Elle Japan, and VoCE; Yoga magazines such as Yogini and Yoga Journal Japan. Mindfulness studios and Yoga studios actively publish such articles.

Another form of media through which mindfulness spread in Japan, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, is cellphone applications (Apps). There are more than 20 apps available for iOS and Android, that offer mindfulness-guided meditations in Japanese. Examples of mindfulness apps are Relook, Calm, RussellME, Meditopia, Awarefy, Netamanma Yoga, The mindfulness app, Cocorus, Meiso. Some are paid apps.

Mindfulness is popular on YouTube. There are 550 Japanese videos available on YouTube about mindfulness as of October 2, 2022. Mentalist DaiGo⁵² is a famous YouTuber, entrepreneur, creator, author, and blogger in Japan. He explained mindful life and easy ways of meditating in the book, *Jibun o Ayatsuri, Fuan o Nakusu Kyūkoku no Maindofurunesu* (Ultimate mindfulness to manipulate yourself and eliminate anxiety) (2020). He also shared his experiences and scientific pieces of evidence.

Several mindfulness conferences and seminars are conducted in Japan every year. “Wisdom 2.0 Japan” conference⁵³ has been conducted every year in Japan since 2020. According to the website of Wisdom 2.0 Japan⁵⁴, the conference aims to update Japan’s mindfulness by rediscovering the value of wisdom in Japanese culture, especially the moment-to-moment attention taught in Japanese art (*geidō*). Another international conference on Zen and mindfulness is Zen 2.0, which has been organized in Kencho-ji temple in Kamakura city, Japan, since 2017. According to the website of Zen 2.0⁵⁵, The mission of the conference is to build a mindful planet. It aims to integrate advanced technology with the spirituality of Zen.

4.1.2. Application of Mindfulness in Various Fields

Mindfulness practice is spreading in various fields. In the article, “*Nihon no maindofurunesu he mukatte* (Towards Mindfulness of Japan)” published in Kwansai Gakuin University’s Journal, *Human Welfare Studies* Vol. 7, No. 1, Isshō Fujita classifies mindfulness in Japan into five categories. 1. Mindfulness in Buddhism, 2. Mindfulness in health care, 3. Mindfulness in business 4. Mindfulness in sports, and 5. Mindfulness in daily life. He briefly explains the spread of mindfulness in each category (Fujita 2014:19-21). Similarly, this section analyzes the acceptance and expansion of modern mindfulness in six categories; 1. Mindfulness practice by Buddhist monks, 2. Mindfulness practice in clinical fields, 3. Mindfulness practice in corporate training 4. Mindfulness practice in sports, 5. Mindfulness practice in education, and 6. Other. These categories are closely associated and may not be entirely separated. For

⁵² The detailed information about Mentalist DaiGo is available on his official website (<https://daigo.jp>).

⁵³ Wisdom 2.0 Japan is inspired from Wisdom 2.0 conference conducted in the United States every year since 2009. It was started by Soren Gordhamer. According to the website of Wisdom 2.0, the aim of the conference is to explore the application of ancient wisdom in modern life. It is the world’s most impactful conference that brings technology leaders and teachers from wisdom traditions together. They discuss on how to live mindfully and use the technologies for the benefit of the society. The founders of Twitter, Facebook, and eBay have participated in the conference. The detailed information of Wisdom 2.0 is available on its website (<https://www.wisdom2summit.com>).

⁵⁴ The detailed information of Wisdom 2.0 Japan is available on its website (<https://wisdom2japan.com>).

⁵⁵ The detailed information of Zen 2.0 conference is available on its website (<https://www.zen20.jp>).

example, a Buddhist monk may conduct a mindfulness program for business people and school students. However, the purpose of creating these categories is to indicate that mindfulness programs are not limited to clinics. They have spread to other fields.

1) Mindfulness Practice by Buddhist Monks

As mindfulness originated from Buddhism, Buddhist monks in Japan are interested in it. They teach mindfulness individually or through a studio or temple. The mindfulness programs taught by Buddhist monks contain various types of meditations created based on American mindfulness programs and monks' own experiences and knowledge of Buddhism. They also include Zen meditations. Some Buddhist monks and their contributions to spreading mindfulness in Japan are discussed below.

Ryodo Yamashita (1956-) and Isshō Fujita (1954-) began their Zen training in Antaiji temple and went to the United States to teach Zen at Pioneer Valley Zendo in Massachusetts.⁵⁶ They came to know about mindfulness. Yamashita returned to Japan in 1992 and began teaching Zen in Kyoto. However, in 1995 after the terror attack of the cult group AUM Shinrikyo⁵⁷, he was disappointed that Buddhism and religion were leading cult groups. He began interacting with Thich Nhat Hanh and Theravāda Buddhist teachers. He went to Myanmar to study mindfulness taught in the Theravāda tradition. He completed his training and returned to Japan in 2006. Yamashita has also studied Sri Lankan Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism (One Dharma Forum International n.d.). On the other hand, Fujita continued to stay in the United States. He returned to Japan in 2005.

Yamashita and Fujita conduct research on Buddhism and mindfulness. They have published several articles and books on mindfulness together and individually. They proposed the concept of “Buddhism 3.0”. 2 books elaborate on this concept. First is *Appudeto Suru Bukkyo* (Buddhism Updating Itself) (2013), and the other is *Bukkyo 3.0 o Tetsugaku Suru* (Philosophically Examining Buddhism 3.0) (2016). The second book is coauthored by Professor Hitoshi Nagai from Nihon University, College of Humanities and Science. It is also available in English with the title *Buddhism 3.0: A Philosophical Investigation* (2021). The books discuss three versions of Buddhism.

Buddhism 1.0 is existing in Japanese Buddhism. Buddhism 2.0 is mindfulness derived from Theravāda Buddhism and used for stress reduction. Yamashita and Fujita provide a

⁵⁶ Pioneer Valley Zendo is a Soto Zen center in Massachusetts, United States (<https://valleyzendo.org>).

⁵⁷ For more details on AUM Shinrikyo, refer section 5.5.

critical view of Buddhism 1.0 and 2.0. To overcome them, they propose Buddhism 3.0. They see Buddhism as a solution for life. Buddhism 1.0 has problems like nihilism, which distracts itself from achieving Buddhism's real purpose, which is to remove suffering. Therefore, people are getting attracted to Buddhism 2.0, which is mindfulness. Mindfulness has contributed to spreading Buddhist practices as a therapy for mental and physical problems. However, mindfulness teaches to focus on one's problems and make them self-centric or narcissistic. This approach is against the original purpose of Buddhism, which teaches us to get rid of the self. Therefore, Buddhism 3.0 is a concept that provides solutions to the problems in versions 1.0 and 2.0 by replacing one's mind with the original Buddha's nature.

Buddhist monks who have studied psychology and psychiatry teach mindfulness, for example, Rev. Dr. Taishu Kawano, a Buddhist monk, and psychiatrist. Dr. Kawano works to promote Zen and Mindfulness. According to his website, Dr. Kawano aims to create harmony between Zen and modern mindfulness, which is popular in the United States. He is working to convey this knowledge that will contribute to people's lives. He conducts Zen and mindfulness sessions.

Teragoya Buddha (Cocokuri)⁵⁸ is an organization where monks of various sects work together to bring the temples and their activities closer to the general people. Among their various projects, the Healthy Temple Community project offers 15-minute online mindfulness sessions every morning. Buddhist monks of various sects conduct these sessions. The sessions are free of cost. They contain simple exercises for the body and mindfulness meditation.

2) Mindfulness Practice in Clinical Fields

American mindfulness-based programs gained the attention of psychology and psychiatry professionals. Professor Fusako Koshikawa described in her article, '*Nihon no Shinri Rinshō ni Okeru Maindofurunesu: Kore made to Korekara*' (Mindfulness in Japanese clinical psychology: The journey thus far, and future directions) (2014), about the development and practice of mindfulness in Japan, especially in the clinical field, Professor Koshikawa explained how mindfulness-based interventions spread among Japanese professionals in clinical fields. In addition, she indicated the challenges that mindfulness may face in the future. In the end, she emphasized that empirical research on mindfulness should be increased. The

⁵⁸ The website link of Teragoya Buddha (Cocokuri) is provided in appendix 1.

previous sections show that the empirical studies on mindfulness have grown in the past few years.

MBSR, MBCT, and other mindfulness-based interventions are conducted in Japan by Japanese instructors certified by Western mindfulness organizations. Psychologists and psychiatrists conduct mindfulness sessions for patients. In addition, mindfulness programs are conducted for medical professionals, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Keio Mindfulness and Well-being Labo offer the “Mindfulness for Health Professionals Building Resilience and Compassion: MEHALO program”⁵⁹ for medical professionals to reduce stress. Medical professionals are often exposed to various stressors. The situation of medical professionals is a serious problem that impacts the quality and safety of medical care. MEHALO is based on mindfulness, compassion, and positive psychology that help reduce the burnout of medical professionals.

3) Mindfulness Practice in Corporate Training

In the current era, VUCA is an essential element of the business. Employees face numerous problems such as commutation, deadlines, multitasking, making critical decisions, and human relations. Particularly, the Japanese work culture expects dedication, precision, and hard work. In addition, unspoken rules and peer pressure create tremendous stress on employees, resulting in mental illness, Suicides, and *Karōshi* (Death due to overwork). To ease the work pressure and improve the performance of employees, companies in Japan are offering Mindfulness training to employees.

Mindfulness in corporate training began with Google’s SIY program. Junya Ogino and Kimiko Bokura-Shafe brought SIY to Japan in 2013 through MiLI. Another certified Japanese teacher of SIY is Eiji Han Shimizu. He conducts various happiness and mindfulness programs. SIY and other mindfulness programs are conducted as corporate training in Japanese companies such as Toyota Motor Corporation, Mercari Inc., Sansan Inc., KDDI Corporation, SMBC Nikko Securities, and Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. They are conducted in Japanese branches of multinational organizations such as Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft.

The first Japanese company that conducted SIY for its employees is Sansan Inc. It conducted the SIY for managerial employees of all departments in September 2017. In January 2018, it conducted mindfulness training for all employees (Sansan 2018).

⁵⁹ The detailed information of Keio Mindfulness and Well-being Labo and MEHALO program is available on (<http://mwl.csr.keio.ac.jp/project/healthcareprovider.html>).

Yahoo Japan is also active in providing mindfulness training to its employees. According to the articles published about Yahoo Japan and its mindfulness training, Yahoo Japan has developed meta-cognition training for its employees. They have an in-house university called “Academia,” established in 2014 to create and nurture next-generation leaders. Satoru Nakamura is in charge of the human resource development program at Academia. After participating in the SIY program in Japan, he developed a seven weeks meta-cognition training program based on SIY. In an interview with Nakamura that was published on LinkedIn⁶⁰ in September 2018, Nakamura explained that employees are constantly under pressure due to workload, deadlines, and multitasking. In this situation, there is a possibility that employees make inaccurate decisions. In a rapidly changing business environment, each decision affects the business. Therefore, in order to make an accurate decision even under pressure, it becomes necessary that employees put themselves in a psychological state where they can calm down and think objectively. Mindfulness helps to create such a state (LinkedIn 2018). Other than SIY, various programs are available for business people and employees. In addition, there are teacher training programs.

4) Mindfulness Practice in Sports

Athletes face a wide range of stressors during their training and performance. A range of studies suggests that mindfulness can be helpful for athletes. Recently, Japanese researchers, especially in the field of sports psychology, are also keen to study the effects of mindfulness-based interventions on Japanese athletes. Dr. Rei Amemiya, an assistant professor at the University of Tsukuba, and Dr. Hanako Fukamachi, a researcher from Waseda University Sports Science Research Center, explain that mindfulness can be useful to a great extent to deal with a wide range of mental and physical problems of athletes (Amemiya 2016; Fukamachi 2018). However, the evidence is still inadequate to prove mindfulness’s efficacy for Japanese athletes.

Basketball player Michael Jordan and Tennis player Djokovic practice mindfulness meditation. Ichiro Suzuki, an ex-baseball player from the US Major League, uses mindfulness as part of his pre-match routine. In Japan, Kotoshōgiku Kazuhiro, a professional sumo wrestler who became the first Japanese sumo wrestler in 10 years to win the tournament, incorporated mindfulness into his training. Yuto Nagatomo, a basketball player, mentions mindfulness in

⁶⁰ The interview is available on the LinkedIn profile of Satoshi Ebitani (<https://jp.linkedin.com/pulse/瞑想だけではないヤフーのマインドフルネス研修が10期続く理由-satoshi-ebitani> accessed October 2, 2022).

his book *Yogatomo* (Yoga Friend) (2016). In one of the interviews, Olympic handball player Remi Anri Doi explained that mindfulness benefits athletes. When Doi was in a bad career phase, he found a mindfulness book. His performance increased when he began practicing mindfulness. In this way, mindfulness is spreading among Japanese athletes.

Few mindfulness studios in Japan offer courses and seminars for athletes. For example, Zuci Yoga/ Miho Mindfulness School offers Personal Lessons for Athletes⁶¹. True Nature Meditation offers an Athlete Program⁶², which is for individuals as well as for teams. In this way, awareness about mindfulness in the field of sports is growing.

5) Mindfulness Practice in Education

Even though mindfulness is promoted as secular and scientific, its religious roots are undeniable. Bringing mindfulness to Japanese education is challenging because the Japanese constitution does not allow religious education and activities in the public-school curricula. Despite such policies, mindfulness has entered Japanese schools as scientific mind training and calming technique. Though the scale of mindfulness in education is still extremely small in Japan compared to Western countries, mindfulness studios are taking initiatives to teach mindfulness programs from elementary schools to universities. Some mindfulness studios offer the .b program and other mindfulness programs for children. They also conduct seminars and workshops.

Mindfulness studio MELON conducted a mindfulness program⁶³ in several elementary schools all over Japan from May 2021 to November 2021. The program was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tadao Fujiwara from the Hyogo University of Education and Dr. Toru Takahashi from Waseda University. The number of students who participated in the program was 279. They were from grades 4 to 6. A ten-minute video created by MELON was played for eight weeks in each school. Mindfulness through observing breath and through the movement of the body was practiced. After the program, MELON presented statistical data that confirmed that 71% of students had improvement in responding to stress (MELON 2021).

Mindfulness practice was conducted in some Japanese Universities. Some universities have mindfulness research clubs in their departments. For example, Kansai Medical University

⁶¹ The detailed information of the personal lessons is available on the website of Zuci Yoga/ Miho Mindfulness School (<https://www.zuci-Yoga.com/personal-lesson/> accessed September 2, 2022).

⁶² The detailed information of the athlete program is available on the website of True Nature Meditation (<https://www.truenature.jp/athlete> accessed October 2, 2022).

⁶³ The detailed information is available on the website of MELON (<https://www.the-melon.com/blog/blog/mindfulness-school-536/> accessed October 2, 2022).

has *Shinrigaku Kyoshitsu* (Psychology classroom).⁶⁴ Keio University has Keio Center for Stress Research.⁶⁵ They promote research on mindfulness. There is significant research going on at the University of Tokyo and Waseda University on mindfulness; especially in the area of psychology and psychiatry.

6) Other

Mindfulness in all categories mentioned in this section is for mental and physical fitness. This category focuses on daily or short-term programs, fitness programs, Yoga, and retreats. This category has a wide range of programs, from 15 min sessions to weekly programs. They cater to a large number of audiences irrespective of their profession. Moreover, they are not conducted as a clinical treatment. They are instead conducted for relaxation or to improve a specific aspect of daily life; for example, communication, diet, and physical fitness. Such programs encourage people to adopt mindfulness in their daily lives. The short mindfulness sessions are mainly designed for busy individuals. Mindfulness studios in Japan have a variety of such programs. Most of them are created in Japan. Yoga studios also offer mindfulness Yoga and meditation programs. The details of mindfulness studios and Yoga studios are discussed in the following sections.

4.1.3. Mindfulness Organizations

After 2012, the executive committee of the Mindfulness Forum established the Japanese Association of Mindfulness in 2013 (Koshikawa 2014: 49). The association aims to contribute to academic research on mindfulness and the effectiveness and safety of mindfulness practice in Japan. It also promotes research, education, and dissemination of mindfulness in various fields such as psychology, medicine, industry, sports, welfare, and education.

It defines mindfulness as “just watching without being bound by intentionally paying attention to the experience of this moment, without judgment.” “Watching” means seeing, listening, smelling, tasting, touching, and seeing the work of the mind caused by them (Japanese Association of Mindfulness n.d.). The association conducts annual conferences, meetings, and training for mindfulness professionals. The association conducted a Mindfulness forum in 2016. Dr. Mark Williams, one of the leading members who developed MBCT, was

⁶⁴ The detailed information is available on the website of Kansai Medical University *Shinrigaku Kyoshitsu* (<https://www7.kmu.ac.jp/psycho/> accessed October 2, 2022).

⁶⁵ The detailed information is available on the website of Keio Center for Stress Research (<https://csr.keio.ac.jp/mindfulness/> accessed October 2, 2022).

the chief guest. Dr. Williams conducted MBCT workshops, lectures, and seminars on mindfulness. The association continued to conduct seminars, training programs, and conferences for its members.

After the Japanese Association of Mindfulness, the number of mindfulness organizations increased. The list of mindfulness organizations is provided in Appendix 1. The list is limited to the organizations that conduct mindfulness programs. It does not include instructors who conduct mindfulness programs individually. Some mindfulness organizations that primarily offer Western mindfulness programs and are connected with Western mindfulness organizations are discussed below.

In 2013, Dr. Hisanobu Kaiya, a psychiatrist and member of the executive committee of the Mindfulness Forum 2012, established “Tokyo Mindfulness Center” in association with his psychiatry clinic named “Akasaka Clinic”.⁶⁶ The Tokyo Mindfulness Center is managed by Yosuke Hasegawa, a MBSR instructor certified by the Center for Mindfulness, University of Massachusetts Medical Center, and son-in-law of Dr. Kaiya. Tokyo Mindfulness Center is the first organization in Japan that offered mindfulness-based interventions like MBSR, MBCT, and MSC. The patients of Akasaka Clinic are advised to participate in mindfulness programs if necessary. In addition to mindfulness-based interventions, the organization also conducts short programs, seminars, and retreats. They promote mindfulness programs through books, articles, blogs, and news.

Another organization that was established in 2013 is Mindful Leadership Institute (MiLI). It is the first organization in Japan that offered Google’s SIY program and that introduced mindfulness for leadership and organizational development. The aim of MiLI is to support the healthy coexistence and prosperity of all individuals, organizations, and societies. MiLI conducts seminars for companies, municipalities, and Non-profit organizations.

In 2014, Japan Institute for Mindfulness in Leadership was established. Jon Kabat-Zinn is its advisor. This organization aims to disseminate mindfulness meditation to people working in fields such as business, health care, and education and for the leaders in those fields. They also work for the promotion of mindfulness by conducting scientific research and training mindfulness instructors.

Another organization that offers MBSR program is the MBSR Study Group. It was founded in 2016 by Dr. Yasushi Ito and Dr. Kazumi Yamamoto. In addition to MBSR, the organization offers .b (dot b) programs for schools, silent retreats, and teachers’ training

⁶⁶ For more details on Akasaka Clinic, please refer (<https://fuanclinic.com/akasaka/>).

programs. Mindful Health Co., Ltd. offers courses and seminars on diet, anti-aging, and improving health habits. They also offer MBSR course. Tokyo Stress Reduction provides MBSR program and mindfulness workshops for individuals, companies, and schools. These programs are available in Japanese and English.

International Mindfulness Center Japan (IMCJ) is partnered with The Institute for Mindfulness-Based Approaches (IMA).⁶⁷ In association with IMA, IMCJ offers MBSR, MBCT, Mindfulness-based Compassionate Living (MBCL), and Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness (TSM) programs. They also conduct MBSR teacher training courses. In addition, they have online study groups and an 8-week habitualization course four times a year to continue the practice of mindfulness and make it a habit.

Apart from the Western mindfulness programs, many organizations have developed their mindfulness programs. Japanese Association of Mindfulness Psychotherapy (JAMP) was established in 2014. Kenjirou Ohta (1945-), founder of the organization, developed a mindfulness program based on Daisetsu Suzuki's Zen and Nishida's philosophy⁶⁸. The program is called "Self-Insight Meditation Technology Therapy (SIMT)." According to the website of JAMP, SIMT is a psychotherapy that is beneficial for depression, anxiety disorders, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In SIMT, it is taught to observe the inner self-mind (Praxis) during work and other activities (Poiesis). It also teaches to control egoism (Japanese Association of Mindfulness Psychotherapy n.d.). According to Ohta, Japan has the world's best mindfulness philosophy, Zen. Nishida's philosophy is based on Zen and SIMT is derived from it. Therefore, instead of re-importing mindfulness from the United States, Japan should look back to its ancient culture (Mindfulness Research Institute 2016).

Ningensei Shinkyu Kenkyujyo was established in 2015. The organization does not follow the American curriculum. It offers an eight-week mindfulness program that includes Buddhist values such as Zen and *vijnapti-matrata* (a theory that all existence is subjective and nothing exists outside of the mind). According to the organization's website, the representative director, Kiyoko Kitayama, received approval from Jon Kabat-Zin to deploy "*Maindofurunesu Hō* (Mindfulness Law)" in Japan. She developed a program called "Mind Talk Insight Method," catering to Japanese society. The eight weeks program they offer contains Mindfulness theory

⁶⁷ The detailed information is available on the website of The Institute for Mindfulness-Based Approaches (<https://www.institute-for-mindfulness.org/about-ima>).

⁶⁸ Nishida's philosophy logically defines the Self and the world in which one resides. His philosophy has been translated into many Western languages and is still being studied today.

and practice such as Eating Meditation, Life Meditation, and Zen meditation at Rinza Sect's Monastery. After the eight weeks program, they offer teachers' training programs at three levels.

Teragoya Buddha (Cocokuri) is an organization run by Japanese monks of various sects. Conducting mindfulness sessions is one of their activities. The sessions are free of cost. They contain simple exercises for the body and mindfulness meditation.

Kansai Mindfulness Association which was established in 2017, offers seminars and courses on mindfulness. They have beginners' courses, practitioner courses, and master's courses. Manabiya Academy, established in 2017, primarily offers courses, seminars, and workshops for companies. Russel Mindfulness entertainment also works in the same area. It is a part of the Japan mindfulness promotion organization. They conducted market research in Japan to understand the current situation of mindfulness. MELON is an organization established in 2019. MELON works in multiple areas. They offer 30-minute mindfulness programs. They also provide mindfulness training for companies and schools.

MFQR Co., Ltd. is an organization that combines mindfulness with reading ability. They offer a program called "*Maindofurunesu Sokudoku* (Mindfulness quick-read)." The program uses mindfulness training to improve the ability to read. Awareness Retreat Center offers a "*Kizuki no Meisō*" course. It is based on Vipassanā meditation and Zen techniques that develop awareness. Grateful Academy conducts mindfulness seminars as well as teacher training courses. After completing the teacher training course, they guide for a month, and only qualified individuals are certified as instructors.

In this way, Japanese mindfulness organizations work in multiple fields and conduct various mindfulness programs. Most of the studios are located in Tokyo. A few are located in Osaka and other parts of Japan. Organizations that offer mindfulness programs other than Western programs are more in number.

4.1.4. Yoga Organizations

According to the database of Kokusai Yoga Association⁶⁹, there are 928 Yoga classes nationwide (as of October 7, 2022). Among them, a few Yoga studios offer mindfulness programs. Yoga studios primarily conduct Yoga programs; however, after the proliferation of mindfulness, they began offering mindfulness Yoga and meditation programs. The list of yoga

⁶⁹ The detailed information is available on the website of Kokusai Yoga Kyokai <https://kokusai-Yoga.net/staticpages/school>.

organizations is provided in Appendix 1. The list is limited to the organizations that conduct mindfulness programs. It does not include instructors who conduct mindfulness programs individually. The mindfulness programs and seminars that Yoga studios offer is briefly discussed below.

Japan Yoga Meditation Association is a Yoga organization founded in 1978. It has a separate webpage for mindfulness. Five mindfulness programs are listed on it; Morning meditation marathon, mindfulness good sleep, eight-week program, corporate training, and Teacher training. The videos of each program are available on YouTube. Mindfulness and Yoga network has an eight-week online MBCT course and short online sessions. Zuci Yoga has a separate branch called Miho Mindfulness School that offers mindfulness Yoga and mindfulness in Yoga. Maulea Japan offers mindfulness instructor training courses and mindfulness programs that combine mindfulness meditation and simple Yoga.

Yoga Medical Society In Japan conducts a ‘Mindfulness Yoga therapy program,’ combining mindfulness and Yoga. Beauty Elegancia offers a similar course. Japan Men’s Yoga Association and Japan Fitness Yoga Association have one-time programs. Livewell Institute offers a ten-weeks online Meditation Teacher Training Course in which the participants can practice Yoga and meditation and learn how to teach them. Nami Yoga Studio offers a Mindfulness meditation workshop.

According to the data collected from the websites of Yoga studios, their programs are broadly divided into two categories; 1. Mindful Yoga, and 2. Yoga and mindfulness meditation. The number of Yoga studios is lesser than the number of mindfulness studios.

4.2. Market Research on Acceptance and Awareness of Mindfulness in Japan

As discussed in the previous sections, there is a significant increase in mindfulness programs. Mindfulness is a growing health trend. It is seen as a business opportunity. Two Japanese organizations conducted market research to understand the acceptance and awareness of mindfulness. Their results are discussed below.

4.2.1. Market Research by Imagination Creative (2017)

Imagination Creative Co., Ltd. is a marketing, branding, and PR company. It conducted an “Awareness Survey on Mindfulness” in partnership with the business comic “Google’s Mindfulness Revolution in Manga.” The survey aims to understand the popularization of mindfulness and interest in mindfulness in Japan. The survey is conducted online from May 16

to 19, 2017. The respondents are 300 men and 300 women between 26 to 60 of age. However, the survey does not explain whether the respondents are buyers of the comic and whether they have read it.

This section discusses the survey results by dividing them into four categories. 1. Causes of Stress, 2. Awareness about mindfulness, 3. Image of mindfulness, and 4. Reasons for taking an interest in mindfulness.

1) Causes of Stress

Age group	Cause of Stress
25 to 29	Work Content
30 to 34	Relation with Boss
35 to 39	Work Content
40 to 44	Work Content
45 to 49	Salary
50 to 54	Relation with Boss
55 to 59	Work Content

Table 5: Causes of Stress based on the Age Groups:

Source: Created and translated by Author based on <https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000002.000019385.html>

Table 5 shows the causes of Stress by the age groups. According to Table 5, work content is the cause of stress for three age groups. For the age group 30 to 34 and 50 to 54, relation with the Boss is the cause of stress. For the 45 to 49 age group, salary is the cause of stress.

Top 3 causes of stress for people who do not practice mindfulness	Top 3 causes of stress for people who practice mindfulness
Work Content	Relation with Boss
Relation with Boss	Work Content and salary
Salary	

Table 6: Cause of Stress for Mindfulness Practitioners and Non-practitioners

Source: Created and translated by Author based on <https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000002.000019385.html>

Table 6 shows the top 3 causes of stress for mindfulness practitioners and non-practitioners. The causes of stress are same for practitioners and non-practitioners; however, their order is different. The primary cause of stress for non-practitioners is work content; whereas for practitioners, it is relation with Boss. The second cause of stress for non-practitioners is relation with Boss; whereas, the second causes of stress for practitioners are Work Content and salary. The third cause of stress for non-practitioners is salary. There is no third cause of stress for practitioners.

2) Awareness about Mindfulness

According to market research results, 25.1% of respondents have heard the word mindfulness, while 74.9% have never heard it. 26.9% are willing to try mindfulness, and 26.9% are interested in it. However, 41.9% do not want to try it. Therefore, the number of respondents who know about mindfulness is lesser than the number of respondents who do not know about mindfulness. In addition, the number of respondents interested in mindfulness is lesser than the number of respondents who are not interested in mindfulness.

Have learned mindfulness	1.8%
Practicing it in continuation	1.5%
Know about mindfulness	4.7%
Heard about mindfulness	17.1%
Never heard about it	74.9%

Table 7: Knowledge about Mindfulness

Source: Created and translated by Author based on <https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000002.000019385.html>

Table 7 shows the percentage of people who know about mindfulness. According to table 7, only 1.8% of the respondents have learned mindfulness, and only 1.5% of respondents practice it often. On the other hand, 74.9% of respondents are unaware of mindfulness. 17.1% of respondents have heard about it, and only 4.7% know the practices done in mindfulness. The table clearly shows that in 2017, fewer people were aware of mindfulness.

Age group	Awareness about mindfulness
25 to 29	33.3%
55 to 59	29.2%
40 to 44	26.5%
50 to 54	12.5%

Table 8: Awareness of Mindfulness by Age Group

Source: Created and translated by Author based on <https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000002.000019385.html>

Table 8 shows the awareness of Mindfulness by Age Group. Among all age groups, the 25 to 29 age group has the maximum percentage of awareness about mindfulness. The percentage of awareness decrease with the increase in age. Therefore, the younger generation is more aware of mindfulness than the older generation.

3) Image of Mindfulness

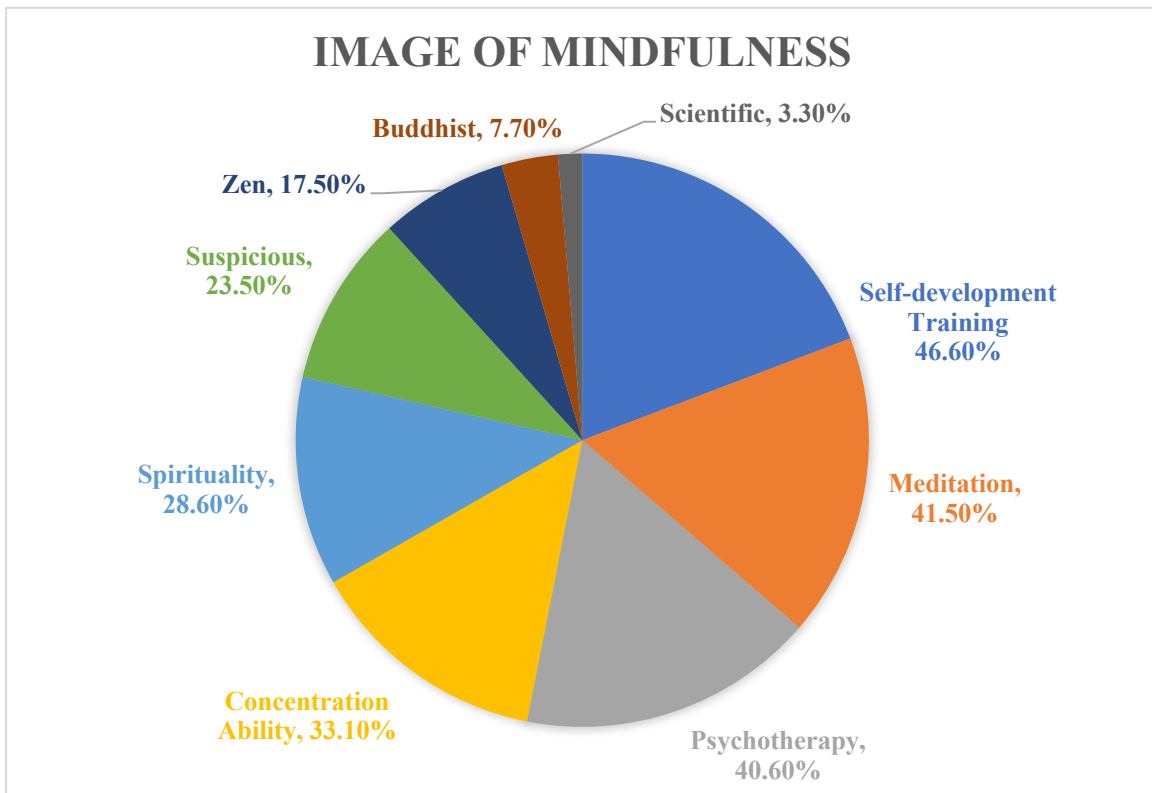


Figure 5: Image of Mindfulness

Source: Created and translated by Author based on <https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000002.000019385.html>

Figure 5 is a pie chart showing respondents' images of mindfulness. The respondents were asked to choose five options. 46.6% of respondents think of mindfulness as self-development training done in companies. 41.5% of respondents think mindfulness is meditation, while 40.6% of people think that mindfulness is psychotherapy. 28.6% of people have the image of anxiety reduction, and 18.1% have the image of stress reduction. 39.8% have the image of mindfulness as spirituality, and 33.1% have the image of concentration ability. Only 3.3% of respondents think it is scientific, while 23.5% think it is suspicious. Only 7.7% think that it is Buddhist. However, 17.5% of people have the image of Zen. Thus, on the one hand, some people think mindfulness is self-development training, psychotherapy, and a method to improve concentration and reduce stress and anxiety. On the other hand, some people think mindfulness is spiritual and suspicious. In addition, an image of meditation and Zen is attached to mindfulness.

Age group	Image of Mindfulness
25 to 29	Spiritual
30 to 34	Self-development
35 to 39	Self-development
40 to 44	Self-development
45 to 49	Meditation
50 to 54	Psychotherapy
55 to 59	Meditation

Table 9: Image of Mindfulness by Age Group

Source: Created and translated by Author based on <https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000002.000019385.html>

Table 9 shows the image of mindfulness in each age group. Young people in the age group of 25 to 29 perceive mindfulness as spiritual. From the age of 30 to 44, the image of mindfulness is self-development seminars. Age groups 45 to 49 and 55 to 59 perceive mindfulness as meditation. Only one age group perceives mindfulness as psychotherapy. Thus, the changes in perception appear after the age group of 40 to 44.

Those who answered, "I do not want to do mindfulness" were asked their image about it. Some of the responses are as follows. 1. Troublesome 2. It seems impossible for me 3. I do not think I can be so attentive 4. I am distracted Because I do not have creativity and intuition 5. I

cannot think of anything because I am busy etc. From these answers, it is clear that some people have a negative image of mindfulness.

4) Reasons for Taking an Interest in Mindfulness

For those interested in mindfulness, the market research asked why they were interested. Some reasons are as follows. 1. Seems interesting 2. I can improve concentration 3. It is effective to improve concentration 4. I can look back at myself 5. I think I can get good results in everything 6. I want to use it in my work 7. I can be mentally calm 8. It seems it will improve my ability 9. I can show my potential 10. I want to see what effects it will bring 11. It seems to help you know your true feelings.

4.2.2. Market Research by Russel Mindfulness Entertainment (2020)

Another market research was conducted by Russel mindfulness entertainment in 2020. Russel mindfulness entertainment is an organization in Japan dedicated to promoting mindfulness. The organization is a part of the Japan mindfulness promotion organization as discussed in section 4.1.3.

According to the organization's website, in Japan, 1.93 million people practice mindfulness at least once a month, and 44 billion yen per year is used for mindfulness-related content. In the future, the market size is expected to grow to 250 billion yen by 2023, and the population practicing mindfulness will increase to 9.35 million.

The following survey is conducted in Japan by distributing online questionnaires. The number of respondents is 400 men and women between the age of 20 to 69. The survey was conducted from May 4 to 6, 2020. The purpose of the survey is to understand the present situation of mindfulness in Japan. The results of the survey are as follows.

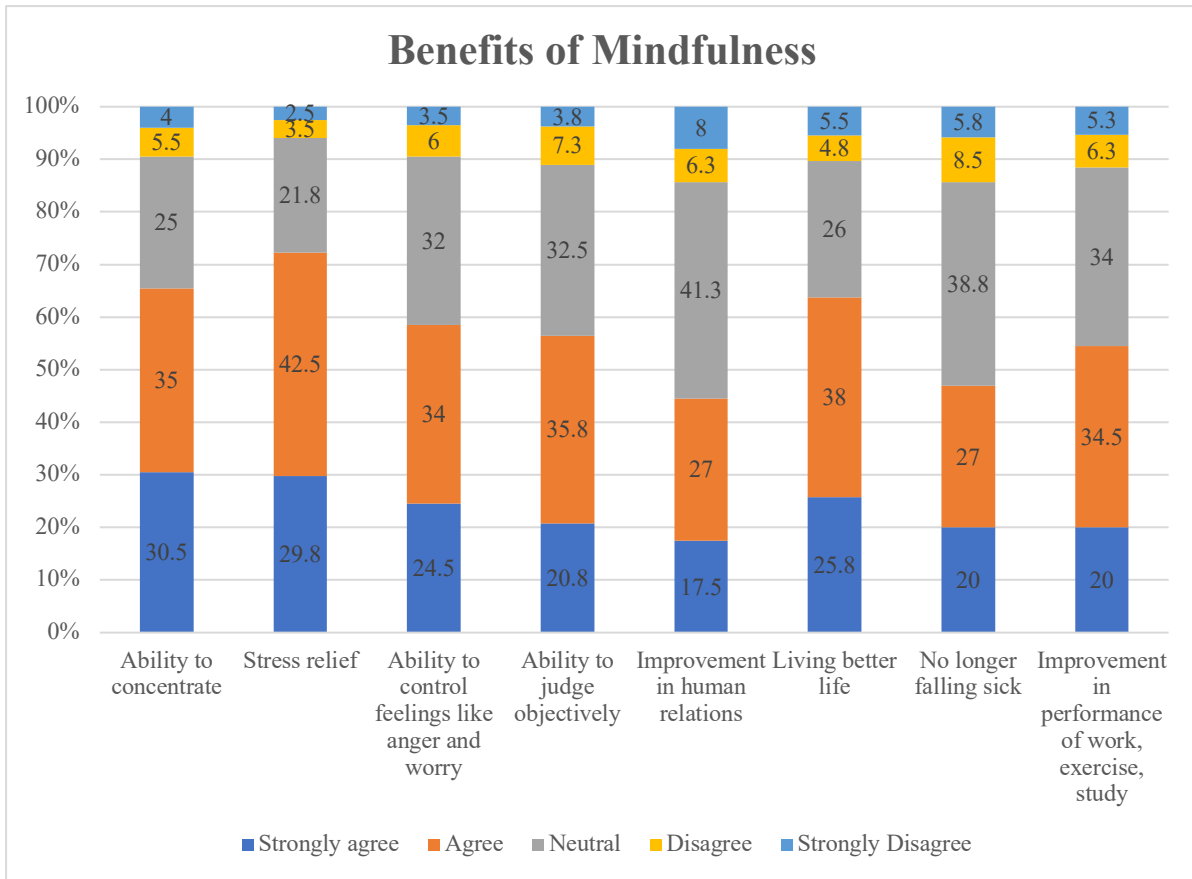


Figure 6: Benefits of Mindfulness

Source: Created and translated by Author based on <https://russellme.com/columns/mindfulness-meditation/955/>

Figure 6. is a graphical representation of the benefits of mindfulness. The responses are separated into five categories. 1. Strongly agree, 2. Agree, 3. Neutral, 4. Disagree, and 5. Strongly Disagree. According to figure 6, the benefits of mindfulness are 1. Ability to concentrate, 2. Stress relief, 3. Ability to control feelings like anger and worry 4. Ability to judge objectively, 5. Improvement in human relations, 6. Living better life, 7. No longer falling sick, 8. Improvement in performance of work, exercise, and study. 30.5% of people strongly agree, and 35.0% of people agree that they got the ability to concentrate. 29.8% of people strongly agree, and 42.5% of people agree that mindfulness relieves their stress. 25.8% strongly agree, and 38.0% agree that they began to think to live better after practicing mindfulness.

On the other hand, 41.3% of people are neutral about improving human relations, and 38.8% are neutral about no longer falling sick. The number of people who disagree and strongly disagree with mindfulness’s benefits is deficient. Thus, most people strongly agree or agree with the benefits of mindfulness, such as the ability to concentrate, Stress relief, and living a better life. However, most people are neutral about improvement in human relations. From this

graph, the majority of people accept the benefits of mindfulness. However, some people are neutral about some of the benefits of mindfulness.

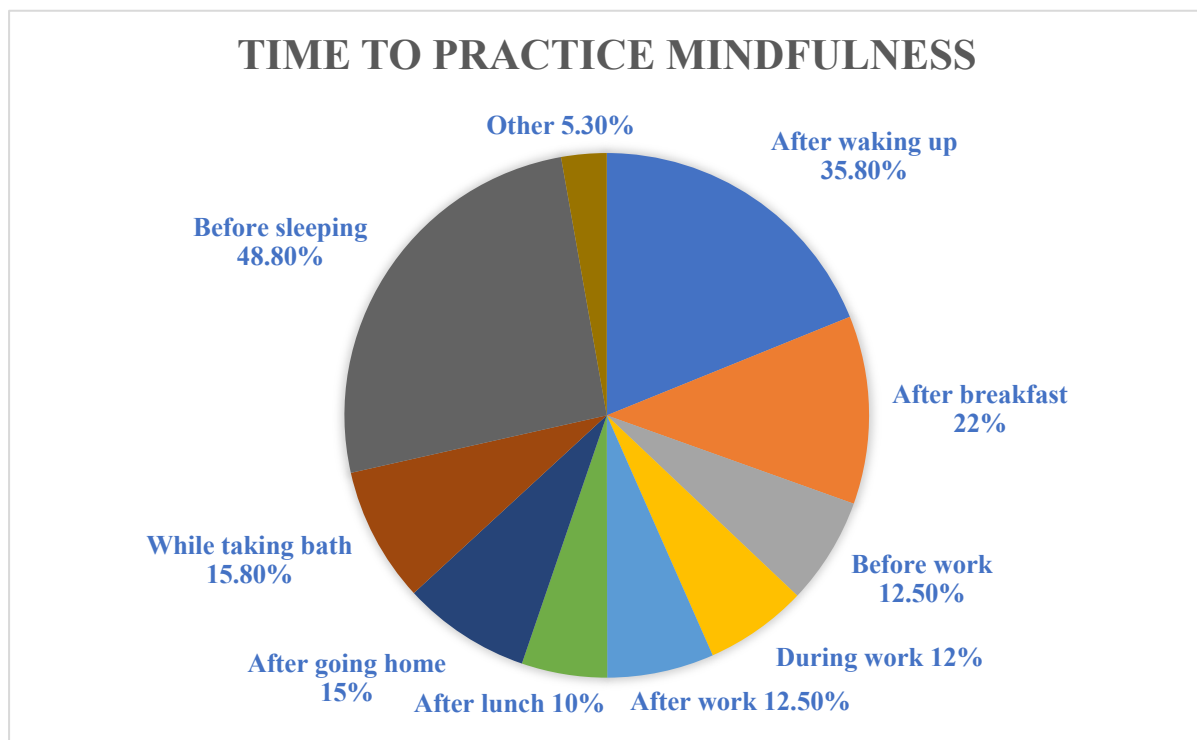


Figure 7: Time to Practice Mindfulness

Source: Created and translated by Author based on <https://russellme.com/columns/mindfulness-meditation/955/>

Figure 7. shows when the respondents practice mindfulness. There are ten response options. 1. After waking up, 2. After breakfast, 3. Before work, 4. During work, 5. After work, 6. After lunch, 7. After going home, 8. While taking a bath, 9. Before sleeping, and 10. Other. 48.8% of people practice it before sleeping. 35.8% of people practice it after waking up, and 22.0% practice it after breakfast. 15.8% practice while taking a bath, while 15.0% practice it after going home. Thus, most Japanese prefer to practice mindfulness starting or ending their day. In addition, there is a culture of bathing in Japan for relaxation. Therefore, some Japanese prefer to practice mindfulness during that time.

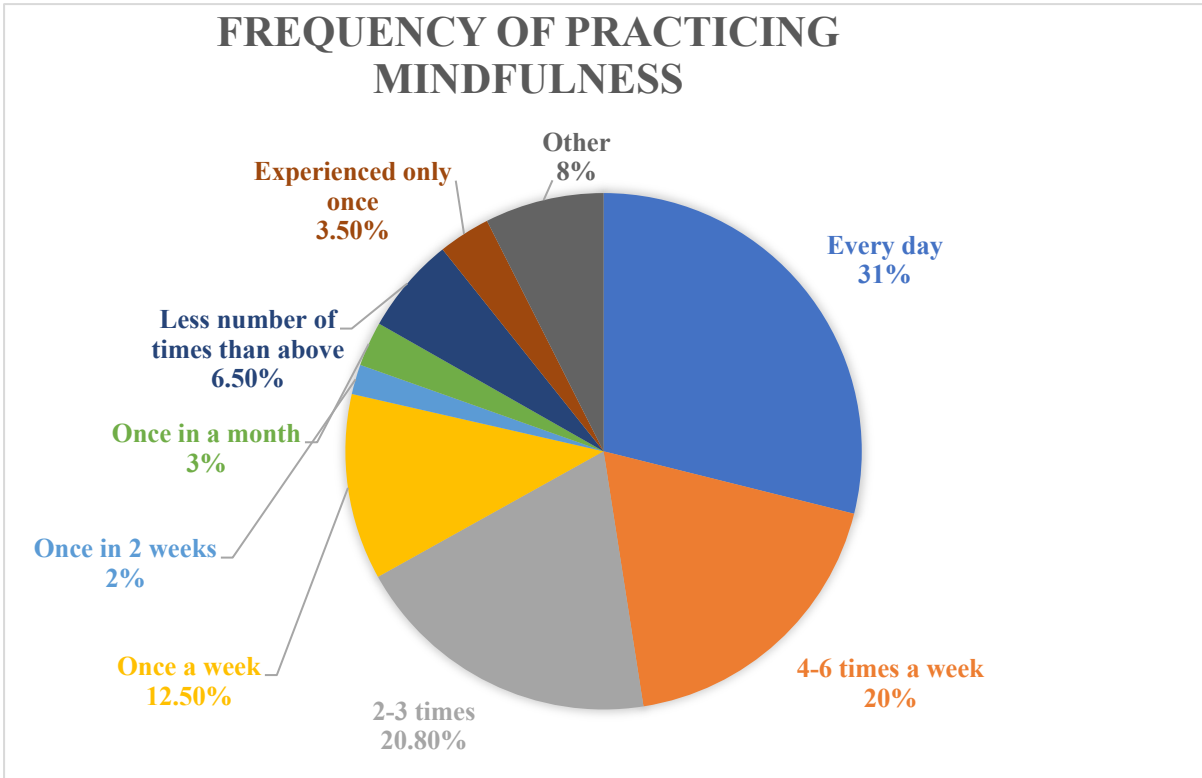


Figure 8: Frequency of Practicing Mindfulness

Source: Created and translated by Author based on <https://russellme.com/columns/mindfulness-meditation/955/>

Figure 8. shows the frequency of practicing mindfulness. There are nine response options. 1. Every day, 2. 4-6 times a week, 3. 2-3 times a week, 4. Once a week, 5. Once in 2 weeks, 6. Once in a month, 7. Less number of times than above, 8. Experienced only once and 9. Other. 31% of the population practice mindfulness every day. 20.0% practice it 4-6 times a week, and 20.8% practice it 2-3 times a week. Therefore, the majority of Japanese practice mindfulness as a routine.

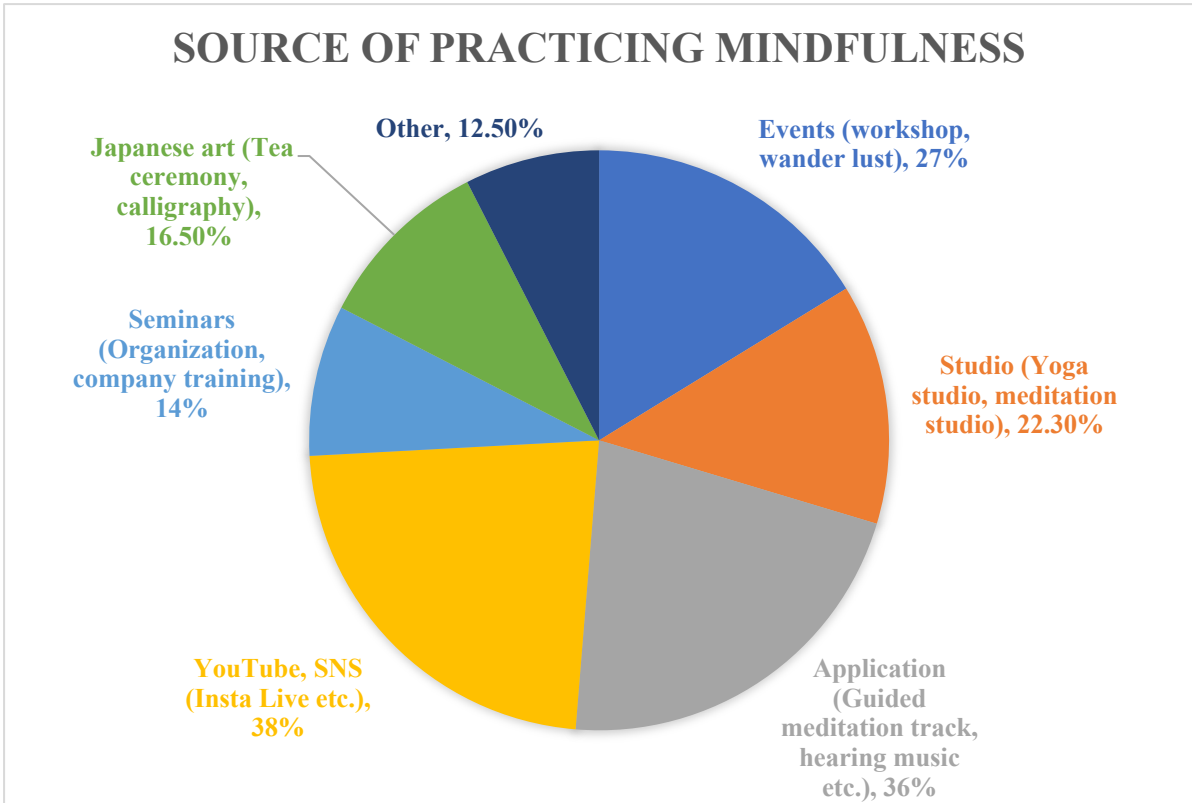


Figure 9: Source of Practicing Mindfulness

Source: Created and translated by Author based on <https://russellme.com/columns/mindfulness-meditation/955/>

Figure 9 is a graphical representation of how the respondents practice mindfulness. There are seven response options. 1. Events (workshop, wander lust), 2. Studio (Yoga studio, meditation studio), 3. Application (Guided meditation track, hearing music, etc.), 4. YouTube, Social Networking Sites (SNS) (Insta Live, etc.), 5. Seminars (Organization, company training), 6. Japanese art (Tea ceremony, calligraphy), and 7. Other. 38.0% of respondents practice mindfulness with YouTube and SNS (Insta Live, etc.), and 35.0% of respondents practice mindfulness using an application (Guided meditation track, hearing music, etc.). 27.0% practice it in events, and 22.3% practice it by going to studios. Therefore, most people practice mindfulness virtually rather than going to mindfulness studios. The reasons to attend online courses is perhaps because the survey was conducted from May 4 to 6, 2021, when the COVID-19 pandemic was active.

The market survey also asked about the reasons for practicing mindfulness. It was found that the most common reasons to practice mindfulness are “to relax (60.3%)” and “to calm the mind (50.3%)” or for self-care. Other reasons are “to relieve stress (49.8%)”, “to relieve fatigue (36.8%),” and “to improve concentration (27.3%)”.

4.2.3. Limitation of Market Research Conducted by Imagination Creative and Russel Mindfulness Entertainment

The market research conducted by Imagination Creative Co., Ltd. in partnership with the business comic “Google’s Mindfulness Revolution in Manga” provided an overview of the causes of stress, awareness about mindfulness, and the image of mindfulness in Japanese society in 2017. Moreover, it showed responses of each category by age group. However, the survey has the following limitations. 1. For the causes of stress, the result considered only four causes of stress. It does not show if there are any other causes included in the questionnaire. 2. The categories do not provide the number of respondents for each age group. 3. Regarding the image of mindfulness, the survey does not clarify whether people who have never heard about mindfulness are included. 4. Also, the survey does not clarify whether people who are not interested in mindfulness are asked about their image of it. Thus, the market research does not clearly explain mindfulness awareness in Japanese society. However, the survey contributed to some extent in spreading awareness about mindfulness.

The market research conducted by Russel Mindfulness Entertainment in 2020 showed that mindfulness is growing in Japan. If the results are compared to the market research conducted in 2017, Japanese interest in mindfulness is increasing. However, there are limitations to this survey. 1. From the survey results, it looks like most of the survey respondents are mindfulness practitioners 2. The survey does not specify the number of respondents in each age group. These limitations show that another market research is required in Japan to understand the expansion of mindfulness.

4.3. Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Proliferation of Mindfulness

The COVID-19 pandemic played a crucial role in the expansion of mindfulness. The changes that the pandemic brought to people's lives resulted in mental, social, and economic crises. Various stressors such as changes in lifestyle, fear of getting infected by the virus, and fear of losing Jobs and businesses created mental pressure on the global society. According to some reports, the pandemic brought changes in the sensory environment. Due to the stay-home policy and social distancing, online communication increased. In this period, the sense of sight and hearing became prominent, and the sense of touch, an essential form of communication, lost its power. It resulted in mental conditions such as loneliness, anxiety, etc. Organizations such as World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations (UN), American Psychological

Association (APA), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) advised practicing mindfulness in response to the worldwide decline in mental health.

Japan was no exception to the mental decline caused by the pandemic. Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan conducted an online survey⁷⁰ about mental health between September 11 to September 14, 2020, with 10,981 respondents above the age of 15 years. According to the survey results, respondents faced trouble and stress due to the fear of getting infected, lifestyle, medical facilities, and family. 75.5% of respondents were stressed because they feared that they or their family members would get infected by the virus. 50.6% of respondents were stressed because they had difficulty obtaining medical supplies and sanitary supplies (masks, etc.), and 50.4% were stressed because they could not travel and do leisure activities. 43.1% faced difficulties in receiving medical facilities. 47.9% were stressed because they could not meet family, relatives, friends, etc. In a CNN report published in December 2020, Japan recorded over 2,100 suicides in October 2020, the highest number since May 2015 (CNN 2020). Several other reports recorded mental health decline.

During the pandemic, Mindfulness studios began conducting online programs and events to spread awareness about mindfulness and reach a vast audience. Courses such as MBSR, MBCT, and SIY were also conducted online. Tokyo mindfulness center, MBSR study group, and many other studios in Japan conducted online courses. Mindfulness studio MELON provided online mindfulness sessions free of cost for medical professionals and common people. According to the website of MELON, the free online mindfulness service was available for common people from January 13 to March 12, 2021 (MELON 2021). The free online mindfulness service was available for medical professionals from April 2020 to November 2021 (MELON 2022). Japanese Association of Mindfulness also conducted annual conferences and events online during the pandemic. Wisdom 2.0 Japan and Zen 2.0 were also available online in this period.

Online events on mindfulness increased during the pandemic. Peatix, an event searching and ticketing platform published a report⁷¹ based on the survey they conducted in 2021. According to their report, the number of online events about mindfulness has increased to 4,529, which is a 295.6% increase compared to 2020 (Peatix n.d.). The number of online courses

⁷⁰ The results of the survey are available on the website of Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (https://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/newpage_15766.html accessed October 2, 2022).

⁷¹ The report is available on the website of Peatix (https://blog.peatix.com/featured/2021_event_survey.html#h.jb8in9q5ict5 accessed October 2, 2022).

available on the website of Street Academy (Storeka)⁷² as of October 2, 2022, is 673. Among the several categories, Yoga fitness has the highest number of online courses. The number is 116. The second-highest category is beauty health, and the third-highest category is Business skills (Storeka 2022). When the word mindfulness is searched on the Udemy platform, 99 Japanese online mindfulness courses appeared as of October 2, 2022. Among the several categories, Yoga has the highest number of online courses (Udemy 2022).⁷³

As seen in section 4.2.2, figure 9, the primary sources of practicing mindfulness identified in the market research conducted in 2020 were YouTube, SNS, and cellphone apps. As mentioned in section 4.1.1., point 3), 550 videos on mindfulness are available on YouTube as of October 2, 2022. 11 videos were posted in 2019, 114 in 2020, 167 in 2021, and 258 as of October 2, 2022. There has been a growth in the number of videos from 2020 which is during the pandemic. In this way, when Japan faced challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, mindfulness spread rapidly through online courses and social media. As seen in the market research results in section 4.2.1., table 7, 74.9% of respondents were unaware of mindfulness 2017. Currently, there is no data available on the awareness of mindfulness. However, growth in mindfulness courses, books, articles, and mindfulness studios, especially from 2020, shows that mindfulness is spreading in Japanese society, and the COVID-19 pandemic has become one of the reasons for its growth.

In this way, the growth of mindfulness in Japan is evident. Following the American pattern, it grew in multiple directions and spread with various interpretations. More than MBSR and other Western mindfulness programs, locally designed mindfulness programs are conducted in Japan. Yoga studios, by offering mindfulness programs, are contributing to it. The reach of the programs increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, mindfulness and meditation, which were limited to medical professionals and Buddhist monks in Japan, are now practiced by common Japanese.

⁷² The website of Street Academy (Storeka) is (<https://www.street-academy.com/about>).

⁷³ The website of Udemy is (<https://www.udemy.com>).

PART 2

Interview Survey

Part two is based on an interview survey conducted in Japan from October 16, 2020, to June 28, 2021. In the beginning, I sought publicly known organizations that offer mindfulness programs. I first selected the well-established organizations that offer Western mindfulness-based programs and are connected with Western mindfulness organizations. I further contacted organizations that offer locally developed mindfulness programs. 16 organizations that promote and teach mindfulness and mindfulness-based meditations were contacted. 10 of them agreed to participate in the interview survey. Each organization had a minimum of 1 respondent and a maximum of 3 respondents. The initial plan was to conduct interviews with all the founders of the organizations. I requested the staff of the organizations whether they could connect me to the founders. Some of them connected me to their founders and allowed me to conduct interviews with them; while others selected the individuals from their organizations who agreed to participate in the interview survey. The total number of respondents from mindfulness organizations was 19. I conducted in-depth interviews with them.

While connecting with the mindfulness organizations, I also contacted individuals who conduct mindfulness programs or write articles on mindfulness. The individuals I contacted were mainly academics and Buddhist monks because while collecting information on mindfulness, I had read their articles and interviews. Those who agreed for the interview connected me to other individuals who work in this field. I contacted 21 individuals. 15 of them agreed to participate in the interview survey.

Before conducting the interview survey, the purpose, questions, and schedule were discussed in detail with the research supervisor. The interview survey was conducted based on the guidelines written in the research promotion rules of Daito Bunka University.⁷⁴ As of October 2020, the institutional review board of the university was under preparation. Therefore, the research proposal and interview questionnaires were not submitted to the institutional review board. However, in order to maintain the research ethics, the purpose, content, and schedule of the interview survey were shared with the organizations and individuals via email prior to the interviews (See Appendix 4). After their written agreement and no objection to the

⁷⁴ For more details of the research promotion rules of Daito Bunka University, please refer (https://www.daito.ac.jp/research/promotion/human_morals.html).

purpose and the content, the interviews were scheduled with them. All the respondents participated voluntarily in the interview survey.

The consent of the respondents was also taken at the beginning of the actual interview and the purpose and content of the interview were again explained to them. The respondents were assured at the beginning of the interview that their personal information and the discussions of the interview would not be used for any purpose other than research analysis and completion of the dissertation. In every interview, permission was taken to do an audio-visual recording of the interview. The respondents were also assured that the audio-visual recordings would not be shared with a third party or on social platforms.

Many respondents were public figures and some of them often speak about their work publicly. They expressed that their names can be used while including their opinions in the dissertation. For those who did not provide permission to disclose their names or their organizations' names and opinions they provided in the interview survey, every care was taken to maintain confidentiality.

The interview schedule was determined based on the availability of the respondent. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most interviews were conducted online through Zoom meeting software. Only four interviews were conducted in person because the respondents allowed me to conduct interviews in that manner. Three of them were conducted in Tokyo; while one of them was conducted in Saitama prefecture. The interviews conducted in person allowed me to observe them closely and see their workplaces. Most of the interviews are individual interviews. Only two interviews were conducted with a group of 2 individuals because they belonged to the same organization. The length of the interviews was between 38 minutes to 2.5 hours. language of the interview was primarily Japanese, and only two interviews were conducted in both languages; English and Japanese. The details of the interview survey are provided in Appendix 3.

The number of individuals who participated in the interview survey was 34. They are mindfulness instructors, Buddhist monks, academics, yoga teachers, psychiatrists, and psychologists. Many respondents belong to more than one profession. For example, a Buddhist monk who also works as a psychiatrist or an academic. A yoga teacher who works as a mindfulness instructor. The reason behind selecting respondents from various backgrounds is to understand the views on mindfulness programs from various angles. In order to understand the holistic growth of mindfulness in Japanese society, it was necessary to involve individuals who work in various fields. The information of respondents is presented below in Table 10.

Respondent No.	Occupation/ Profession	Gender	Age group	Respondent's Details
1	Buddhist Monk (Japanese Buddhism: Zen sect)	M	-	Member of Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists (JNEB). ⁷⁵
2	Buddhist Monk (Japanese Buddhism: Zen sect)	M	50-60	Rev. Muhō Nölke Former chief priest at Antaiji Temple, Japan. Rev. Nölke was born in Germany. He has been living in Japan for many years. He has published numerous books and articles on religion in Japan, Zen and mindfulness.
3	Buddhist Monk (Thailand Theravāda Buddhism)	M	60-70	A Japanese monk trained in Thailand's Theravāda Buddhism.
4	Buddhist Monk (Sri Lankan Theravāda Buddhism)	M	70-80	Rev. Dr. Alubomulle Sumanasara Thero Founder of the Japan Theravada Buddhist Association. Rev. Sumanasara was Born in Sri Lanka. He has been living in Japan for more than 40 years. He is highly respected scholar and a Buddhist master in Japan. He has published numerous books and articles on Buddhist teachings and their application in daily life.
5	Buddhist Monk, (Japanese Buddhism: Zen sect) Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	M	60-70	Dr. Masaki Matsubara Researcher at Cornell University, United States and Brown University, United States. Dr. Matsubara teaches Zen and tea ceremony at Google headquarters and Virgin America headquarters.

⁷⁵ Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists (JNEB) is an organization that promote engaged Buddhism. For more details of the organization, refer (<https://jneb.net>).

6	Buddhist Monk, (Japanese Zen Buddhism and Myanmar Theravāda Buddhism) Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	M	50-60	Mr. Vimala Inoue Founder of Mindful Life Kenkyūjyo: Office Rakuda and a former professor at Health Science University, Japan. Mr. Inoue is trained in Japanese Zen Buddhism and Myanmar Theravāda Buddhism.
7	Buddhist Monk, (Japanese Buddhism: Jodoshinshu sect) Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	M	70-80	Rev. Dr. Kenneth Tanaka Former professor at Musashino University, Japan. Rev. Dr. Tanaka completed his Ph.D. from University of California, Berkeley, United States. He specializes in Buddhist studies.
8	Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	M	50-60	Dr. Kenta Kasai Professor at Sophia University, Japan. He specializes in religious studies.
9	Buddhist Monk, (Japanese Buddhism: Shingon sect) Mindfulness Instructor	M	40-50	-
10	Buddhist Monk, (Japanese Buddhism: Nichiren sect) Mindfulness Instructor	M	40-50	-
11	Buddhist Monk, (Japanese Buddhism: Zen sect) Psychiatrist, Mindfulness Instructor	M	40-50	Rev. Dr. Taishu Hironori Kawano Psychiatrist and a chief priest at Rinkoji Temple Japan.
12	Director of Buddhist Magazine	M	-	Mr. Eisaku Kawashima Director at Samgha Shinsha Ltd.
13	Mindfulness Instructor	F	-	Administrative member of wisdom2.0 conference held in Japan in 2020.
14	Mindfulness Instructor	M	40-50	Certified MBSR instructor.
15	Mindfulness Instructor	M	40-50	-
16	Mindfulness Instructor	M	-	-
17	Mindfulness Instructor	F	-	-

18	Mindfulness Instructor	M	-	Mr. Masaki Kani Mindfulness instructor at Osaka Mindfulness Kenkyūjyo.
19	Mindfulness Instructor	F	-	-
20	Mindfulness Instructor	F	-	Ms. Hiroko Kuroishi Founder of Mindful Quick Read Co., Ltd. and developer of Mindfulness Sokudoku.
21	Mindfulness Instructor	M	-	-
22	Mindfulness Instructor	M	30-40	Mr. Jyunichi Nishiyama Founder of Osaka Mindfulness Kenkyūjyo.
23	Mindfulness Instructor	M	70-80	Mr. Kenjiro Ohta Founder of the Japanese Association of Mindfulness Psychotherapy (JAMP) and developer of Self-Insight Meditation Technology Therapy (SIMT).
24	Mindfulness Instructor	M	60-70	Disciple of Thich Nhat Hanh.
25	Mindfulness Instructor	M	-	-
26	Mindfulness Instructor	F	-	Mindfulness facilitator from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC).
27	Mindfulness Instructor, Psychiatrist	M	50-60	Certified MBSR and SIY instructor.
28	Mindfulness Instructor, Psychiatrist	M	-	Certified MBSR instructor. Completed MBCT step 1 from Oxford University.
29	Mindfulness Instructor, Psychologist	F	-	-
30	Mindfulness Instructor, Yoga Teacher	F	50-60	Ms. Yukari Murata Founder of mindful esalen.
31	Mindfulness Instructor, Yoga Teacher	F	30-40	Ms. Asako Nishiyama Mindfulness Instructor at Osaka Mindfulness Kenkyūjyo and founder of Kenkōbikenkyūjyo.
32	Mindfulness Instructor, Psychologist, Yoga Teacher	F	-	Certified MBSR instructor.

33	Mindfulness Instructor, Organization Staff	F	-	Mr. Shigeru Horisaki Japan Institute for Mindfulness in Leadership.
34	Mindfulness Studio Staff	F	-	-

Table 10: Respondent Information

Source: Author

Notes: 1. In the gender column, “M” denotes male, and “F” denotes female.

2. In the age group column, the “-” symbol is used if the age group of the respondent is unknown.

3. The last column provides more information about the respondents. The names of the respondents are presented with their prior permission. For anonymous respondents, either their mindfulness qualifications are mentioned or “-” symbol is used if there is no significant information.

4. The information of respondents is as of June 2021.

Table 10 lists the respondents who participated in the interview survey. It also shows their occupations, gender, age group, and additional information about the institutions to they belong, their mindfulness qualification etc. In further sections of this dissertation, the respondents will be addressed with the serial numbers they are given in table 10.

All the interviews were semi-structured interviews. The first half of every interview was dedicated to understanding the respondent and their activities. The second half was dedicated to understanding the respondents’ views on mindfulness and its connection with religion, its acceptance and expansion in Japanese society, and its future. Before every interview, I gathered information via internet and published material about the respondent, his or her organization (if applicable), expertise, qualifications, and activities regarding teaching mindfulness. At the beginning of every interview, I asked every respondent how they came to know about Western mindfulness programs. Second, I asked about their qualifications, their activities in general, and related to teaching mindfulness programs. Third, for those who are associated with mindfulness organizations, I asked about the details of their organizations, their role, and the mindfulness programs they offer, their association with Western mindfulness organizations and leaders.

For Buddhist monks, I mainly asked about their sects, the organizations/temples they work with, their views on western mindfulness programs, and their experience in teaching mindfulness programs. From the information I gathered prior to the interview, I identified that some Buddhist monks have a specific view on Western mindfulness programs. I asked them in detail about the reasons for having such a view. For mindfulness instructors, I asked about their qualifications, the programs they teach, and their teaching methods and experience.

In the second half of the interview, I first asked about the difference between Zen and western mindfulness programs, the reasons that mindfulness programs were not born in Japan, and whether religion can be disassociated from mindfulness. Next, I asked about the role of sociocultural aspects in accepting mindfulness and teaching methods. Finally, I asked about standardization for teaching methods, concerns regarding the current practice of mindfulness, and the future of mindfulness in Japan. Buddhist Monks who teach mindfulness programs were asked about the reasons for teaching such programs and their teaching styles. Yoga teachers were asked about their program content and the reasons for taking an interest in mindfulness programs.

The interview survey was not targeted to any particular organization or individual and their activities. In addition, it did not intend to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of mindfulness practice. Its aim was to understand the role and view of mindfulness organizations and individuals on mindfulness programs. Therefore, the interviews were conducted mainly with two types of individuals. First, those who teach and promote mindfulness programs or are associated with mindfulness programs through organizations. Second, those who study mindfulness and have shared their views on mindfulness programs through articles, blogs, and interviews. The information of respondents and their organizations was mostly available on the internet.

The interview survey did not target the participants of the mindfulness programs for the following reasons. First, the participants of mindfulness programs may include patients with mental illnesses. Due to ethical issues, it is challenging to conduct interviews with them. Second, Mindfulness and yoga organizations maintain the confidentiality of the personal information of the participants. Therefore, I could not connect with the participants through the organizations. Lastly, it was challenging to contact the participants through other channels and arrange interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thus, the interview survey does not present the views of all individuals in Japan who are engaged in mindfulness practices. In order to understand awareness about mindfulness programs and their participation in those programs, market research, social platforms, and media content were analyzed. Through the interview survey, the varieties of mindfulness programs, teaching styles, and views of Buddhist monks and academics were analyzed.

The analysis is divided into three chapters. Chapter five examines how mindfulness is presented on the websites of mindfulness and Yoga studios. Second, it discusses the similarities and differences between Zen and mindfulness. Third, it identifies the reasons why mindfulness programs were not born in Japan, even if Japan has a history of Buddhism. Fourth, it presents

the views shared in the interview survey on the question of whether religion can be removed from mindfulness. Further, it briefly discusses the response of Japanese monks to the popularization of mindfulness programs. Finally, it discusses the image of mindfulness in Japanese society.

Chapter six first examines the teaching methods that mindfulness instructors use in Japan. Second, it explores how mindfulness instructors respond to religion-related questions. Third, it examines whether cultural aspects play any role in the acceptance of mindfulness. Fourth, it briefly analyses how mindfulness spreads in the Yoga industry and why Yoga teachers are interested in mindfulness. Fifth, it analyzes whether there should be standardization for teaching mindfulness programs.

Chapter seven mainly covers three aspects of mindfulness and Japanese society. First, it analyzes if mindfulness programs are necessary in Japan. Second, it discusses whether mindfulness would grow on the future. Third, it explores the problems that the expansion of mindfulness has brought or might bring in the future. It further discusses the aspects that need to be taken into account for the future growth of mindfulness. Overall, part two is dedicated to discussing the views shared by the respondents in the interview survey. Based on the discussion, it analyzes how mindfulness is accepted and practiced in Japan.

Chapter 5: Mindfulness and Religion

5.1. Presentation and Promotion of Mindfulness Programs

Japan's sociocultural aspects are likely to play a significant role in the presentation and promotion of mindfulness. It may ultimately impact the acceptance of mindfulness in Japanese society. This section examines how mindfulness is promoted by Japanese mindfulness and Yoga studios.

5.1.1. Mindfulness Studios

As discussed in chapter four, modern mindfulness in Japan began growing after 2011. There is a gradual increase in the number of mindfulness studios and Yoga studios that teach mindfulness. These studios work in multiple areas. They conduct programs, seminars, and workshops. This section analyzes the mindfulness-related information on the websites of mindfulness and Yoga studios. It identifies the way mindfulness is presented and conveyed through the websites.

According to the data collected from 39 websites of mindfulness and Yoga studios across Japan, the following words are common in the description of mindfulness and mindfulness-related courses. The words are America, Western, Harvard University, Brown University, University of Massachusetts, Google, Meditation, Yoga, Scientific, Psychology, Psychiatry Brain, Neurology, Buddhism, Religion, and Zen. The following graph identifies the number of times the words appear on the websites of mindfulness and yoga studios.

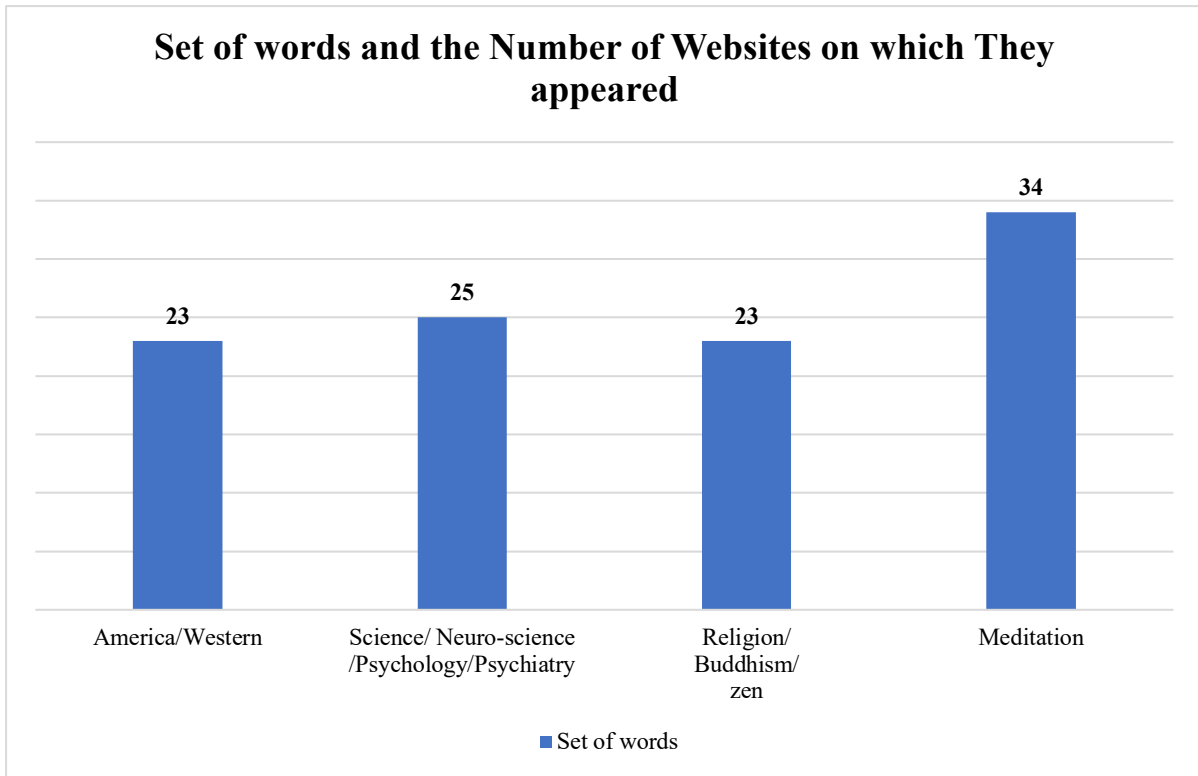


Figure 10: Set of Words and the Number of Websites on Which They appeared

Source: Author

- Notes: 1. The data is collected as of April 2022 from 39 websites of mindfulness and yoga organizations in Japan. For more details, see Appendix 2.
 2. The website links of mindfulness and yoga studios are provided in appendix 1.
 3. All the websites of mindfulness and yoga studios considered in figure 10 are primarily in Japanese. The English translation of the website content used in the discussion below is translated by the Author.

Figure 10 shows the common words used by the mindfulness and Yoga Studios on their websites to explain Mindfulness. They are divided into four groups, 1. America/West, 2. Science/ Neuroscience /Psychology/Psychiatry, 3. Religion/Buddhism/Zen, and 4. Meditation. Figure 10 also shows the number of Websites on which the group of Words Appeared. The graph is prepared based on the data collected from the websites of 39 mindfulness and Yoga studios. Among 39 studios, 23 explain mindfulness with references to America or Western, 25 of them provide references to science, Neuroscience, psychology, and psychiatry, 23 of them have words like religion, Buddhism, and Zen and 34 of them explain mindfulness as meditation.

In the first group, 23 studios have references to the United States and Europe on their websites. Moreover, they have references to Kabat-Zinn and MBSR. For example, the Japan Institute for mindfulness website mentions that “In recent years, mindfulness has been gaining attention in European countries.” The Japanese association of mindfulness website indicates that “Mindfulness meditation has already been systematized into various methods in the fields

of business, education, and psychiatry, mainly in Western countries.” Mindfulness studios that offer MBSR, MBCT, and other mindfulness-based interventions have explanations about Kabat-Zinn and the development of MBSR.

There are references to Google, Apple, Facebook, and Nike. For example, MiLI, which offers Google’s SIY program in Japan, mentions on its website that “SIY is a skill development program developed by Google that combines mindfulness, neuroscience, and emotional intelligence to bring out individuality and leadership.” Grateful academy mentions that “the elites of leading companies such as Google and Facebook are all practicing mindfulness.” Similarly, on the website of Manabiya Academy, it is written that “In Europe and the United States, top companies such as Google, Intel, McKinsey, and DANONE have introduced it (mindfulness).”

In addition to the references to Western countries and companies, many studios explain the efficacy of mindfulness through scientific evidence. As shown in Figure 10, 25 studios have information related to science, neurology, psychology and psychiatry. Mindfulness meditation association (Masao Yoshida Mindfulness) states on its website, "In 2005, American psychologist Sarah Lazer reported that if you continue practicing mindfulness meditation for many years, certain changes will occur in your brain”. On the website of Suwaru, it is written that “Since the “effects of meditation on the mind and body” are scientifically proven in the United States, meditation has been adopted by many managers, businessmen and IT engineers such as Steve Jobs and more and more people around the world are practicing meditation.” Japan Yoga meditation association states that, “This meditation method, which has no religiosity and has been medically and scientifically verified, has spread all over the world and has been introduced by many world-leading companies such as Google, Apple, and NIKE. Mindfulness studio MELON explains, “Our mission is to popularize mindfulness programs in Japan that are easy for beginners to start and continue and are based on evidence that has been proven by universities and research institutes in the United States.”

Mindfulness and Yoga studios understand the Japanese interest in Western culture. Second, they provide references to the world’s prominent companies like Google, Apple, and Facebook and their association with mindfulness to create trust among common people. Third, through scientific evidence provided by Western universities, they assert the practical benefits of mindfulness.

The third group in figure 10 is Religion/Buddhism/Zen. These words are found on 23 websites. Awareness Retreat Center offers “*Kizuki no Meisō*” course. The course is based on Vipassanā meditation and Zen techniques that develop awareness. Mindfulness and Yoga

network states, “In fact, it is one of the Buddha’s teachings, “*Sati*” which is a part of the “Nobel Eightfold path”. *Sati* has been replaced with the English word “Mindfulness.” Most studios mention that mindfulness has roots in various forms of Buddhism and Yoga. A few websites use the word *gyakuyunyū* (reimport) for mindfulness. However, almost all studios provide clarifications that mindfulness is not religious.

The examples of such clarifications are as follows; 1. Even if mindfulness has roots in Buddhism and Zen, it is scientifically proven in Western institutes. 2. The aim of the mindfulness programs is not to promote any religion or ideology; it is for mind training, stress reduction, health, leadership skills, etc. 3. Mindfulness is a non-religious meditation used in hospitals, companies, schools, prisons, and sports and is widely adopted by various organizations, including government organizations. 4. Religiosity is removed from mindfulness programs to make them available for people from all religions. 5. Mindfulness programs are related to Buddhist techniques practiced in the modern disciplines of psychiatry, psychology, and neuroscience.

Mindfulness studio Kokorone states, "Mindfulness is originally adopted in the United States from Japanese Buddhist meditation, with the religiosity removed as much as possible." Similarly, the Japan Institute for mindfulness in leadership writes on its website that “Mindfulness meditation has spread rapidly in Europe and the United States, especially in this century, as a non-religious meditation method that is comfortable even for Christians and is widely adopted by various organizations, including government organizations.” Some mindfulness studios clearly state that they do not promote any religion. Japan association of promotion of mindfulness has a note on its website that states, “The association proposes programs that incorporate the teachings of Buddha, which is the source of mindfulness but does not endorse any particular religion such as Buddhism. Please be assured that you do not have to engage in religions and beliefs”. Mindfulness studio MELON states in its FAQ, "Mindfulness incorporates the methods of Buddhism and Zen. However, the program's aim is mind and brain training, and it does not have religious elements.”

There are a few exceptions. For instance, the Japanese Association of Mindfulness Psychotherapy (JAMP) states on its website, “Our organization does not depend on “religious mindfulness.” We study “socially applied mindfulness” that does not depend on any existing religious thought.” Nevertheless, it states, “However, there are some problems that can only be solved with religious mindfulness.” Such descriptions are rarely identified on the websites. The majority of the studios promote mindfulness as secular.

The last group in figure 10 is meditation. This word appeared on 34 websites. On some

websites, it appeared as ‘*Maindofurunesu Meisō*’ (mindfulness meditation), while on other websites, it appeared in the explanation of mindfulness. In the United States, mindfulness is mainly spread as meditation. Even Haṭha Yoga is considered a meditation practice. Japanese studios also describe mindfulness practice as meditation.

Based on the data collected from the mindfulness and Yoga studios’ websites, it is clear that mindfulness and yoga studios in Japan present mindfulness as Western, scientific, and secular. Many of them mention about its connection with Buddhism. However, in most cases, explanations of Buddhist and religious roots are followed by clarifications so that the studio and their activities do not look religious.

5.2. The Practice of Japanese Zen and Modern Mindfulness

Mindfulness practice is a mixture of selective teachings from Buddhism and Yoga. Historically, in Asian cultures, meditation was practiced to seek the path of enlightenment by renouncing materialistic life. As it went to the West, it was mainstreamed as a tool or instrument for health benefits. The mindfulness movement is borne from Western thought and Eastern practices. Many Asian teachers have contributed to this movement. Zen masters from Japan also contributed significantly to spreading meditation in the West.

There are three reasons to discuss Japanese Zen and its connection with modern mindfulness. First, Japanese Zen has played an important role in the mindfulness movement. The first encounter of Kabat-Zinn with Buddhism was when he attended a talk given by Philip Kapleau (1912-2004), a Zen monk trained in the Sanbō Kyōdan sect of Japanese Zen. There are references and quotes from Zen monks in Kabat-Zinn’s writings. The second reason is that mindfulness gained attention as a meditation practice. There are two types of meditation techniques taught in mindfulness programs. First is ‘Focused attention’ (*Samatha*), which is paying attention to an object, for example, breath. The other technique is ‘Open Monitoring’ (*Vipassanā*), which is a moment-to-moment observation or monitoring without reacting (Chihara 2018: 4; Lutz et al., 2008:163). The Zazen practice is based on *Samatha* meditation. Third, many studies and discussions on Zen and modern mindfulness in Japan exist. Zen monks and Buddhists often compare Japanese Zen and modern mindfulness. This section discusses the similarities and differences between Japanese Zen and modern mindfulness. It also explains the reasons why common people prefer mindfulness over Zen.

5.2.1. Similarities between Japanese Zen and Modern Mindfulness in Terms of Practice

The primary similarity between Japanese Zen and modern mindfulness is *Samatha* meditation. In Zen, one focuses on the ingoing and outgoing breaths. Sitting meditations in mindfulness also start with observing breaths. In the interview survey, Rev. Dr. Taishu Kawano, a Zen monk and a psychiatrist explained the similarities between Japanese Zen and mindfulness. He stated,

Zen meditation is *Samatha* meditation, but Zen is not limited to *Samatha*. According to meditation scholars, monks who undergo the training of Zen also practice Vipassanā as a part of their training. Zen is practiced in daily life. My teacher used to refer to it as ‘*Gyōjūzaga*,’ which means all the activities that we do in our daily life are Zen meditation. For example, monks who walk with big hats have limited vision of the road. They have to be extremely careful while walking. They have to be very attentive. This is nothing but Vipassanā. This attention training is practiced in cleaning and collecting alms (author’s interview with Rev. Dr. Taishu Kawano, 28 February 2021).

In this way, Zen is not limited to meditation. Even though the primary similarity between Zen and modern mindfulness in terms of practice is *Samatha* meditation, the lifestyle and daily tasks of Zen monks contain Vipassanā elements that are paying attention to the surroundings and actions and maintaining the balance between them.

5.2.2. Differences between Japanese Zen and Modern Mindfulness in Terms of Practice

This section examines the differences between Japanese Zen and modern mindfulness based on the interview survey. Their responses are summarized in table 11 and are divided into four categories, 1. Practice and Religion, 2. Accessibility, 3. Science and 4. Scope. All respondents are Japanese, and the differences mentioned here are based on their experience and image of Zen and mindfulness in Japan.

Category	Zen	Modern Mindfulness
Practice and Religion	Zen is done with no purpose.	Mindfulness is done with purpose. The purpose depends on the individual and the industry. Mindfulness is focused on one goal.

	The ultimate goal is self-realization and enlightenment.	Mindfulness is done for self-compassion, well-being, and living a good life.
	Emptying the mind.	Observing whatever comes in the mind and body.
	Extended training is required.	Mindfulness can be practiced for a limited time.
	Strict training is required. Zen has a process of learning.	No strict training is required. Mindfulness is easy to access. People experience it and understand it on their own.
	Zen has rules and a framework. For example, sitting position, clothing, etc.	Mindfulness does not have strict rules.
	Zen is <i>Samatha</i> , that is, concentration. Concentrating on one thing.	Mindfulness starts with <i>Samatha</i> but eventually goes into <i>Vipassanā</i> , that is, observation.
	Zen is taught traditionally. Chanting rituals are performed.	Rituals and chanting are removed. The focus is meditation.
	A Zen master teaches Zen.	A mindfulness instructor teaches mindfulness.
	Zen is religion. The background of Zen is different.	In mindfulness, there is no belief in God. Mindfulness is a tool or method. The background of mindfulness is different from Zen. Mindfulness is considered secular.
Accessibility	Zen might not be easy to understand for common people.	Mindfulness is systematic and easy to understand for common people.
	Zen is done in temples away from daily life.	Mindfulness is implemented in daily life.
	Common people think Zen is complex, and a particularly high-class group practices it.	Mindfulness is light and casual. Therefore, young people take an interest in it.

Science	Zen does not have scientific data.	Mindfulness can be measured with science. To measure it with science, Kabat-Zinn has created a model.
Scope	Zen deals with life-related questions. For example, why am I here? What is the purpose of my life?	Mindfulness deals with physical and mental illness.
	In meditation, some phenomena or experiences are beyond human understanding. Zen deals with such experiences.	Mindfulness does not talk about experience that is beyond human understanding.

Table 11: Differences between Zen and Modern Mindfulness

Source: Author

Table 11 explains the differences between Zen and modern mindfulness. Zen is done with no purpose. The Zen meditation practice focuses on sitting meditation. It refuses materialism. On the other hand, modern mindfulness is done with purpose. The purpose varies depending on the individual or the industry. For example, mindfulness practice in the business industry has a purpose or goal of increasing productivity and leadership skills. Mindfulness practiced in the health industry aims to reduce mental and physical stress. Mindfulness is focused on a goal. Zen is practiced for self-realization. Mindfulness is practiced for self-compassion, well-being, and living a good life by reducing stress.

In Zen, emptying the mind is practiced. Mindfulness practice is not emptying the mind but observing what comes into the mind and body without any judgment. Long and strict training is required for Zen. Mindfulness can be practiced for a limited time, from 3 minutes to 1 hour. It can be practiced at any time and as a part of daily activities. No strict training is required. Mindfulness is easy to access. Zen has a particular process of learning. For mindfulness, people experience it and understand it in their way. Zen has rules and a framework. For example, sitting position, clothing, etc. Mindfulness does not have strict rules. Zen is *Samatha* meditation which means concentrating on one thing. Mindfulness starts with *Samatha* but eventually goes into *Vipassanā*, that is, observation.

Zen is taught traditionally. Mindfulness has a different way of presentation and expression. A Zen master teaches Zen. A mindfulness instructor teaches mindfulness. Access to mindfulness is not limited to one school or authority. Zen is religion. The background of Zen

is different. In mindfulness, there is no belief in God. Mindfulness is a tool or method. The background of mindfulness is different from Zen. Mindfulness is considered secular. Zen might not be easy to understand for common people. Mindfulness is systematic and easy to understand for common people. Zen is done in temples away from daily life. Mindfulness is implemented in daily life. Common people think that Zen is complex and is practiced by a high-class group. Mindfulness is light and casual. Therefore, young people take an interest in it. Zen does not have scientific data. Mindfulness can be measured with science. To measure it with science, Kabat-Zinn has created a model.

Zen deals with life-related questions. For example, why am I here? What is the purpose of my life? Mindfulness deals with physical and mental illness. In meditation, some phenomena or experiences are beyond human understanding. Zen deals with such experiences. Mindfulness does not talk about the experience that is beyond human understanding. In this way, the Japanese have a specific image of Zen. On the other hand, mindfulness spread as an American technique. It is easy to access and practice.

In this way, the Japanese have a specific image of Zen. On the other hand, mindfulness is spreading as a simple and scientifically proven technique that results in health benefits.

5.3. Why Were Mindfulness Programs Not Born in Japan?

As discussed in the last section, Japanese Zen is one of the important factors in the formation of MBSR. Many articles and commentaries show a close association between Japanese culture with mindfulness. For example, an article on BBC Travel titled “The Japanese skill copied by the world” explained that mindfulness, that is, moment-to-moment awareness is already present in Japanese culture in tea ceremony, haiku, flower viewing, moon viewing, and many customs (Powell 2017). If mindfulness is close to Japanese, why mindfulness programs were not developed in Japan. The interview survey discussed the question.

Some respondents mentioned that the reason mindfulness programs did not develop in Japan is that the scope of Japanese Buddhism is limited. Respondent 11 explained that the competition among various Buddhist sects created a mindset among Buddhist monks that their sect is right and the other sects are not. The more one gives importance to his or her sect, the more one tries to protect it and separate it from others. Zen and meditation are treated as a religion in Japan. Therefore, even though all sects are a part of the same Buddhism, they become separate religions.

In addition, Respondent 11 criticized Japanese Buddhism because it has become a

business. Respondent 11 stated that there is a *Danka* System⁷⁶ for temples. *Danka* means parishioner or household. They have their family grave in a particular temple. If the family member of the parishioner dies, the funeral is held at the same temple. The parishioner pays for it. In this way, conducting funerals at temples has become a business in Japan. People do not see Buddhism as a way to get liberated. Buddha shared his experience of liberation with everyone. Buddhism has excellent knowledge, but Buddhism in Japan is for funerals, and visiting graves.

Respondent 26 shared a similar opinion: “Temples are a part of capitalism. Temples are service providers. Their real role for the community has been lost. It has become a business.”. In this way, temples have become a part of the service sector. Their role is to provide funeral and memorial services. People do not seek help from them for their daily problems. In Japanese, Buddhism is referred as “*Osōshiki Bukkyō*,” which means funeral Buddhism. Another limitation of Japanese Buddhism is that the sects are not united. Temples and monks believe that their sect is right and others are not even though they belong to the same Buddhism.

Respondent 4 indicated another limitation of Japanese Buddhism that it does not upgrade itself. Its approach is not scientific because one cannot ask questions. Respondent 4 called this situation as “Religious fossils.” Respondent 3 shared a similar opinion. They both commented on the approach of Zen. Respondent 4 explained, “*Shikantaza*⁷⁷ is just sitting. It does not answer questions like, why am I thinking? Why am I not willing to do Zen meditation? Rather, one cannot ask such questions. One cannot get a scientific approach within this framework”. Respondent 3 also mentioned that Zen is practiced in temples. It does not accept new approaches and adapts itself accordingly. Respondent 4 is trained outside Japan in Theravāda traditions of Buddhism. However, living in Japan for many years, he understands how Buddhism functions in Japan. Based on his knowledge and experience they shared a similar opinion that Buddhism in Japan works within a particular frame and does not accept changes.

Some respondents explained the differences between Japanese Buddhism and mindfulness programs developed in the United States. Respondent 8 mentioned that common Japanese think that Buddhism requires ascetic training (*shugyō*). This thinking keeps them away from Buddhism and from experiencing the good side of Buddhism. On the other hand,

⁷⁶ *Danka* System is a system where a household is affiliated to Buddhist temples. The *danka* supports financially to the temple and temple provides memorial and other services to the *danka*.

⁷⁷ *Shikantaza* is a sitting meditation with a focus on ‘just sitting’. It was founded by Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253), a famous Japanese Buddhist masters who brought Zen Buddhism from China to Japan. He founded the Sōtō sect of Buddhism (Martínková and Wang 2022).

modern mindfulness programs do not require ascetic training that harms the body and mind; instead, in mindfulness, one maintains the harmony between body and mind. Being a scholar of Buddhism and meditation, respondent 8 highlights the differences between the Japanese image of Buddhism and mindfulness.

Respondent 3 stated that the mindfulness that came from the United States has scientific evidence. It is easy to accept for people in various fields. Unlike traditional Buddhism, it is accessible to common people. Respondent 7 provided a similar view by stating that Kabat-Zinn's approach is scientific, and he took meditation beyond religion.

Respondent 30 mentioned about the inclination of the Japanese toward Western culture. Respondent 30 stated that mindfulness was accepted in Japan not because it has roots in Buddhism but because it has come from the United States. The association of mindfulness with the United States created trust among the Japanese. However, it is a fact that when they practice it, some of them realize that it is already present in their culture. Respondent 30 is a yoga teacher who teaches mindfulness meditation. Yoga became popular in Japan because it was favored and approved in the United States. Respondent 30 views mindfulness in a similar way.

Respondent 24 explained why the Japanese are fascinated with Western culture. Respondent 24 stated,

Japanese culture is very simple, subtle, and silent. America is a powerful country. Whatever comes from that country looks fascinating to us. We have assumed that Japan cannot offer anything to America. We have an inferiority complex. We are small and cannot make any impact on such a powerful country. In American TV shows, only the great things about America are shown. Although in America, there are problems of poverty, and racism, in TV shows, you see affluent white people. When you look at yourself, you think you are just sitting on a tatami mat, in a *kotatsu* (warm Japanese table), and peeling the oranges. You feel like sitting on the chair and table and calling your mother 'Mummy' and not *Okāsan* (mother). You feel like having a white complexion, blond hair, and long legs. You want to become like an American. You kind of get brainwashed. After watching this, you look down upon your culture, which teaches you just to sit and drink tea silently.

In this way, Respondent 24 commented on the Japanese inferiority complex against the Western culture. As per table 10, respondent 24's current age is between 60 to 70 years. Therefore, he must have grown up watching American television dramas which became

popular in Japan in the 1960s. From an early age, he must have seen how the Japanese are fascinated with American culture and how it is passed on to the next generations. Therefore, he stated that, in the process of imitating Western culture, the Japanese do not take an interest in their own culture. They tend to get fascinated by the mindfulness endorsed by the United States.

Another reason that the Japanese do not realize the significance of mindfulness in their culture is that they are closely associated with it. Respondent 1 stated that Japanese art and compassion are forms of mindfulness. The Japanese practice them as a part of day-to-day activity. When they are explained as mindfulness, they look new and fresh. Moreover, when science is attached to them, the Japanese take an interest in them.

Other reasons are explained by Respondents 26 and 29. Respondent 26 stated that the Japanese education system does not allow the interference of religion in educational institutions. The Japanese, from their childhood, do not learn meditation; or spirituality in schools. Therefore, most of them do not develop an interest in meditation, or spirituality. That is why mindfulness programs were not born in Japan. Respondent 29 stated that psychiatry and psychology first developed in Western countries. It took time for them to grow in Japan. Therefore, mindfulness programs that initially developed as psychological interventions were designed in Western countries.

According to the responses to the interview survey, there are two main reasons mindfulness programs were not born in Japan; 1. The Japanese do not see Buddhism as a solution to their daily problems, especially meditation and contemplative practices. The role of Buddhist temples is limited to conducting funerals. Temples consider it as a business. 2. Japanese practice Mindfulness daily as a part of their culture. However, they do not recognize its importance. After the *Meiji era* (1868-1912), Japan adopted Western culture in the process of modernization. It naturally created a fascination for Western culture. When Mindfulness went to the Western countries and returned to Japan, the Japanese began realizing its importance.

5.4. Can Religion be Removed from Mindfulness?

There is a great debate around the association of mindfulness with religion. As discussed in previous sections, mindfulness is presented as secular. However, it teaches the practices and values that are part of Buddhism and Yoga. Therefore, the question arises whether religion can be removed from mindfulness. The question was discussed in the interview survey.

Respondent No.	Occupation	Response
1	Buddhist Monk (Japanese Buddhism: Zen sect)	Depends on what religion is
2	Buddhist Monk (Japanese Buddhism: Zen sect)	Depends on what religion is
3	Buddhist Monk (Thailand Theravāda Buddhism)	Depends on what religion is
4	Buddhist Monk (Sri Lankan Theravāda Buddhism)	Depends on what religion is
5	Buddhist Monk (Japanese Buddhism: Zen sect), Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	Not possible
6	Buddhist Monk (Japanese Zen Buddhism and Myanmar Theravāda Buddhism), Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	Other
8	Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	Other
9	Buddhist Monk (Japanese Buddhism: Shingon sect), Mindfulness Instructor	Possible
11	Buddhist Monk (Japanese Buddhism: Zen sect), Psychiatrist, Mindfulness Instructor	Depends on what religion is
13	Mindfulness Instructor	Not possible
15	Mindfulness Instructor	Not possible
16	Mindfulness Instructor	Possible
19	Mindfulness Instructor	Depends on what religion is
21	Mindfulness Instructor	Not possible
22	Mindfulness Instructor	Partly possible
23	Mindfulness Instructor	Depends on what religion is
26	Mindfulness Instructor	Not Possible
27	Mindfulness Instructor, Psychiatrist	Possible
29	Mindfulness Instructor, Psychologist	Not possible

30	Mindfulness Instructor, Yoga Teacher	Not possible
31	Mindfulness Instructor, Yoga Teacher	Partly possible
32	Mindfulness Instructor, Psychologist, Yoga Teacher	Not possible
33	Mindfulness Instructor, Organization Staff	Not possible

Table 12: Can Religion be Removed from Mindfulness?

Source: Author

Table 12 is the list of the respondents, their occupation, and their answers to the question, “Can religion be removed from mindfulness?”. Their responses are classified into five groups. 1. It is not possible, 2. It depends on what religion is, 3. It is possible, 4. It is partly possible, and 5. Other. The number of respondents in group 1 is 9, and in group 2, it is 7. For group 3, there are 3 respondents. For groups 4 and 5, there are 2 respondents in each group. These numbers show that group 1 has the highest number of respondents, while group 2 has the second highest number of respondents. The respondent count in all other groups is significantly less compared to them. For group 3, it is 3, for group 4, it is 2, and for group 5, it is 2.

1) It is not Possible

This group has the greatest number of respondents. Among the 9 respondents in this group, 3 explained that Buddhist values such as impermanence and compassion are taught in mindfulness programs. In addition, love, kindness, non-doing, and non-dualism are also included in mindfulness programs. They are used to deal with daily problems.

Few respondents stated that mindfulness would lose its essence if religiosity is removed from it. If mindfulness is taught only as meditation, it might not have long-term benefits. Respondent 33 mentioned that, in their studio, they do not aim to cut the religious roots of mindfulness.

While discussing religiosity in mindfulness, respondents 5, 29, and 32 stated that religion cannot be separated from mindfulness. Respondent 29 stated that it is not necessary to remove religion. Buddhism has developed from experience. Some parts of it can be proven by science, but Buddhism as a whole cannot be proven by science. Similarly, respondent 32 explained that science has limitations. It cannot verify and certify everything. Mindfulness sometimes brings intuitions. They cannot be proven by science. At least today’s neurosciences cannot prove it.

Respondent 5 commented on the calling mindfulness as non-Buddhist. Respondent 5 explained that Buddhism originated in India, went to China, and further went to Tibet, Korea, and Japan. It took various forms in different countries. That is why Japanese Buddhism differs from Indian, Chinese, Tibetan, and Korean Buddhism. In this case, Japanese Buddhists might say that Chinese Buddhism is not Buddhism because it differs from what they practice.

Similarly, Buddhism reached America, mixed with American society and culture, which resulted in the mindfulness movement. Calling it non-Buddhist is similar to a Japanese saying Chinese Buddhism is not Buddhism. Respondent 5 is a Zen monk and a scholar of Buddhism. He is living in the United States for many years. Therefore, he explained the adaptations that Buddhism has gone through in Asian countries and in the United States. In addition, he emphasized that referring to mindfulness as scientific and non-religious does not remove its roots.

Respondent 15 explained that even though some mindfulness instructors think religion cannot be removed from mindfulness, they never mention this in their mindfulness class. They are careful about their choice of words and expressions. Initially, it is necessary to present mindfulness as non-religious. Religion-related questions are answered only if the participants ask or if they experienced anything during the meditation. Respondent 15 further explained that mindfulness is an experience. There is a gradation in every individual's experience. There is no 0 or 1. One can start mindfulness as a technique considering it non-religious. However, with consistent practice, religiosity might come into the picture. In other words, mindfulness meditation may bring experiences that cannot be explained or proved by science.

In this way, respondents in this group highlighted that mindfulness could be presented as non-religious, but it is not possible to separate it from religion.

2) It depends on what religion is

Among 23 respondents, 7 stated that it is essential to understand what religion is before discussing whether religion can be removed from mindfulness. 5 out of 7 stated that Buddhism is not a religion.

4 out of the 7 respondents stated that Buddhism is not a religion. According to them, the Western concept of religion differs from the Eastern one. In the West, religion is to have a contract with God and believe in God. If one believes in God, he or she will be rescued by God. Converting into that religion is necessary. This fundamental difference between the Eastern and Western religions has made mindfulness paradoxical.

Some respondents explained what Buddhism is. Respondent 11 explained that Buddhism is practiced for self-development. One does not have to believe in Buddha. Buddha is not a higher power. He was a human being like us who had worries and suffering. However, he meditated and got liberated. The teachings of Buddha are his own experiences of liberating from worldly attachments. There is no magic in it. Respondent 1 also stated that the teachings of Buddhism have come from a human being. You do not have to have a contract with God. The teachings of Buddha emphasize that anybody can become a Buddha and attain enlightenment through training. Respondent 1 further stated that Kabat-Zinn and other mindfulness leaders have just removed the system of having a contract with God, which is usually followed in Western religions. Respondent 3 shared the same opinion.

When asked about whether religion can be removed from mindfulness, Respondent 4 questioned whether mindfulness should be called a religion. Respondent 4 stated,

Mindfulness is not a religion. The term religion is fundamentally unscientific. Religion means something you believe, something you rely on. Mindfulness is something you do or practice. It is in your hands. When it becomes religion, it is not in your hands. Therefore, mindfulness is not a religion. Buddha's original teachings are not a religion. It is pure science but not modern science. It is the science of mind and life.

Thus, respondent 4 shared the views on the concepts of religion and science. The interpretation of religion is different in the West and East. Respondent 4 further indicated that Kabat-Zinn and other mindfulness leaders have placed mindfulness in the Western approach of religion. If Buddhism, a base of mindfulness, is not a religion, there is no question of separating religion from it.

3) It is possible

Among 3 respondents in this group, Respondent 27 stated that it is possible to remove religion. Respondent 27 explained mindfulness and religion in the same way that Kabat-Zinn explained in "Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means, and the trouble with maps" (2011). Respondent 27 stated that Kabat-Zinn's dharma is with small d, and Buddhist dharma is with capital D. Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness is a small part of big dharma. Mindfulness can be practiced universally. Respondent 27 further stated that in their mindfulness studio, they use the quotes of Buddhist teachers such as Shunryu Suzuki. However, they do not explain that this quote has a connection with Buddhism. Similarly, Respondent 16 stated that removing religion

is possible if one explains mindfulness without using religious words.

4) It is partly possible

In this group, Respondent 22 stated that religion can be removed from mindfulness if mindfulness is considered a technique or exercise. However, its theory is deeply connected to Buddhism and Yoga. In that sense, separating religion is not possible. Respondent 31 also stated that if mindfulness is learned as a technique as per the instructions, it does not look religious. However, its theory and philosophy cannot be separated from religion. Respondent 22 and 31 teach mindfulness in the same organizations. They are relatives of each other. Therefore, they stated same opinions even though the interviews with them are conducted separately.

5) Other

Both the respondents in this group explained the importance of religion in mindfulness. Respondent 8 explained that, as a practice, religion can be separated from mindfulness. In psychiatry, it is already done. However, mindfulness may sometimes hurt the body and mind if practiced excessively. People sometimes get lost in this process. They are considered meditation refugees⁷⁸. There are no studies or records of individuals who became meditation refugees after practicing mindfulness. Doctors cannot help such people with medicine. They need religious help. Individuals who practice meditation for a long course of time and undergo religious training understand how to treat meditation refugees.

Respondent 6 shared a similar opinion. Respondent 6 stated that religion can be removed from mindfulness. However, people who claim that mindfulness does not have a connection with religion deal with limited aspects of life and death. If an individual has a life-and-death situation, he or she relies on religion and spirituality. In that sense, religion comes into the picture. Respondent 6 further stated that one does not have to believe in religion in order to practice mindfulness. However, one should not disconnect mindfulness from Buddhism. Scientists and their research is always appreciated, but Buddha and the efforts of thousands of Buddhist monks should also be appreciated. They have undergone intense training. It should be told in the mindfulness class. In other words, mindfulness should not be portrayed as just

⁷⁸ An individual becomes a Meditation refugee when he or she does not understand how to deal with the traumas and negative emotions that meditation brings into the mind. It may create adverse effects on the individual's mental health (Purayuki and Uokawa 2016).

plain and scientific; its religious roots should be explained. Respondent 6 has a vast knowledge of various traditions of Buddhism as well as current practice of mindfulness programs. He was invited to the United States by Jon Kabat-Zinn to participate in MBSR. Therefore, respondent 6 understands the reasons to remove religiosity from mindfulness programs; however, he highlights the limitation it brings to the practice of mindfulness and its effects on the individuals.

The word religion is used in various contexts. If religion means to believe in God and have a contract with God, it is not connected with mindfulness programs. In that sense, religion and religious beliefs can be kept separate. However, if religion means practicing meditation, it cannot be disconnected from mindfulness programs.

5.5. The Response of Buddhist Monks to the Proliferation of Mindfulness

The teachings of mindfulness were adapted in the United States. When they returned to Japan, they were accepted and appreciated. There has been a mixed response from Buddhist monks in Japan to the mindfulness programs that emphasize on postural Yoga and guided meditations. In the interview survey, while discussing about mindfulness programs, some Buddhist monks stated that today, mindfulness may look trendy. However, the trend will be over soon. There is no growth for mindfulness after a certain period. One of the monks mentioned that mindfulness programs, in the first place, are not necessary in Japan. The Japanese practice mindfulness in their everyday actions; from organizing shoes before entering the room to being compassionate towards others.

On the other hand, some monks see mindfulness as an opportunity to spread Buddha's teachings. They appreciate the mindfulness programs and their purpose of removing sufferings from peoples' lives; however, at the same time, they point out the issues of the structured mindfulness programs. For example, mindfulness develops narcissistic behavior, mindfulness does not cover all problems of life and death, and mindfulness programs do not provide solutions to the adverse effects of meditation. Some Buddhist monks, especially of Zen tradition, refer to mindfulness programs as *Shūzen*⁷⁹ because the mindfulness practice in them is done with a purpose. Buddhist monks suggest that the knowledge of Buddhism can help in solving such issues. They see mindfulness as an opportunity to revise Buddhism in Japan.

⁷⁹ Zen is usually practiced to reach the ultimate state of meditation. However, Zen master Dōgen pointed out that Zen should not be used to achieve a goal. *Shūzen* is when Zen is practiced with some purpose.

5.6. Image of Religion and Meditation in the Japanese Society

Japanese culture is shaped by various religions like Buddhism, Shintoism, and Confucianism. It is common in Japan to go to temples and shrines to pray, have a wedding ceremony in a church, and perform a funeral in a Buddhist way. However, most Japanese do not affiliate themselves with any religion. Why do the Japanese disassociate themselves from religion? One of the reasons is Japanese are skeptical about religion and religious organizations. There are various examples of anti-social activities carried out by religious organizations. For example, AUM Shinrikyo.

In 1995, the members of a terrorist group called AUM Shinrikyo did a Sarin attack on Tokyo Subway, killing 8 people and several injured. AUM Shinrikyo is a group founded by Shoko Asahara. Most group members were graduates of famous universities like Tokyo, Waseda, Kyoto, etc. The group promoted the particular ideology of Hinduism, especially the practice and theory of Yoga, Indian Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism. It also incorporated Christian ideas. Asahara promoted his teachings by using Manga to attract the young population. The organization strategically justified violence, which resulted in the Sarin attacks not only in 1995 but in 1993 as well. These incidents brought great fear of Yoga and meditation in Japanese society. Therefore, when the Japanese hear about meditation, they tend to connect it to the AUM Shinrikyo incident and the criminal activities done by it. The terror attack of AUM Shinrikyo was mentioned by several respondents in the interview survey.

The Japanese image of religion is precisely summarized by Jesse R. LeFebvre in the article, 'Christian Wedding Ceremonies "Nonreligiousness" in Contemporary Japan (2015). LeFebvre stated,

Statements of "non-religiousness" are used to express a wide variety of effective religious dispositions and behaviors while simultaneously relieving the cognitive burden of their eclectic nature. However, the issue is not religion versus secularization but more properly understood as religious attitudes that appear to be "normal" or "typical" versus attitudes that are perceived as deviant, atypical, or extraordinary. Given this association with normalcy, "non-religiousness" is a rejection of religious associations and practices deemed unhealthy, strange, or foreign. Just as frequently, "non-religiousness" is used to express an absence of extraordinary or specialized religious skills and knowledge but "nonreligion" is not the wholesale rejection of religion. Rather, "nonreligion" is better

understood as the religious outlook of the average Japanese person who often engages in religious activity affectively and vicariously (LeFebvre 2015: 201).

According to LeFebvre's analysis, in Japan, being non-religious does not mean disconnecting all religious activities such as going to temples, praying, and celebrating festivals. It rather means, disassociation with the malpractices that are considered strange and socially unhealthy.

Due to the unfavorable image of religion and meditation, mindfulness instructors initially faced challenges. Some of them avoided using the word meditation. They promoted mindfulness as scientific and emphasized that it does not bring the practices, rituals, or customs considered unusual or strange in Japanese society.

Chapter 6. Teaching Mindfulness in Japan

6.1. Japanese Way of Teaching Mindfulness

6.1.1. Changes in Teaching Style

Due to the sociocultural differences between Japan and the United States, the teaching style of mindfulness programs varies. In the interview survey, the respondents were asked if they make any changes in the teaching style that they think are suitable for the Japanese. Their responses are discussed below.

Respondent 6 explained that changing teaching methods is necessary because the Western curriculum of mindfulness programs may not suit for all areas. There should be different programs for jails, schools, and health care, as the requirements are different for each area. A program like MBSR has a mindfulness retreat, however, not every individual can spare his or her time for long-term programs. There should be programs for such individuals so that they can practice mindfulness daily.

A few respondents explained the changes they make in the teaching material while conducting MBSR and SIY in Japan. These changes are made considering the nature and characteristics of the Japanese. In the case of MBSR, Respondent 27 explained that, in their studio, they made certain changes in the teaching material of MBSR. For example, instead of translating English quotes and poems into Japanese, they use Japanese quotes and poems that convey a similar message as the original ones. In this way, the meaning and essence of the quote and poems do not change, and the participants understand them well. Respondent 33 also commented on teaching the MBSR in Japan. Respondent 33 stated,

Kabat-Zinn strongly said that you do not have to follow my program as it is. You can conduct it based on local requirements. Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness has four pillars, sitting meditation, walking meditation, Yoga meditation, and body scan. They do not change. However, the explanations and way of conducting might change. For example, a company employee wants to increase efficiency through mindfulness. He or she does not have time. Therefore, he or she wants to practice meditation in train. We recommend such employees practice it in train with guided meditations. We encourage them that they can do it anytime and anywhere. Our aim is to spread mindfulness that is easy to understand for Japanese. It is an awareness training.

SIY instructors also make changes in the SIY curriculum while teaching it in Japan. While discussing the teaching methods of SIY, Respondent 19 explained that, usually, the same curriculum is followed for SIY all over the world. Only a 10% change is acceptable as per the local culture. Respondent 19 further stated that, in their studio, they encourage participants to have one-to-one conversations. It is because the Japanese are not assertive and straightforward like Americans. Americans are not hesitant to speak, even if there are differences in opinions. On the other hand, the Japanese are shy and may not communicate well. Therefore, in order to make them comfortable, one-to-one conversations are encouraged.

Respondent 25 is not MBSR or SIY instructor but shared a similar view as respondent 19. Respondent 25 stated that, in Japan, creating an environment is essential. Japanese might not speak frankly as Westerners do when they are asked to share thoughts and experiences. Therefore, the instructions and guidelines should be prepared in a way that creates an environment for people to share their opinions. Respondent 25 further explained that, in their studio, they take the participant's name and ask him or her to share the opinion. In this way, they engage the participants in the program.

Another characteristic of the Japanese, as mentioned by Respondent 13, is that the Japanese think there is only one correct way. Therefore, when practicing mindfulness, they often worry about whether they are doing it right. For example, suppose a participant felt refreshed after the first mindfulness meditation, and the other participant did not feel the same. In that case, the other participant would think that he or she is not going in the right way. In order to avoid this situation, Respondent 13 explained that, in their studio, they create a group of 4 to 5 participants. They ask them to continue meditation with the same group. Once a week, they ask them to share their experiences and opinions. At that time, they explain to the participants that the experience of meditation may differ from person to person. There is no correct answer. Gradually, the participants understand and do not feel anxious.

According to Respondent 3, the image of meditation is an important aspect that should be considered while teaching mindfulness in Japan. Many Japanese tend to think that meditation is equal to Zen meditation and Zen meditation means emptying the mind. When they practice mindfulness, they assume that the mind should not wander and be free of thoughts. However, in mindfulness, the thoughts and feelings are observed and accepted as they are without any judgment. This fundamental difference between Zen meditation and mindfulness should be explained in class. Otherwise, the participants who think mindfulness is a practice of emptying the mind may resist the thoughts, and if the thoughts continue to come, they might get restless.

In this way, mindfulness instructors in Japan make changes in their teaching material and methods based on the characteristics and behavioral patterns observed in common Japanese.

Respondent 8 indicated a trait generally observed everywhere and also applicable to the Japanese. Respondent 8 stated that an enormous amount of information on mindfulness is available on the internet. Some of it might be false. One should not rely on such information and expect immediate results. For instance, if a student reads about mindfulness and if he or she practices it on his or her own before the examination to relax the mind, it may not work because the mind is restless before the examination. In this event, the student may think that mindfulness practice has no effect. Before making such judgments, one must learn mindfulness with proper guidance and continue to practice it. According to Respondent 8, guidance and training are required to practice mindfulness. Awareness about learning mindfulness with proper guidance should be spread.

When the respondents were asked if they use Buddhist terminologies or explanations while teaching mindfulness, some of them mentioned that they do so in their classes. Respondent 18 stated that mindfulness instructors should not follow American mindfulness programs as it is; they should instead add Buddhist terminologies because the Japanese might relate to them. Respondent 33 had a similar opinion; however, Respondent 33 also mentioned that such terminologies should be used carefully. Otherwise, the program may look religious. Respondent 33 explained that, in their studio, they explain mindfulness by giving examples of tea Ceremony, flower arrangements, and judo. Such examples are easy to understand for the Japanese.

Respondents 15 and 16 also commented on the choice of words. According to Respondents 15 and 16, spiritual and mystical words should be avoided in mindfulness classes. The Japanese already have a negative image of meditation due to the AUM Shinrikyo's criminal activities. Therefore, the program should not look religious.

From the responses above, it is clear that mindfulness instructors in Japan make changes in their teaching methods considering the personality of the Japanese. Secondly, they present mindfulness as scientific and secular because religion and meditation have a negative image in Japan. However, they use examples of tea ceremony, judo to highlight the cultural connection with mindfulness. In addition, they use quotes and poems of Buddhist masters and philosophers.

6.1.2. Questions about Religion

As discussed in chapter five, the websites of mindfulness and Yoga studios in Japan use references of scientific studies to highlight the disassociation with religion. In the interview survey, the respondents were asked if they receive questions on religion and how they respond to such questions. When the respondents were asked whether they receive religion-related questions from the participants. Out of 18, 11 respondents stated that they do not receive such questions.

Respondent 32 who is a certified MBSR instructor shared that, during the MBSR teachers' training course in the United States, her fellow participants had asked in the class, how to respond if someone asks whether mindfulness is religious or not. There was a great discussion over this topic. However, in Japan, Respondent 32 has not received any such questions.

Respondents 11, 19, 21, and 31 mentioned that even if they do not receive religion-related questions, they make an effort to remove the negative image of meditation. Respondent 11 stated that, participants who are more than 30 years of age still have memories of the terror attack by AUM Shinrikyo in 1995. Respondent 11 further stated that, in order to remove skepticism about meditation, in his mindfulness class, he rather explains mindfulness with the example of AUM Shinrikyo's incident. He highlights the differences between mindfulness and AUM Shinrikyo's ideology and practice. In this way, He tries to reduce the confusion of the participants. Respondent 19 stated that, in their studio, initially they did not use the word "meditation" because of the negative image of meditation. Once the word "mindfulness" spread through the media, they began using the words meditation in their class.

When the respondents were asked if they explain about the religious roots of mindfulness, many of them stated that they provide more information about scientific studies and Google's mindfulness training. Respondent 31 stated that in seminars, the time is limited. People expect to hear more about how they can be benefited from mindfulness. Therefore, priority is given to the practical benefits of mindfulness; rather than its history and development. Respondent 13 mentioned that the more one explains about religion, the more he or she invites suspicion about mindfulness among the participants.

Buddhist monks who are mindfulness instructors stated that they explain in detail about the religious roots of mindfulness only if the participants ask. Respondents 9 and 11 elaborated that, the explanation of mindfulness changes as per the target audience. Sometimes, elderly people are interested in knowing the connection of mindfulness with Buddhism. At that time, Respondents 9 and 11 explain about the history and roots of mindfulness.

Thus, according to the respondents of the interview survey, they do not receive many questions on the religious roots of mindfulness. The respondents did not mention the reasons for not receiving religion-related questions. However, the possible reasons are; 1. Many mindfulness and yoga studios mention on their website that mindfulness programs are scientific and not religious. 2. Japanese might feel shy to ask such questions in the mindfulness class.

In this way, the respondents explained that they understand the negative image of meditation and they make an effort to showcase mindfulness programs as secular and scientific so that the Japanese do not attach the negative image for mindfulness programs. Buddhist monks also explain in detail about Buddhism and its connection with mindfulness if it is asked by the participants.

6.2. The Role of Cultural Aspects

The last chapters discussed the connection of Mindfulness with Japanese culture. In the interview survey, the respondents were asked if they think mindfulness is easy to accept for Japanese because it is a part of their culture. Their responses are discussed below.

Respondent No.	Occupation	Related to Buddhism	Response
1	Buddhist Monk	<input type="radio"/>	Easy to Accept
4	Buddhist Monk	<input type="radio"/>	Other
5	Buddhist Monk, Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	<input type="radio"/>	Easy to Accept
6	Buddhist Monk, Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	<input type="radio"/>	Easy to Accept
7	Buddhist Monk, Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	<input type="radio"/>	Not Easy to Accept
8	Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	<input type="radio"/>	Both
10	Buddhist Monk, Mindfulness Instructor	<input type="radio"/>	Easy to Accept
11	Buddhist Monk, Psychiatrist, Mindfulness Instructor	<input type="radio"/>	Both

12	Editor of Buddhist Magazine	○	Easy to Accept
13	Mindfulness Instructor	×	Easy to Accept
19	Mindfulness Instructor	×	Other
20	Mindfulness Instructor	×	Easy to Accept
21	Mindfulness Instructor	×	Not Easy to Accept
24	Mindfulness Instructor	○	Easy to Accept
25	Mindfulness Instructor	×	Easy to Accept
26	Mindfulness Instructor	×	Not Easy to Accept
28	Mindfulness Instructor, Psychiatrist	×	Both
29	Mindfulness Instructor, Psychologist	×	Both
30	Mindfulness Instructor, Yoga Teacher	×	Easy to Accept
33	Mindfulness Instructor, Organization Staff	×	Both
34	Mindfulness Studio Staff	×	Easy to Accept

Source: Author

Table 13: Acceptance of Modern Mindfulness

Table 13 shows the respondents' answers to the question, "Is mindfulness taught in mindfulness programs easy to accept for Japanese?" It also shows the respondents' occupations and whether they have knowledge of Buddhism. Respondents who have prior knowledge or are trained in Buddhism include monks of Buddhist traditions in Japan as well as in other Asian countries, researchers who study Buddhism, followers of Buddhist masters, and writers and editors of Buddhist magazines. Respondent 24 does not consider himself a Buddhist; however, he is a disciple of Thich Nhat Hanh. All respondents' opinions are divided into four groups: 1. Easy to accept, 2. Not easy to accept, 3. Both and 4. Other. Among 21 respondents, 11 stated that mindfulness is easy to accept for the Japanese. 6 are related to Buddhism, and 1 is a Yoga teacher. 3 respondents stated that mindfulness is not easy to accept for the Japanese. 5 respondents stated that it could be both and 2 respondents are in the other category.

1) Easy to accept

Many respondents stated that mindfulness is easy to accept for the Japanese. Respondents 1, 6, and 10, who are Buddhist monks, stated that mindfulness is widely known as a new American technique; however, the Japanese are brought up in a culture where mindfulness is already practiced in the form of tea ceremony, Judo, and other art forms.

However, the Japanese may not always recognize such similarities. Respondent 13 stated that the Japanese experience mindfulness from their childhood. However, they do not realize that they are practicing mindfulness. When the examples such as the tea ceremony and Judo are given, some Japanese notice the connection with mindfulness and recall their experiences of moment-to-moment attention while practicing various forms of Japanese art.

2) Not easy to accept

Very few respondents stated that mindfulness is not easy to accept for the Japanese. Respondent 7, a Buddhist scholar and monk from the Jōdo Shinshu sect⁸⁰, explained that Japanese culture is shaped by Buddhism, Shintoism, and Confucianism. Respondent 7 explained that, in Jōdo Shinshu, there is no meditation. Meditation is practiced in Zen and only by Zen monks. Common people do not practice it. It is a practice for a limited number of people. Therefore, common people do not feel a connection with meditation. Some people might experience Zen meditation in temples as a part of their company activities; however, such events are limited. Therefore, in terms of meditation, very few people can connect with mindfulness.

3) Both

4 respondents out of 5 first stated that mindfulness is not easy to accept. However, after asking them about the connection between mindfulness and Japanese art and compassion, they answered that it might be easy to accept. Only Respondent 8 answered that mindfulness may or may not be easy to accept for the Japanese.

Respondent 8, a Buddhist Scholar, explained that even though mindfulness has roots in Buddhism, its approach differs from the approach of Buddhism that is commonly known in

⁸⁰ Jōdo Shinshu is a sect in Japanese Buddhism founded by Shinran Shonin (1173-1262). The teachings of Jōdo Shinshu tradition emphasizes salvation through faith rather than relying on self effort to attain enlightenment.

Japan. Respondent 8 stated that the Japanese try to imitate American culture. In that sense, mindfulness might be easy to accept. However, from the Buddhist perspective, accepting mindfulness might not be easy. The idea of Buddhism for the Japanese is to get rid of greed and other attachments. However, mindfulness teaches to observe and accept them. These two concepts are contradictory.

Respondent 8 further commented on Confucianism and Japanese culture. Respondent 8 stated that even in the 21st century, the Japanese have a hierarchy where the young pays respect to the elders, males are superior to females, and seniors are superior to juniors. Japanese cannot throw these Confucius values because they are rooted in their culture. Mindfulness teaches to accept everything without any judgment. Therefore, it might not be easy for the Japanese to accept things as they are.

In short, mindfulness might be easy to accept for the Japanese because they are interested in Western culture. However, the concept of mindfulness might not fit into the image that the Japanese have of Buddhism. In addition, the Confucius values they have been following for many years might not allow them to accept the events as they are.

4) Other

Respondent 19, pointed out that understanding mindfulness depends on the individual. It is not a comparison between the Americans and the Japanese. Respondent 19 explained that the problem of stress is universal and not limited to Japan. The acceptance of mindfulness depends on how one experiences it, irrespective of nationality. The understanding and acceptance of mindfulness vary from person to person.

Respondent 4 stated, "I have not thought whether mindfulness is easy to accept for the Japanese. I think more than cultural similarities, Japanese accept mindfulness because it is American." Respondent 4 did not share a clear opinion on the acceptance of mindfulness; however, he pointed out that the acceptance of mindfulness in Japan is due to the American influence.

Though there was a mixed response on the cultural similarities with mindfulness and their effect on the acceptance of mindfulness, the number of respondents who answered that the Japanese can connect with mindfulness due to the cultural similarities is greater.⁸¹

⁸¹ Section 6.2. is previously published in Japanese by the author in the *Journal of Daito Asian Studies* Vol. 22 (Wagh-Gumate 2022: 46-61). The translation in English is done by the author.

6.3. Yoga Studios and Mindfulness

The number of Yoga studios offering mindfulness programs is increasing. In the interview survey, some respondents were asked, why Yoga teachers are teaching Mindfulness. Respondent 18 mentioned that Yoga teachers were unaware of mindfulness, but recently, they have begun taking an interest in it. Respondent 30 stated that mindfulness is systematic and easy to teach. It is a growing health trend. There are Yoga schools that offer mindfulness teacher training courses. Respondent 26 also mentioned that Yoga teachers are learning mindfulness. Many Yoga schools in Japan added mindfulness as a part of their curricula.

Respondent 16 stated that mindfulness is easy to understand for Yoga teachers. Yoga sessions sometimes include meditation. When Yoga teachers read mindfulness books, they identify common threads. They use them in their Yoga class. Respondent 32 mentioned a similar point by stating that Yoga teachers are interested in mindfulness because Yoga is a part of MBSR. However, Respondent 32 expressed a concern, whether the expansion of mindfulness in Japan would lead to McM mindfulness like the United States.

As seen in chapter four, the number of Yoga studios that offer mindfulness programs is increasing. The question is whether Yoga teachers use mindfulness meditation, commonly taught in Mindfulness-based interventions, or they teach the same meditation they have been teaching and call it mindfulness.

Respondent 8 stated that meditation is taught in some Yoga classes. The Yoga teachers might call it mindfulness. However, no data or study is available prove this argument. Some Yoga teachers believe that including mindfulness meditation in a Yoga class might increase the popularity of Yoga classes. Respondent 18 stated that the original purpose of Yoga is self-realization. However, it is used for health benefits. Calling it mindfulness does not change anything.

Respondent 31 also mentioned that Yoga teachers include mindfulness meditation in their classes to increase the popularity of the organization. Respondent 31 further stated that mindfulness is practiced with a purpose. For example, to reduce stress, to improve efficiency, etc. When practicing it with yoga, the purpose and contents of the program should be clear.

Thus, there are two reasons that yoga studios offer mindfulness programs or conduct mindfulness meditation in a Yoga class. 1. There are practical and theoretical similarities between Yoga and Mindfulness that are easily acquired by Yoga teachers. 2. Haṭha Yoga is a part of MBSR. Therefore, it is easy to associate it with Yoga.

Further, the Yoga teachers who teach mindfulness can be classified into two groups. 1. Yoga teachers who learn from Western mindfulness programs and implement them in their Yoga classes. 2. Yoga teachers who teach the same meditation they have been teaching and call it mindfulness. In this way, mindfulness is becoming a part of Yoga classes and also undergoing several adaptations according to the interpretation and experiences of Yoga teachers.

6.4. Standardization for Teaching Mindfulness

As discussed in chapter four, all mindfulness and yoga studios do not follow Western mindfulness programs. There is a variety of mindfulness programs that are designed in Japan. In the interview survey, the respondents were asked if there should be standardization in Japan for teaching mindfulness programs.

Respondent No.	Occupation	Response
3	Buddhist Monk	Yes
5	Buddhist Monk, Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	Other
7	Buddhist Monk, Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	No
8	Buddhist Scholar, mindfulness researcher	Other
10	Buddhist Monk, Mindfulness Instructor	Yes
11	Buddhist Monk, Psychiatrist, Mindfulness Instructor	Other
12	Editor of Buddhist Magazine	Other
13	Mindfulness Instructor	Yes
15	Mindfulness Instructor	Other
18	Mindfulness Instructor	Yes
20	Mindfulness Instructor	No
21	Mindfulness Instructor	No
22	Mindfulness Instructor	Yes

25	Mindfulness Instructor	Yes
27	Mindfulness Instructor, Psychiatrist	Yes
28	Mindfulness Instructor, Psychiatrist	Yes
32	Mindfulness Instructor, Yoga Teacher	Yes

Table 14: Standards for Teaching Mindfulness

Source: Author

Table 14 is the list of respondents, their occupation, and their response to the question “Should there be a standardization for teaching mindfulness programs?”. The responses are divided into three groups. 1. Yes, there should be standardization 2. No, standardization is not required 3. Other. The number of respondents for group 1 is 9; for group 2, it is 3, and for group 3, it is 5. Therefore, the number of respondents who answered yes to standardization is more than the other groups.

1) Yes, there should be standardization

This group has the maximum number of respondents. Respondent 13 stated that she has not heard of any malpractice that happened in Japan for mindfulness programs. Therefore, it can be assumed that the mindfulness instructors are teaching it with good intentions. However, in the future, there is a possibility that profit-making organizations or individuals may come into the picture. Standardization will become necessary at that time.

Respondent 18 stated that suspicious and profit-making organizations and mindfulness instructors already exist. This number will increase in the future. In order to avoid such situations, standardization is necessary for the current practice of mindfulness in Japan. Respondent 22 also mentioned that some participants are adversely affected by mindfulness meditation because it was taught in an incorrect way. Creating standards for teaching mindfulness may reduce such cases.

Respondents 3 and 25 stated that it is safe to have standards for teaching mindfulness. However, who should create the standards and how they should be created are prime questions. Respondent 22 stated that Government or any powerful non-governmental organization should take an initiative to create standards for teaching mindfulness.

Respondents 27 and 28 mentioned that there should be guidelines for teaching mindfulness programs. Guidelines of MBSR and MBCT may help. Respondent 27 further stated that a database for mindfulness instructors can be a good option. Respondents 27 and 28

are psychiatrists and participated in MBSR in the United States. Therefore, they suggest having standard guidelines for mindfulness programs.

2) No, standardization is not required

The number of respondents for this group is lesser than the other groups. Respondent 7 mentioned that due to individual differences, it might not be easy to create standards. Instead of creating standards, instructors should be trained properly. Respondent 20 stated that the current mindfulness practices are more natural because the adaptations in such programs are making them spread in various fields. Respondent 20 has designed a special program that uses mindfulness techniques to improve the abilities of the brain. If mindfulness programs are conducted in certain ways based on certain standards, it will restrict the variations.

3) Other

The number of respondents in this category is 5. The respondents in this group did not state clearly whether standardization is required or not. However, based on their explanations, it is assumed that they do not support the standardization of teaching mindfulness. They rather raised questions on standardization and suggested options to optimize the teaching methods of mindfulness programs. Respondent 3 asked who should create standards. Respondent 11 mentioned that the growth of mindfulness programs may get restricted due to the standardization of teaching. Therefore, instead of standardization for mindfulness instructors, there should be guidelines for common people to choose good instructors.

Respondent 15 stated that mindfulness does not belong to anyone. It is for everyone. If standardization is created for teaching mindfulness, it will become a business. Respondent 5 shared a similar view. Respondent 5 stated that there are organizations that act as an agent and that connect the supplier to the consumer. They earn profit by charging fees to both parties. If such organizations create standards and began providing mindfulness instructors, it will become a huge business.

Respondent 8 stated that, instead of standardization in teaching mindfulness, groups (*Sangha*) should be created. When a mindfulness instructor is surrounded by other instructors, he or she can evaluate his or her performance as an instructor. In addition, instructors in these groups can help each other by sharing teaching methods.

In this way, many respondents suggested having standardization for teaching mindfulness. However, creating them is not easy. In Japan, some organizations provide certifications for mindfulness instructors. However, there they do not have a standard curriculum. Not all

individuals who aim to become mindfulness instructors can go to the United States to complete the teachers' training courses. Therefore, guidelines to teach mindfulness might be required.

This chapter examined the Japanese teaching methods for mindfulness programs. The sociocultural aspects play an important role in teaching mindfulness. Mindfulness is already present in Japanese culture as Zen, Japanese art, and many other forms. When mindfulness is explained using cultural elements, it might be easy for some individuals to relate to mindfulness. It creates a positive effect on the acceptance of mindfulness. Some mindfulness instructors use Buddhist quotes, poems, and terminologies familiar to the common Japanese to understand mindfulness better. However, their usage depends on the requirements of the target audience.

Chapter 7: Mindfulness and Japanese Society

7.1. Necessity of Mindfulness

In addition to the differences between Japanese Zen and modern mindfulness, the respondents were asked if and why mindfulness programs are necessary for Japan when the knowledge and practice of Buddhism is available in Japan. The majority of the respondents to this question are mindfulness instructors. Therefore, they stated that mindfulness programs are necessary. On the other hand, Respondent 5, a Buddhist monk, stated that mindfulness programs are not necessary; instead, Zen should be taught in a simple way. All other respondents highlighted the secular and scientific nature of mindfulness programs.

Respondent 25 explained that mindfulness programs are necessary because the Japanese tend to trust Western ideas. When words such as Silicon Valley and Steve Jobs are attached to mindfulness, the Japanese take an interest in it.

Respondents 3, 8, 9, 12, and 19 stated that the common people do not practice Zen. They think it is difficult, high class, and out of the reach of common people. Therefore, mindfulness programs are necessary to improve mental and physical health. The more people meditate, the more they will create a better world.

Respondent 15 explained that mindfulness programs are necessary because they are presented as secular and scientific. In Japan, not even 1% of the population practices Zen. The Japanese keep themselves away from religion. They instead believe in scientific evidence. Mindfulness-based interventions like MBSR and MBCT have scientific evidence. The aim of mindfulness programs is to reduce pain and worries. Zen can also be converted into systematic and structured programs with the help of science; however, there are no such programs. Therefore, when choosing between Zen and mindfulness, the Japanese choose mindfulness programs.

In the interview survey, many respondents supported mindfulness programs. They highlighted their characteristics. However, there are some respondents, especially Buddhist monks who think that mindfulness programs are not necessary in Japan; instead, Zen should be taught in a simple way.

7.2. Future of Mindfulness in Japan

As discussed in the previous chapters, the awareness of mindfulness and the number of

practitioners is growing. Will they continue to grow? What will be the future of mindfulness in Japan? The respondents were asked whether mindfulness will grow further in Japan and how it will spread in the next ten years.

Some respondents stated that media and celebrities could contribute to spreading mindfulness. However, many respondents raised questions about the current situation of mindfulness in Japan. They mentioned that if those questions are not resolved, they might hamper the growth of mindfulness. Respondent 5 stated that if mindfulness in Japan continues to grow as it is growing today, it will have limitations. Meditation has become a product. It is sold as a commodity. In the United States, mindfulness is connected to social and environmental problems. If the Japanese do not use mindfulness for social problems, it will not develop. It will become a business model. It will reach its peak and finish. Respondent 5 is a Japanese monk living in the United States for many years. Therefore, he explained that instead of making mindfulness programs as a business product, they should be used for bigger causes such as solving social and environmental problems. According to Respondent 5, this approach is lacking in the current practice of mindfulness in Japan. If it continues, mindfulness will not grow further.

A similar view is shared by respondents 11 and 26. Respondent 11 stated that mindfulness unites us. It shows that we are connected to the whole world. In Buddhism, it is called 'dependent origination' (*engi*). If all the Japanese could spare some time to practice mindfulness, it would create awareness about the world and environment. When you feel a connection with nature, you naturally respect it. You will not increase garbage and waste food.

Respondent 26 explained that Mindfulness, done with a purpose, is on the verge of completing the circle. It became popular in the media, People consumed it, and if it continues in the same way, one day, it will be forgotten. Mindfulness is not what one consumes. It is an everyday practice. It is a living style. We have to keep this in mind while teaching. Otherwise, mindfulness will fade away.

Thus, according to the above respondents, if the purpose of mindfulness is to make money and its scope is limited to solving mental and physical problems, it might not grow. It should be made an everyday practice so that people can unite and solve more significant problems in the society and environment.

Respondent 6 also explained that the current mindfulness practice in Japan should broaden its vision. Respondent 6 stated that the number of people practicing mindfulness would increase in the next ten years. It will be taught in schools and at home. It will become a part of life. However, if the current practice of mindfulness is followed for the next ten years, it will not

cover all of life's problems. Jon Kabat Zinn's mindfulness is a method to relax. Buddha's *Satipaṭṭhāna* and Vipassanā handle all aspects related to life and death. Therefore, preparation is necessary to make mindfulness a part of life in the next ten years. Respondent 6 is trained in Japanese as well as other traditions of Buddhism. He has lived in Western countries for a few years and has participated in MBSR. He supports American mindfulness programs; however, he also points out their limitations and proposes to add Buddhist values that deal with not only mental stress but other aspects of life and death.

Respondent 18 raised a concern about the current practice of mindfulness in Japan. Respondent 18 stated that mindfulness instructors in Japan have a variety of interpretations for mindfulness. Some believe that mindfulness is for relaxation and to calm the mind. However, mindfulness is not limited to this. If it continues to spread this way, it will go away from its original objective. Respondent 13 also mentioned that there are differences in the understanding of mindfulness. Such people are spreading mindfulness with different interpretations.

In this way, after observing a certain growth in mindfulness in Japan, respondents identified its constraints such as, 1. Mindfulness is not connected to social, environmental, or life-related problems. 2. Mindfulness has become a business model. 3. There are differences in understanding and interpreting mindfulness. From these observations, it is clear that mindfulness in Japan requires revision to sustain.

Respondents did not just blame the current situation of mindfulness, they mentioned that their efforts are essential for the further growth of mindfulness in Japan. They shared their vision. Respondent 11 stated, "I will make an effort to convey mindfulness in a simple way so that many people can practice it. One day, it should be a daily practice for every Japanese". Respondent 15 also mentioned, "We want to create a world where everyone will spare time for meditation." Respondent 25 stated, "I wish every Starbucks in Japan has a space to practice mindfulness. Every school in Japan has mindfulness programs". In this way, mindfulness instructors are hopeful and putting effort into spreading mindfulness in Japanese society.

Respondent 3 explained that the growth of mindfulness in Japan depends on its promotion. Respondent 3 stated,

If good instructors continue to increase, many people would be benefited from them. They will spread the word through SNS, and mindfulness will expand. On the other hand, if mindfulness instructors and other individuals, such as celebrities and politicians who promote mindfulness, do not maintain appropriate behavior, it will impact the image of

mindfulness.

Respondent 16 expressed a different opinion from the above respondents. Respondent 16 explained that the growth of mindfulness in Japan depends on individual experience. If a more significant number of individuals have a good experience with mindfulness, they will spread it positively. On the other hand, those with a bad experience, would spread it that way. Such individuals will refrain from practicing mindfulness. Another important aspect of mindfulness practice is consistency, which will bring changes in the individual's life. If more individuals are not consistent in their practice, they might not be able to experience its positive effects. Ultimately, such individuals will stop practicing mindfulness. Thus, according to Respondent 16, the growth of mindfulness in Japan will depend on how most Japanese experience it.

Some respondents were unsure whether mindfulness would spread in Japan as in the United States. For example, Respondent 13 mentioned that Americans have a habit of spending money on counseling and therapy. On the other hand, the Japanese spend less money on counseling and therapy. This factor may affect the popularity of mindfulness in Japan.

Respondent 7 stated that mindfulness would not grow in Japan as it did in the United States. Respondent 7 explained that only a group of people in Japan would take an interest in mindfulness. In the United States, 20 million, 7% of the population, practice meditation, and many practices Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness. In Japan, it will probably increase to a certain extent. Respondent 7 made a joke that the Japanese do not need mindfulness because they have "*Maindo 'furo 'ness*" (*Furo* is a bathtub in Japanese), where they can relax and calm their mind.

Overall, very few respondents gave a clear opinion on whether mindfulness in Japan will grow or not. The majority of the respondents raised their concerns about the current mindfulness.

7.3. Problems Concerning the Proliferation of Mindfulness

After mindfulness got mainstreamed in the United States, it received criticism. In Japan, mindfulness is proliferating. Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, its demand has increased. The previous chapters discussed the expansion and practice of mindfulness in Japan. As a next step, it is crucial to examine the issues that the expansion of mindfulness has brought. This topic was discussed in the interview survey.

Respondent 3 stated that mindfulness should be presented in the right way so that it will not have adverse effects. Mindfulness instructors should have experience and knowledge to

identify if a participant is facing any challenges while meditating, especially when it is affecting adversely people's health. Respondent 3 is a Buddhist monk who conducts counseling sessions. He further mentioned that he has provided counseling to people who had adverse effects of mindfulness.

Respondent 22 also stated that when one goes deep into mindfulness practice, the bad qualities of oneself become visible. In the case of depression, the mental condition worsens. Even people who are not depressed begin to dislike themselves. These are the risks that mindfulness practice might bring. Respondent 8 stated that excessive meditation practice might bring adverse effects. Usually, when the Japanese take interest in something, they tend to do it excessively. Respondent 18 mentioned about "Zen sickness", which creates delusions. For example, after a long practice of mindfulness meditation, there is a possibility that one sees a flash, light, or experience levitating. One might get deluded by such mystical experiences. To overcome the adverse effects of mindfulness, proper guidance is necessary.

Some respondents commented on the difficulty of finding a good mindfulness instructor. Respondent 8 stated that the number of mindfulness instructors increased as mindfulness grew in Japan. An enormous amount of information about mindfulness and mindfulness instructors is available online. It is not always reliable. If one experiences any challenges in mindfulness meditation, all instructors might not be able to handle them. Respondent 8 further stated that attention is often given to the merits of mindfulness; however, its challenges are not discussed. One should be careful when choosing a mindfulness program and a mindfulness instructor.

Respondent 18 shared the same opinion. In addition, Respondent 18 stated that meditation looks easy at first. However, it should be carried out with specific guidelines. If one practices meditation alone, it may not always lead in a good direction. Respondent 22 also expressed the same concern by stating that if mindfulness meditation is done without guidance, it may be detrimental to health. Both respondents, 18 and 22, stated that very few studies reveal the adverse effects of mindfulness. Such studies are not conducted in Japan.

Another concern raised by the respondents is that the proliferation of mindfulness will lead to competition. Respondent 26 mentioned about the competition among the mindfulness studios. Respondent 13 mentioned about the competition among the school students if mindfulness spreads widely in the schools. Respondent 13 explained that Mindfulness might receive similar treatment as other subjects. It will have an evaluation system. In that case, students will be divided into groups based on the evaluation. For example, if mindfulness practice has given a score out of 5, students who receive 5 out of 5 will be considered good at mindfulness, while those who receive 2 out of 5 will be considered bad at mindfulness. If

mindfulness spreads in this way, it will lose its essence.

Respondent 33 stated that mindfulness has become a business. Teaching mindfulness for monetary benefits is common. There are many such organizations in Japan. Some demand a great amount of money to conduct mindfulness programs. In that case, its original purpose is lost.

According to the responses collected in the interview survey, mindfulness might bring the following issues. 1. Adverse effects of mindfulness 2. Untrained Instructors who might not be able to deal with the adverse effects 3. The commercialism of mindfulness.

7.4. Introspection for the Future Growth of Mindfulness

Mindfulness programs can be an opportunity to reconsider and reconstruct the role of Buddhism in Japanese society. Understanding this fact, Buddhist monks from various sects are coming together to create mindfulness programs and spread the knowledge of Buddhism through mindfulness. They also work with mindfulness instructors and professionals and conduct various programs, seminars and retreats.

Another aspect that might benefit the growth of mindfulness in Japan is highlighting its connection with Japanese culture. Postwar, in the process of Westernization, the Japanese began adopting American lifestyles. They developed an inferiority complex against the American culture. One of the reasons that mindfulness was accepted in Japan is because it is American and associated with well-known American companies and Universities. However, understanding its roots and connection with Japanese culture might lead to further growth.

Conclusion

The mindfulness movement and its developments in other countries is endless. The more one studies it, the more it gets complex. First, the teachings of mindfulness originated in the East and underwent several interpretations in the West that lead to the development of secular and scientific mindfulness programs. When such programs reached Japan, they again underwent adaptations as per the local culture. This transition of mindfulness practice is complex. It has several facets. As seen in chapter one, there are many studies that discuss the development and proliferation of mindfulness in the United States and other Western countries. However, such studies are limited in number in Asian countries like Japan where mindfulness practices originated. This dissertation is a first attempt that studies the acceptance and practice of mindfulness programs in Japan.

Mindfulness programs reached Japan in the 1990s and began spreading in the 21st century, especially after the visit of Kabat-Zinn in 2012. Initially, it drew attentions of medical professionals and Buddhist monks, followed by corporate professionals. Through the networks of various professionals and media, it spread in various fields. The awareness about mindfulness programs and their effects is more in clinical and corporate fields compare to other fields like education, fitness etc. The nature of mindfulness practice in the form of secular and mindfulness-based interventions and programs is observed and analyzed in this dissertation in two parts. The first part focused on the development of mindfulness in the United States and Japan. The second part discussed the results of the interview survey. The chapters in this part covered mindfulness and its relationship with religion, teaching strategies of mindfulness, its flaws, and future growth.

Chapter one briefly explained how mindfulness, a religious practice, turned into a secular practice and became mainstream. The success of mindfulness in the United States lies in the strategies used by mindfulness leaders to promote it. When the teachings of mindfulness reached the United States, they were adapted to the requirements of American society. Only selective elements such as Haṭha Yoga and meditation were focused on. Systematic and structured programs were designed. Scientific studies were attached to them to prove their efficacy. Religious and mystical elements were removed from them. Elites and professionals promoted such programs through their networks of organizations. They were also promoted by popular media. As a result, mindfulness reached a large number of audiences as a stress-reducing method.

Chapter two focused on the similarities and differences between the teachings of popular Hindu spiritual teachers and MBSR. Mindfulness is primarily associated with Buddhism. However, the ideologies, and strategies behind mindfulness, especially MBSR, share similarities with the teachings of popular Hindu spiritual teachers; Swami Vivekananda, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, and Sri Ramana Maharshi. Kabat-Zinn and other mindfulness leaders used similar strategies that Vivekananda and Maharishi used to promote their teachings. They simplified traditional concepts with modern science and used English vocabulary. They abstracted selective Vedantic teachings and emphasized their practical application.

On the contrary, Nisargadatta Maharaj and Ramana Maharshi did not use any strategy to promote their teachings. However, some of their teachings are incorporated by Kabat-Zinn into MBSR. In this way, MBSR and mindfulness, in general, are not limited to Buddhism; they are also associated with the teachings of Hindu spiritual teachers.

Chapter three reviewed mindfulness's criticism in the past few years for capitalizing on religious practices, inaccurate scientific evidence, adverse effects of mindfulness meditation, and inadequate knowledge to overcome the adverse effects. The criticism has led to revisions in mindfulness programs. Such revisions suggest adding spiritual and Buddhist elements to the programs. Therefore, no matter how much effort is put into removing religion from mindfulness, only rituals and mystical parts can be removed. Otherwise, religion remains closely associated with mindfulness.

Chapter four focused on the developments and trends of mindfulness identified in Japanese society. Mindfulness spread in Japan with several interpretations. More than MBSR and other Western mindfulness programs, locally designed mindfulness programs cater to many people. The reach of the programs increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the American pattern, it grew in various directions. Therefore, mindfulness and meditation, which were limited to Buddhist monks in Japan, have broken their boundaries.

Chapter five discussed the relationship of mindfulness with religion. Even though Buddhism is practiced in Japan for many years, it is limited to a group of people. In addition, Religion and meditation have a negative image in Japan due to the anti-social activities carried out by religious groups such as AUM Shinrikyo. Therefore, mindfulness is mainly presented as Western, scientific and secular. However, mindfulness has roots in Buddhism and Yoga. Presenting it in secular way is paradoxical.

Chapter six examined how mindfulness is taught in Japan. The sociocultural aspects play an important role. Mindfulness is already present in Japanese culture as Zen, Japanese art, and many other forms. When mindfulness is explained using cultural elements, it gets easy for some individuals to relate to mindfulness. It creates a positive effect on the acceptance of mindfulness. Some mindfulness instructors use Buddhist quotes, poems, and terminologies familiar to the Japanese to understand mindfulness better. However, their usage depends on the requirements of the target audience.

Chapter seven analyzed a few aspects regarding the development and proliferation of mindfulness. From the responses received from the interview survey, it is clear that one of the reasons that mindfulness was accepted in Japan is because it has come from the United States. The growth of mindfulness in Japan led to several concerns similar to the United States. Such concerns should be addressed for mindfulness to grow further in the coming future.

Acceptance and Expansion of Mindfulness in Japan

In the United States, the secular side of mindfulness was highlighted because Americans are brought up with Christian and Jewish values. If mindfulness were presented as Buddhist or religious, Americans would have become skeptical about converting to Buddhism. It would have hindered the acceptance of mindfulness for Americans who affiliate with a particular religion and even those who are unaffiliated with a particular religion. Further, it would not have achieved the aim of reaching a large audience.

In the 20th century, Hindu and Buddhist religious leaders and spiritual movements were active in the United States. Several Americans adopted their teachings; however, later, these movements were considered cultic. Mindfulness leaders were aware of the social situation in the United States. Therefore, they disassociated mindfulness with religion, and through various professionals, media, and a network of organizations, they spread mindfulness as a secular practice.

In Japan, religious groups such as AUM Shinrikyo turned into cult and terrorist groups. The anti-social activities carried out by them have created a negative image of religion and meditation. Even though practices such as going to temples and shrines, offering prayers, having a wedding ceremony in a church, and performing a funeral in a Buddhist way are standard in Japan, the Japanese are skeptical of the concept of religion that makes individuals believe in God or religious ideology. Therefore, while teaching mindfulness in Japan, it becomes essential to emphasize that mindfulness does not promote any religion.

With the expansion of mindfulness, it appears that the negative image associated with meditation is changing to a certain extent. Initially, mindfulness instructors were concerned about whether mindfulness would be accepted in Japan. They used to avoid using the word meditation. However, today, mindfulness is primarily associated with meditation and is often referred to as “*Maindofurunesu Meisō*” (mindfulness meditation). As a result, meditation studios are emerging. Temples also offer Zen and other meditation programs.

Mindfulness programs have drawn considerable attention in Japan in the 21st century. After 2014, mindfulness studios were established. Initially, they offered Western mindfulness-based interventions and programs; however, gradually, they began offering newly designed programs. Books and research on mindfulness increased during this time. In 2016, when mindfulness was introduced on NHK’s Television program, it reached common people. Initially, mindfulness was limited to psychiatrists, psychologists, and a few Buddhist monks; the studios were concentrated in Tokyo and Osaka. However, from 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, mindfulness spread widely through online programs and social media. Even after the relaxation of the pandemic restrictions, mindfulness is expanding. It is growing parallelly in several fields. Collectively they are contributing to the development of mindfulness in Japan.

The secular and scientific mindfulness that came to Japan through interventions and stress reduction programs has received a mixed response from Japanese Buddhist monks. For some, Mindfulness programs reconstructed in the United States are not required in Japan because the Japanese practice the values of mindfulness in their culture daily. For others, structured mindfulness programs can reduce the mental health problems of the Japanese. In addition, such programs will help rediscover Japanese culture and Buddhism. Some monks deny the association of mindfulness with Buddhism, while others refer to Zen and other Buddhist contemplative practices as mindfulness. Those who advocate mindfulness programs point out the shortcomings of such programs. They propose that Buddhism can fill those gaps.

Promoting and Teaching Mindfulness in Japan

As discussed in chapter five, mindfulness is promoted mainly as Western, scientific, and secular. The Japanese tend to take an interest in Western culture; therefore, it is promoted under the names of Western companies, personalities, and universities. Considering the negative image of religion and meditation in Japan, scientific evidence of mindfulness is highlighted to prove its efficacy and disassociation with religion.

On the other hand, there are Japan-specific promotion strategies for mindfulness. Mindfulness is considered a reverse import of traditional Buddhist practices. Some mindfulness studios and Buddhist monks explain the similarities between mindfulness and Japanese culture. They usually use examples of tea ceremonies, Judo, and many other forms of Japanese art. In addition, they use quotes and poems from Japanese Zen masters and philosophers such as Shunryu Suzuki. They also make necessary explanations to remove the negative image of meditation. They conduct interactive sessions in which they encourage the participants to share their meditation experiences and opinions.

In terms of application, mindfulness studios began with Western programs; however, various programs, including mindful Yoga programs, were gradually developed. As seen in chapter four, some studios strictly follow the Western curriculum, while others offer mindfulness programs that are developed based on their own interpretations and experience of mindfulness. They do not precisely follow the practices of Western mindfulness programs; instead, they change the contents according to their knowledge of mindfulness and the target audience's requirements. Such programs are great in number compared to Western programs such as MBSR, MBCT, and SIY. Some studios offer teachers' training courses based on Western curriculum, while others have self-designed curricula. There is no standardization for mindfulness studios and their programs; rather, the term mindfulness has become too ambiguous to create standardization. Every program claim that the practices it is offering are mindfulness practices. Mindfulness is taking shape in Japan with local adaptations. It can be regarded as "Japanese mindfulness."

Concluding Remarks and Further Research Topics

In Japan, Mindfulness is criticized, especially by Buddhist monks, for its limited scope. Japanese critics do not use the word "McMindfulness"; however, they point out that mindfulness programs are superficial and may not be able to resolve all the issues concerning life and death. Some of them suggest revising the current mindfulness practices with the help of Buddhism.

I believe mindfulness will create an opportunity for Japan to rediscover its culture and roots. It will create an opportunity for Buddhist monks and mindfulness instructors to collaborate and develop sustainable programs that benefit society. In this way, Japan can contribute to the Global mindfulness movement. Though the scale of mindfulness in Japan is smaller compared to the United States and Europe, its growth is evident on the local level.

This dissertation attempted to understand how mindfulness adopted in the United States is practiced in Japan, where it originated. In a broader sense, it has contributed to understanding the transition of mindfulness practice from Asia to the United States and from the United States to Asia. In Asia, it is going through revisions based on local requirements. However, there are many approaches that are not covered in this dissertation.

First, it is essential to conduct a survey or market research on a broader scale to understand the awareness about mindfulness in Japanese society. It will give an idea of the overall growth of mindfulness programs in Japan and will help identify its trends. A specific area can be taken up to examine the practice of mindfulness. For example, mindfulness programs in the corporate sector; their structure, application, and target audience.

Second, further consideration is necessary to understand the economics behind mindfulness programs. In the United States and other Western countries, mindfulness has become a billion-dollar industry. It is necessary to study whether Japan is going in the same direction.

Third, there is a great scope to study the awareness about mindfulness in the Buddhist fraternity and the response of Japanese Buddhist monks to secular mindfulness programs. In this dissertation, I discussed the views of Buddhist monks who are public figures and are vocal about their opinions. However, further consideration is necessary for the views of other Buddhist monks in Japan. It would be interesting to identify if the views and opinions of the Buddhist monks differ from sect to sect.

Fourth, there is a need to examine in greater detail, how Buddhist monks and mindfulness instructors can come together and develop mindfulness programs where each of them can use their expertise for the benefit of society. Creating reliable instructors and standardization of teaching methods are other factors that need attention. In addition, it is necessary to examine whether the participation of Buddhist monks in teaching mindfulness programs can bring any changes in the Japanese perception of Buddhism.

Finally, other countries like India where Buddhism and Yoga are practiced can be interesting areas for further research. As seen in chapter one of this dissertation, India is one of the Asian countries where scientific studies on mindfulness are growing. A further investigation can be done into how mindfulness programs are adopted and practiced in a diverse society like India. I believe mindfulness will create many research opportunities for scholars and professionals.

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Appendix 1: Mindfulness and Yoga studios in Japan

Mindfulness Studios in Japan

Name	Foundation Year	Location	Website Link
Osaka Mindfulness Kenkyūjyo	2011	Osaka	https://www.mindfulness-lab.com
Japanese Association Of Mindfulness	2013	Tokyo	https://mindfulness.jp.net
Mindful Leadership Institute (MiLI)	2013	Tokyo	https://mindful-leadership.jp
Tokyo Mindfulness Center	2013	Tokyo	https://tokyo-mindfulness-center.jp
Campus for H	2014	Tokyo	http://campus-h.com
Japan Institute For Mindfulness In Leadership	2014	Tokyo	https://jimleadership.web.fc2.com/about.html
Japanese Association Of Mindfulness Psychotherapy (JAMP)	2014	Tokyo	http://mindful-therapy.sakura.ne.jp
Ningensei Shinkyu Kenkyujyo	2015	Kyoto	https://www.npo-mindtalk.org
Japan Association Of Promotion Of Mindfulness	2016	Tokyo	https://www.mindfulness-fukyu.net
MBSR Study Group	2016	Osaka	https://www.mbsr-study-group.com
Mindful Health Co., Ltd.	2016	Fukuoka	https://mindful-health.co.jp

Teragoya Buddha (Cocokuri)	2016	Tokyo	https://www.cocokuri.com
Manabiya Academy	2017	Tokyo	https://manabiya.academy
Mindfulness Meditation Association (Masao Yoshida Mindfulness)	2017	Kanagawa	https://mindfulness-association.com
Russell Mindfulness Entertainment	2018	Tokyo	https://russellme.com
Medicha	2019	Tokyo	https://medicha-jp.com
Melon	2019	Tokyo	https://www.the-melon.com
Suwaru	2019	Tokyo	https://www.suwaru.co.jp/?lang=en
Japan Mindfulness Promotion Organization (JMPO)	2020	Tokyo	https://www.jmpo.org/mindfulness/
MFQR Co., Ltd.	2020	Tokyo	https://mfqr-method.com/hp/company
Awareness Retreat Center	-	Hiroshima	https://awarenessism.jp
Grateful Academy	-	Hokkaido	http://grateful-academy.jp
International Mindfulness Center Japann (IMCJ)	-	Nagasaki	https://www.mindfulness-japan.org/about-imcj/about-imcj-en/
Japan Mindfulness Training Institute (JMTI)	-	Tokyo	https://www.mindfulness-t.com
Kansai Mindfulness Association	-	Osaka	https://ks-mindfulness.com

Mindfulness Studio (Kokorone)	-	Osaka	https://cocoro-ne.jp
Mindfulness Studio Daikanyama	-	Tokyo	https://www.easYoga.jp/information/6291/
Tokyo Stress Reduction	-	Tokyo	https://tokyostressreduction.org
True Nature Meditation	-	Tokyo	https://www.truenature.jp
Kenkōbikenkyūjyo	-	Hyogo	https://mindfulnessjapan.com

Source: Author

- Notes: 1. The table is created by the author based on the information available on the internet as of August 2022.
2. The “-” symbol is used if the foundation year and location of the organization are not mentioned on the website.

Yoga Studios in Japan that offer Mindfulness Programs

Name	Foundation Year	Location	Website Link
Japan Yoga Meditation Association	1978	Tokyo	https://Yoga.jp
Japan Fitness Yoga Association	1993	Tokyo	https://Yoga.co.jp/aboutus/english
Mindfulness and Yoga network	2012	Tokyo	http://mindfulness-Yoga.jp
Zuci Yoga/ Miho Mindfulness School	2012	-	https://www.zuci-Yoga.com/mindfulness-school/
Maulea Japan	2013	Tokyo	https://maulea.co.jp
Yoga Medical Society In Japan	2016	Kanagawa	https://Yoga-medical.org/english/
Beauty Elegancia	2017	Tokyo	https://beauty-elegancia.com
Japan Men's Yoga Association	2021	Tokyo	https://mensYoga.jp
Livewell Institute	-	-	https://www.livewell-institute.com
Nami Yoga Studio	-	Tokyo	https://www.namiYogastudio.com

Source: Author

Notes: 1. The table is created by the author based on the information available on the internet as of August 2022.

2. The “-” symbol is used if the foundation year and location of the organization are not mentioned on the website.

Appendix 2: List of Mindfulness and Yoga Studios and set of words used on their websites to explain Mindfulness

Name	Found ation Year	Location	America/ Western	Science/ Neuro- Science /Psycholo gy	Religion/ Buddhism / Zen	Meditatio n
Osaka, Mindfulness Kenkyujyo	2011	Osaka	○	○	○	○
Japanese Association of Mindfulness	2013	Tokyo	○	○	○	○
Mindful Leadership Institute (MiLI)	2013	Tokyo	○	○	×	○
Tokyo Mindfulness Center	2013	Tokyo	○	○	○	○
Campus for H	2014	Tokyo	×	○	×	○
Japan Institute For Mindfulness In Leadership	2014	Tokyo	○	○	○	○
Japanese Association Of Mindfulness Psychotherapy (JAMP)	2014	Tokyo	×	○	○	○
Ningensei Shinkyu Kenkyujyo	2015	Kyoto	×	×	×	×
Japan Association Of Promotion Of Mindfulness	2016	Tokyo	○	○	○	○
MBSR Study Group	2016	Osaka	○	○	○	○
Mindful Health Co., Ltd.	2016	Fukuoka	○	○	×	○

Teragoya Buddha (Cocokuri)	2016	Tokyo	×	×	○	○
Manabiya Academy	2017	Tokyo	○	○	○	○
Mindfulness Meditation Association (Masao Yoshida Mindfulness)	2017	Kanagawa	○	○	○	○
Russell Mindfulness Entertainment	2018	Tokyo	○	○	○	○
Medicha	2019	Tokyo	×	×	×	○
Melon	2019	Tokyo	○	○	○	○
Suwaru	2019	Tokyo	○	○	×	○
Japan Mindfulness Promotion Organization, JMPO	2020	Tokyo	○	○	○	○
MFQR Co., Ltd.	2020	Tokyo	○	○	○	○
Awareness Retreat Center	-	Hiroshima	×	×	○	○
Grateful Academy	-	Hokkaido	○	×	×	○
International Mindfulness Center Japan (IMCJ)	-	Nagasaki	×	○	×	○
Japan Mindfulness Training Institute (JMTI)	-	Tokyo	×	○	×	○
Kansai Mindfulness Association	-	Osaka	○	×	×	○
Mindfulness Studio (Kokorone)	-	Osaka	○	×	○	○

Mindfulness Studio Daikanyama	-	Tokyo	×	×	×	×
Tokyo Stress Reduction	-	Tokyo	○	○	○	○
True Nature Meditation	-	Tokyo	×	×	×	○
Japan Yoga Meditation Association	1978	Tokyo	○	○	○	○
Japan Fitness Yoga Association	1993	Tokyo	×	×	○	×
Mindfulness and Yoga network	2012	Tokyo	○	○	○	○
Zuci Yoga/ Miho Mindfulness School	2012	-	×	○	○	○
Maulea Japan	2013	Tokyo	○	○	×	○
Yoga Medical Society In Japan	2016	Kanagawa	×	×	×	×
Beauty Elegancia	2017	Tokyo	×	○	○	○
Japan Men's Yoga Association	2021	Tokyo	×	×	×	×
Livewell Institute	-	-	○	×	○	○
Nami Yoga Studio	-	Tokyo	×	×	×	○

Source: Author

Note: 1. The table is created by the author based on the information available on the internet as of August 2022.

2. The “-” symbol is used if the foundation year and location of the organization are not mentioned on the website.

3. The “○” symbol is used if the word/s appear on the website. The “×” symbol is used if the word/s do not appear in the description of mindfulness.

Appendix 3: Details of the Interview Survey

Interview Details

Respondent No.	Date of Interview	Interview Recording Time Individual or Group	Online/ Offline	Language of the Interview	Individual Interview/ Group Interview
1	2021/04/07	1:35:47	Offline (Tokyo)	J	Individual
2	2021/05/10	1:45:45	Online	E and J	Individual
3	2021/04/12	55:39	Online	J	Individual
4	2021/06/21	1:36:20	Offline (Tokyo)	E and J	Individual
5	2021/01/22	2:00:20	Online	J	Individual
6	2020/10/29	1:21:41	Online	J	Individual
7	2021/03/28	56:08	Online	J	Individual
8	2021/06/28	59:01	Online	J	Individual
9	2020/11/20	1:19:26	Online	J	Individual
10	2020/12/17	1:19:04	Online	J	Individual
11	2021/02/28	1:17:23	Online	J	Individual
12	2021/04/02	1:32:56	Online	J	Individual
13	2020/12/08	49:25	Online	J	Individual
14	2020/10/16	2:03:19	Offline (Tokyo)	J	Grouped with Respondent 17
15	2020/11/06	38:23	Online	J	Individual
16	2020/12/02	58:07	Online	J	Individual
17	2020/10/16	2:03:19	Offline (Tokyo)	J	Grouped with Respondent 14
18	2020/12/07	1:08:04	Online	J	Individual
19	2020/12/10	1:04:35	Online	J	Individual
20	2020/12/10	1:24:58	Online	J	Grouped with Respondent 34

21	2020/12/08	1:21:27	Online	J	Individual
22	2020/11/25	1:12:00	Online	J	Individual
23	2020/11/30	1:14:56	Offline (Saitama)	J	Individual
24	2021/02/08	2:24:51	Online	J	Individual
25	2020/12/08	55:07	Online	J	Individual
26	2021/03/08	1:36:57	Online	J	Individual
27	2020/11/05	1:28:02	Online	J	Individual
28	2021/04/29	1:04:25	Online	J	Individual
29	2020/12/23	49:07	Online	J	Individual
30	2021/04/22	1:03:40	Online	J	Individual
31	2020/12/01	1:01:41	Online	J	Individual
32	2020/11/16	1:28:02	Online	J	Individual
33	2020/12/17	1:19:38	Online	J	Individual
34	2020/12/10	1:24:58	Online	J	Grouped with Respondent 20

Source: Author

Notes: 1. The respondent numbers are the same as the numbers given in table 10 of this dissertation.

2. The format of the interview date is YYYY/MM/DD.

3. The interview recording time is HH/MM/SS.

4. For the language of the interview “J” denotes Japanese and “E and J” denote English and Japanese.

Appendix 4: Email Request sent to the Respondents before the Interview

___様

初めまして。ワグ・シュレヤと申します。

現在、大東文化大学国際関係学部アジア地域研究科でマインドフルネスの研究をしています。
博士課程後期課程2年生です。

研究目的は、仏教から発展したマインドフルネスに焦点をあて、それを推進する機関と、実践として取り入れている企業を調査し、アメリカと日本におけるマインドフルネスの現状を明らかにすることです。日本では、仏教（禅）がすでにある中で、マインドフルネスはどのように扱われ、どのように実践されているのかを研究しております。宗教社会学の研究になります。

研究調査としてマインドフルネスを教えている・研究している方々にインタビューをしております。
お忙しい中お手数ですが、御社/___様もご協力できますでしょうか。

新型コロナウイルスの状況で対面でのお話は難しいのであれば、Zoomでの対応も可能です。
日程が決まりましたら、こちらからZoomインビを送らせていただきます。

インタビューに約1時間を頂いております。日本におけるマインドフルネスの発展、マインドフルネスと仏教の関係、マインドフルネスの将来などについて主に質問をさせていただきます。

私や私の研究について詳細が必要であれば、お知らせください。

お忙しい中お手数をおかけしますが、何卒ご協力お願い申し上げます。

ワグ・シュレヤ

大東文化大学

国際関係学部 アジア地域研究科

Email Request sent to the Respondents before the Interview: (Translation in English)

Dear Mr./ Ms. _____

Greetings. My name is Wagh Shreya.

I am currently studying mindfulness at the Graduate School of Asian Area Studies, Department of International Relations, Daito Bunka University. I am a second-year doctoral student.

The purpose of my research is to focus on mindfulness that developed from Buddhism and to shed light on the current situation of mindfulness in the United States and Japan by examining organizations that promote it and companies that practice it. My focus is on Japan where Buddhism (Zen) already exists. I am studying how mindfulness is accepted and practiced in Japan. This research comes under the area of the sociology of religion.

As a research method, I am interviewing individuals who teach or study mindfulness. I am sorry to bother you, but would your organization/ you be able to participate in the interview survey?

If it is difficult to conduct a face-to-face interview due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible to conduct it via Zoom. Once the schedule of the interview is fixed, a Zoom meeting invite will be sent to you.

The time for the interview will be 1 hour. I will mainly ask you questions about the development of mindfulness in Japan, the relationship between mindfulness and Buddhism, and the future of mindfulness.

If you require more information about me or my research, please let me know.

Thank you in advance.

Wagh Shreya

Daito Bunka University

Department of International Relations, Graduate School of Asian Area Studies