

Buddhism certainly has taken a life of its own in the United States. Buddhism in the United States has certainly taken a life of its own, finding itself permeating into other non-traditional mediums. Such mediums are often staples of America, such as art, music, fashion, yoga, health, film, and consumer products. One medium in particular, magazines, prove to be an extremely effective communicator, and is definitely a mainstay of American culture. Mindfulness culture within Buddhism has become a genre in its own within the United States, appealing to those looking for some peace of mind in their lives. It is found in areas of health, yoga, and none other than magazines. One magazine in particular, “Mindful”, has done just that. It has taken the areas of Buddhist Mindfulness that are valued within American culture, while simultaneously neglecting the rest of the traditions found within the culture. It is this basis that can be used to explain what Buddhist values are kept in America, and which ones are selectively neglected.

During the hippie revolution of 60's in San Francisco, Buddhism found itself flourishing amongst the youth of America. It was the exact movement that Buddhism needed to launch itself into the gargantuan platform that is the culture of the Western World. The flower power exhibited by the youth fostered ideas of peace, meditation, love, and mindfulness. As a major component of zen and Theravada Buddhism, mindfulness has certainly become well defined over the years and is integral to those forms of Buddhism. Due to a rise in colleges, universities, education, religious studies in universities, and Asian immigration, Buddhism had officially went

from being an ember to igniting into a roaring fire. Now that Buddhism had found itself in a new light, the ever-so-classic America decided that it could launch what they deemed 'desirable' traits of Buddhism into the consumer market. Mindfulness exhibited the traits that are often fostered and exploited in America.

Today, Buddhism finds itself being circulated in American culture in non-traditional Buddhist ways. Magazines flood the newsstands, spreading the word on mindfulness without even acknowledging its roots. One magazine, "Mindful: Taking Time for What Matters", is a notorious one. On the August 2016 edition, we find a woman with her legs folded, assuming a stance that in America is deemed as "meditative". She is wearing contemporary clothing, and some beads around her neck, which could be interpreted in America as 'spiritual'. The woman is a middle-aged, fair skinned white woman, with blue eyes and blonde hair. She is the furthest thing from a historical looking Buddhist, however her appearance appeals to the average consumer of the magazine. That consumer, is probably a middle aged woman, with aspirations of being less anxious, less stressed, retaining what is left of her youth, and being more at peace with herself. On the cover of this edition of the magazine, the headline reads, "Let Yourself Be Happy - 11 Simple Practices For Contentment". While the notion of contentment is very much an integral belief in Buddhism, the implication is that the article is trying to show you how to be satisfied with the readers assumed privilege, and not the deprived and barebones style that is legitimate Buddhism. It is also assumed that those 11 simple practices do not involve any actual Zen Buddhist practice, but rather it most likely describes coping mechanisms for dealing with the modern day stressors that are common for a United States citizen. Also, the notion of 'happiness' is not something that someone longs to achieve in Buddhism. Happiness strays too far from the

middle way, therefore this article is contradictory to what Buddhism actually is. It shows that Americans want the 'serenity' that is exemplified in Buddhism, but they do not want to go through the suffering that is necessary to achieve true nirvana. It is reflective of the fact that Americans want to have more without working for it - taking shortcuts where possible. This popular American trait is also found on the article "DO NOTHING and Get More Done". This is totally indicative of American laziness, something that contradicts Buddhism completely.

Buddhism is based upon living wholesomely. This article is promoting living lethargically, and in indulgence, the exact opposite of what becoming a devout Buddhist is all about. It essentially promotes living lavishly and very much in comfort, a hallmark "sin" in Buddhism. A reflection on American lifestyle, where we want the unattainable without putting any effort into getting it. The effort that Buddhism requires to attain Nirvana in the afterlife, is a lifetime in the making. Buddhists dedicate their whole lives to achieve this goal, whilst the atypical American wants to have immediate results, due in part by the fast-paced nature of American culture. It seems as if what Buddhism in America has amounted to is a means to be happier, and have a more "relaxed" outlook on life, however we are not willing to relinquish all that we have to attain such a mindset of peace. The American mindset is based much more on finding happiness in the short-term, satisfactory feelings rather than living an entire life based on sound morals, and eternal happiness in this life, and beyond it.

Another article on the cover of this magazine is "Is Mindfulness the Future of Therapy? - New Research On Meditation and Mental Health". The implication of this article is that Mindfulness is a means of becoming more 'level headed' and it makes you appreciate more of what the life you have offers you. While the other article headlines are much more indulgent and

are indicative of some of the pitfalls of American society, this one can be construed as some of the positives of American culture. Mindfulness is used as a device to exemplify mental health in this article. While a modern practice, Mindfulness is helpful for a host of psychological things. It shows that American Buddhism picks up on some of the things that allowed it to take a life of its own in America, such as universities and higher education. It shows the health benefits of living mindfully in a Buddhist manor, which is very much the pride of higher education and the health field in general. America has without a doubt revolutionized the health field since the widespread implementation of universities and colleges all across the country. However the influence of mindfulness is not exclusively picked up by Americans. It influences many people on an international scale, so long as America remains a powerhouse in education and attracts the best and brightest students from all over the world. Mindfulness plays a key role in psychological health, and it has been picked up in American Buddhism for the purposes. This shows that education and health is very much cherished in American culture, and is reflected in American Buddhism.

American Buddhism is certainly influenced by the culture that created it. It flourished in a time of America where the youth finally had a voice. Peace loving young people upheld the harmonious lifestyle that was exemplified by Buddhists and orientalism in the United States. This provided a platform for Buddhism to flesh out a life of its own in America. That and higher education fostering higher thinking, which Buddhism certainly had. Unfortunately, over the years Buddhism became a tool of consumer America, and ended up reflecting what Americans wanted to see, rather than conforming to what Buddhism had to offer, especially in regards to mindfulness and zen Buddhism. This has led to an influx of consumer products that reflect what

Americans want to see in Buddhism, including magazines. Magazines provided the perfect platform for how American Buddhism works. It neglects the historical significance that gives it legitimacy, and is a tool for big businesses in America, and shows how American Buddhism has become a product of American culture.

Works Cited

Mindful. "Mindful - Taking Time for What Matters - August 2016." Digital image. Mindful.org.