

THE IMPACT OF FOOD ON THE MIND AND MENTAL HEALTH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BUDDHIST AND WESTERN NEUROPSYCHIATRIC PERSPECTIVES

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This research explores the impact of food on mental health, comparing Buddhist teachings with Western neuropsychiatry. Buddhist scriptures, including the *Bhojana sutta*, *Besajjakkhandhaka*, *Mahāvagga Pāli* and *Kosala Samyutta*, emphasise the importance of mindful eating and how certain foods influence mental well-being. The research problem centers on understanding the connection between specific foods and mental health in Buddhist perspective, a subject increasingly relevant in modern neuropsychiatry. The hypothesis posits that particular foods and nutrients, such as dark green vegetables, fruits and honey etc., have significant effects on mood, cognitive function, and emotional stability, aligning with both Buddhist insights and scientific studies. The methodology involves a comparative analysis of Buddhist texts and neuropsychiatric research. The *Besajjakkhandhaka* of the *Vinaya* highlighted the food's role as medicines and discussed the five medicines for its medicinal properties which nourish the body and support mental clarity. The *Bhojana Sutta* underscores the importance of mindful eating to prevent mental agitation and promote emotional balance. The *Mahāvagga Pāli* details ten benefits of porridge, including improved digestion, strength, and mental alertness. In the *Kosala Samyutta*, the dangers of overeating are discussed, linking it to sluggishness, distraction, and mental dullness. The *Mahāsīhanāda Sutta* further elaborates that viewing food as merely a necessity, rather than a source of pleasure, helps reduce craving and fosters mental clarity. Findings justified in relation to the data that mindful eating, as emphasized in Buddhism, fosters mental clarity and spiritual progress, while Western neuropsychiatry confirms that vitamins such as B6, B12, Omega-3s, and Vitamin D play crucial roles in neurotransmitter production, affecting mood and cognitive health specially reducing of mental stress, anxiety, depression and other mental unrest situations. These nutrients facilitate the synthesis of key neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine, which are crucial for mood regulation and emotional well-being. Similarly, vitamin B12 is vital for neurological function and DNA synthesis, with its deficiency associated with cognitive impairment and psychiatric symptoms. Vitamin D influences serotonin synthesis and has been linked to various neuropsychiatric disorders, emphasizing the interdependence of these nutrients in supporting brain health. The research concludes that integrating Buddhist wisdom on mindful eating and the medicinal value of food with neuropsychiatric insights into the biochemical impact of diet offers a comprehensive approach to mental health, promoting balance and mental well-being through conscious food choices.

Keywords: Buddhism, food, neuropsychiatry, mental well-being