

Revitalization of Spiritual Values in Atthasila Culture in Indonesia Universities

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Abstract

The advancement of scientific and technological development is accompanied by growing moral decline. This situation has caused an increase in juvenile delinquency, including among college students. Psychologically, student behavior tends to stay unstable and is easily influenced by negative media messages. In response, the *Atthasila* activity, organized by the Indonesian Mahanikaya Buddhist Religious Council (MBMI) in partnership with Sriwijaya State Buddhist College (STABN Sriwijaya), Tangerang and Raden Wijaya State Buddhist College (STABN Raden Wijaya), Wonogiri, has become a strategic tool for promoting character education based on Buddhist spirituality in higher education institutions. This activity not only promotes understanding of religious teachings but also highlights internalization and hands-on practice that develop students into morally, spiritually, and intellectually mature individuals. Its implementation is adaptable and context-specific, incorporating ethical values, environmental awareness, and a disciplined lifestyle. The active involvement of clergy, diverse activity methods, and relevant materials enhance students' overall spiritual experiences. The *Atthasila* activity functions as a regular religious practice and a means for deep self-transformation. It also boosts the institution's reputation as a leading Buddhist educational campus. This research adopts a qualitative case study approach, utilizing interview techniques, participant observation, questionnaires, and documentation. The results show that the spiritual values embedded in the *Atthasila* culture include maintaining virtue, practicing self-control, developing an intelligent personality, preserving Buddhist teachings, and respecting others and the environment. These findings emphasize the importance of revitalizing spiritual values as an effort to shape a generation of Buddhists who are resilient, ethical, and competitive amidst the changing times.

Keywords: Atthasila, Buddhist Universities, Revitalization, Spiritual Values.

Introduction

Nowadays, science and technology are advancing rapidly, significantly altering patterns of human life. People face social changes in many aspects of life. Therefore, they are constantly looking for solutions to overcome these challenges. These changes are hoped to bring convenience, influence, and benefits to many people's lives. In this context, human ability to adapt to these changes is essential. Education provides a strong foundation for addressing challenges in life. Accordingly, the goals of national education highlight four essential aspects: religious, moral, intellectual, and national. Article I of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that among the goals of national education is to develop the potential of students to have intelligence, personality and noble morals (1). Therefore, education can serve as a base for navigating life. On the other hand, the development of science and technology that is not used wisely affects a lot of

cases of delinquency among students. The most common disadvantages linked to the use of technology in education, are: privacy problems, discerning reliable and relevant information, the time required for the preparation of educational materials, the negative impact on academic performance of the students, the lack of resources for its implementation in the classrooms and the intoxication (2). These conditions can make students more vulnerable to negative media influences. This issue requires serious attention from educational administrators, especially those in higher education. The internal struggles students face while searching for their identity are also a significant issue. As time goes on, their spiritual dimensions evolve as they mature. The same issues are also experienced by students at Sriwijaya State Buddhist College (STABN Sriwijaya), Tangerang and Raden Wijaya State Buddhist College (STABN Raden Wijaya), Wonogiri.

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Therefore, campuses are good places for students to practice spiritual development. To develop the spiritual dimension, Buddhist religious activities are necessary to study, understand, and directly practice the Buddha's teachings. This is crucial for providing spiritual guidance in one's spiritual journey. Some people consider spirituality a metaphysical dimension, but many spiritual experiences can be studied and proven through research over time. Spirituality does not always mean belief in supernatural or transcendental beings (3). Additionally, spirituality is also engaged with a quest for the sacred (4). Similarly, spirituality can involve a relationship with God, nature, others, and the environment. It is connected to the quality and meaning of life. All religious activities are deeply linked to the concept of thinking. A proper understanding of *Dhamma* is vital in shaping one's spiritual character (5). Spirituality is an essential part of life, emphasizing inner realms. A person's inner spiritual aspect is closely connected to their religious values and influences.

Buddhist students currently live in a fast-paced, pragmatic world that exposes them to hedonistic and individualistic lifestyles, an emphasis on academic, career, and social achievements, and a shallow understanding of *Dhamma*. Religion and spirituality are often marginalized, becoming formal rituals or cultural traditions rather than inner needs. Moreover, many Buddhist students do not understand the meaning of basic teachings such as *Atthasīla*, do not practice spirituality regularly, and some even feel that spiritual practice is too traditional and irrelevant to current developments. In this regard, the issue of spiritual values is very relevant in modern psychology because this value system is considered the foundation of personality development, especially during the collapse of the cultural paradigm and in conditions of socio-economic crisis and social transformation. The system of spiritual and moral values plays an important role in individual adaptation during socio-cultural transformations in society, guiding, encouraging, or restricting the further development of society, and reflecting the axiological aspects of reality (6).

There is a noticeable gap between Buddhist students' lifestyles and the spiritual ideals of Buddhism, especially the spiritual values of *Atthasīla* culture. *Atthasīla* activities include self-

awareness training to practice the eight moral exercises as part of developing the Buddhist *Pancasila*. *Atthasīla* are observed by Buddhists during meditation periods and on the *Uposatha* day. *Atthasīla* are extended from the Five Precepts which do not permit sexual activity (7). Every participant in *Atthasīla* training is training themselves to confront all forms of ignorance, greed, and hatred that arise within them. Participants engage in *Atthasīla* training activities based on their own intentions. Therefore, the direct practice of *Atthasīla* involves recognizing and becoming aware of mental defilements that emerge and working to reduce or erode them, with the goal of gradually weakening the roots that can cause suffering.

The *Atthasīla* organizing committee has a program to convey Buddhist teachings to participants. This program includes ethics, meditation, morality, devotion, and respect for parents and others. This is a positive step aimed at building and maintaining the existence of Buddhism in the archipelago through activities on Buddhist university campuses.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach to thoroughly explore the phenomenon of implementing *Atthasīla* as part of efforts to revitalize spiritual values within the context of Buddhist higher education in Indonesia. This approach allows researchers to understand holistically and contextually how the values of *Atthasīla* are implemented and interpreted in academic and spiritual life on campus. The case study focuses on two locations, namely Sriwijaya State Buddhist College (STABN Sriwijaya), Tangerang and Raden Wijaya State Buddhist College (STABN Raden Wijaya), Wonogiri. The selection of these two institutions was based on the idea that they are representative of Buddhist universities implementing *Atthasīla* activities, thereby providing relevant and rich empirical data for comprehensive analysis. The main focus of the research is to understand the social and religious context, symbolic meaning, and the process of implementing *Atthasīla* on campus. This research examines both aspects of spiritual values developed and their application in campus life, including how these values are internalized by the

academic community. Data collection was carried out using several techniques, such as in-depth interviews with key informants (lecturers, students, and religious activity managers), participant observation of *Atthasīla* activities, and review of archives and records related to these activities. All data collected was carefully analyzed through data reduction, thematic categorization, and interpretation of meaning, then logically used to support the development of valid and scientifically reliable conclusions.

Results

The *Atthasīla* program functions as a way to develop strong Buddhist character and enhance students' morality through direct practice of the Buddha's teachings, especially in self-cultivation and spiritual discipline. Therefore, the DPP-MBMI aims to help the State Buddhist College in nurturing morally and spiritually sound students. Through *Atthasīla* activities, understanding and love for Buddhist culture and teachings are increased, which is expected to renew the spirit of Buddhism in Indonesia. The implementation of *Atthasīla* activities acts as a channel for moral training based on the Buddha's recommendations, to be integrated into the daily lives of Buddhists. These activities also contribute to maintaining the sustainability and glory of Buddhism in Indonesia and support the growth and development of state Buddhist colleges as centers of national Buddhist education.

The objectives of the *Atthasīla* program at STABN Sriwijaya and STABN Raden Wijaya include: training students' attitudes, mentality, and discipline in practicing Buddhist morality directly; building spiritual character and Buddhist integrity in students; supporting each STABN's vision and mission to produce graduates who excel socially and academically; training students to be independent and to release attachments to worldly matters; enhancing spiritual competence through self-control, behavioral improvement, and the instillation of Virtuous values; providing thorough spiritual training and strengthening faith in the Triple Jewels (Buddha, *Dhamma*, Sangha); and deepening Buddhist teachings through direct practice and transformational experiences.

The direct benefits students gain from the *Atthasīla* program, both personally and academically, include: increasing their knowledge of Buddhist

teachings and practices; consistent training in mental and spiritual discipline; real-life application of Buddhist teachings through moral practices and developing patience; shaping student character to align with Buddhist values; cultivating character and ethics based on *Dhamma* principles; gaining practical experience in *Dhamma* practice, not just theoretical understanding; fostering mutual respect, self-confidence, and appreciation for others; an in-depth introduction to the eight principles as a form of self-training; promoting growth in consistent ethics and discipline among students; and earning certificates that can assist in the academic process. The long-term benefits of the *Atthasīla* program show a deep change in the character and spirituality of participants, such as: students gain direct spiritual experience by participating in the *Atthasīla* program; an increasing ability to control desires, endure hunger, and practice patience; students deepen and apply Buddhist teachings in a clear and comprehensive way; the direct application of the eight precepts in daily life; the development of good habits, such as actively practicing the eight precepts during the full and dark moon; increased insight and confidence in practicing Buddhist teachings; the formation of a strong and authentic Buddhist character in students; the development of noble values and a deep Buddhist spirit; and the cultivation of students who excel spiritually, religiously, and in Buddhist character.

The *Atthasīla* program, organized by the DPP-MBMI, features several distinctive characteristics that emphasize not only spiritual growth but also practical daily life skills. These unique traits include: a holistic approach to self-development. Activities focus on both spiritual aspects and include exercises to understand one, maintain personal and environmental hygiene, improve concentration, and cultivate discipline. This shows the integration of spiritual training with character development; practice of cleanliness and mindfulness. Students are directly taught to maintain cleanliness, such as cleaning toilets and floors mindfully, as a form of spiritual practice in everyday life; and students gain a different experience compared to training at other institutions.

Several participants mentioned that the *Atthasīla* activities they previously took part in were stricter

and more formal within the Theravada tradition. In contrast, the DPP MBMI's approach allows for creativity and light activities, such as coloring, while still adhering to Buddhist ethics. The institution's flexible and human-centered approach integrates the five Universal Virtues, meditation sessions of different lengths, and light activities like morning exercises and watching movies together. Although participants are not allowed to use cell phones, the activities are still enjoyable and diverse. Differences in approaches among Buddhist groups. Students understand that each institution has a unique method, but all are guided by the core teachings of the Buddha, enriching their spiritual experience with a wider perspective.

In its implementation, the *Atthasīla* activities also demonstrate the following notable features: Active involvement of the clergy. Monks and spiritual guides not only deliver lectures or instructions but also actively engage in every activity, setting an example of *Atthasīla* practice and community participation. Reflective rituals and meditations, accompanied by heartfelt reflections and words of encouragement, such as chanting the Buddha's name and emphasizing virtues like patience, which leave a deep emotional and spiritual impact on participants. Environmental care training. Students are taught conceptually and engage in practical activities to care for their environment as a sign of independence and personal responsibility. Well-organized and appealing presentation of activities. Activities are carefully arranged and documented with engaging digital materials, creating a positive impression and supporting the program's sustainability within modern education contexts. Unique content not found in other institutions, such as the Five Universal Virtues—compassion, justice, morality, wisdom, and honesty—representing a comprehensive ethical framework. Structured and mindful living. Students are trained to maintain a disciplined lifestyle, including proper eating habits, sleep schedules, and awakening times, with meditation practiced reverently and consistently. Internal transformations in students resulting from *Atthasīla* activities include: Improved character and self-control. Students become more patient, disciplined, and better at managing emotions through practices like meditation, fasting, and controlling desires; Strengthening

spiritual values and faith in the Triple Gem: Consistent training reinforces belief in the Buddha, *Dhamma*, and Sangha. Student's report becoming more diligent in devotional practices and more committed to practicing Buddhist teachings in their daily lives; Mental health and psychological well-being: These activities lead to inner peace, decreased anxiety, and increased self-awareness and self-reflection. Students feel better equipped to handle academic and social pressures; and Developing life meaning and existential values: Through meditation and reflection, participants report gaining a deeper understanding of their life purpose and spiritual direction. This helps in building a meaningful and balanced life.

Atthasīla activities have a social and communal impact, not only shaping spiritual individuals but also strengthening students' social values as social beings. These impacts include: Building stronger relationships among students across study programs. Students who previously did not know each other can form new groups, support each other in spiritual values, and create a more inclusive and harmonious campus atmosphere; Fostering concern for the social environment and society. Practices like cleanliness, cooperation in assignments, and learning universal values encourage students to become individuals who care more about others and the environment; developing enhanced social-emotional abilities. Practices such as meditation, self-control, and simple living shape students who are more empathetic, appreciate diversity, and can contribute positively to society.

The *Atthasīla* program has had a broad impact, including: Strengthening the human resources of Buddhists. Through this training, students, as future Buddhist educators and counselors, develop a deep understanding, moral integrity, and the ability to become agents of change in society; Preserving Buddhist teachings through the younger generation: This program helps regenerate qualified, committed, and highly motivated Buddhists to sustain the continuity of the *Dhamma* in Indonesia; and Promoting involvement in national religious activities. Several students who participated in the *Atthasīla* program continue their involvement as volunteers in major events such as Vesak Day and *Pabbajja*, showing the long-term influence of this activity on religious participation.

The revitalization of spiritual values within the *Atthasīla* culture has had a social and communal impact. This influence helps build the spiritual ecosystem of each campus. It has also led to the creation of a cohesive and inclusive campus spiritual community. Joint practices among students, lecturers, and staff in a religious environment foster a strong sense of connectedness while promoting values such as empathy and concern for others; respect for diversity; responsibility for the environment; and patience and tolerance in social interactions. Therefore, implementing *Atthasīla* activities effectively contributes to character development not only for individuals but also in strengthening a harmonious and spiritual campus culture.

Revitalization of spiritual values in the *Atthasīla* culture aims to preserve and develop the *Dhamma*. *Atthasīla* activities act as a vehicle for preserving the values of Buddha *Dhamma* amidst globalization and the commercialization of education. This revival effort helps keep Buddhism's spiritual heritage alive and relevant, especially among younger Buddhists. *Atthasīla* activities are part of Indonesia's Buddhist renewal movement, which focuses not only on theological discussions but also on spiritual practices integrated into daily life. Recommendations for maximizing the spiritual value of *Atthasīla* culture include: developing technical guidelines for *Atthasīla* as a shared reference for students and teachers; organizing annual *Atthasīla* programs for all students; training facilitators and spiritual mentors among teachers and alumni; and regularly documenting and evaluating the program for sustainable growth. Through this systemic approach, *Atthasīla* activities become more than ceremonial events—they are a vital foundation for shaping students' Buddhist identity and character. The research results show that the implementation of *Atthasīla* activities has a multidimensional impact on individual students, educational institutions, and the development of Buddhism in Indonesia. Based on data from direct interviews with participants and other stakeholders, this impact can be grouped into three main dimensions: institutional, personal-spiritual, and social-communal. The institutional impacts of implementing *Atthasīla* activities include notable contributions to the growth of institutions, both within and outside of state Buddhist colleges.

These include: Impacts related to enhancing institutional reputation; this activity helps establish a brand identity for the campus as a higher education institution committed to Buddhist religious practices and moral values. This bolsters the campus's standing in accreditation assessments and fosters connections among Buddhist educational bodies; Impacts related to strengthening cooperation among stakeholders: This activity encourages collaboration among campus leaders, lecturers, students, and religious organizations such as the Indonesian Mahanikaya Buddhist Religious Council (MBMI), enhancing working relationships and cross-sector coordination on campus; Impacts related to preserving campus spirituality: The campus atmosphere becomes more spiritually and intellectually balanced, attracting prospective Buddhist students seeking to combine knowledge and spiritual practice.

The urgency of revitalizing spiritual values in the *Atthasīla* culture at Sriwijaya State Buddhist College (STABN Sriwijaya) in Tangerang, Banten, and Raden Wijaya State Buddhist College (STABN Raden Wijaya) in Wonogiri highlights the growing importance of this effort within Buddhist higher education. *Atthasīla* activities are not merely ritualistic; they play a strategic role in internalizing the noble values of Buddhism practically and contextually. Therefore, revitalizing *Atthasīla* is seen as crucial and should be implemented in a consistent and ongoing manner. In the context of institutional education, revitalization provides a strategic opportunity for campuses to embed religious practices directly into the learning process. By integrating these activities into the official curriculum, institutions can ensure students not only grasp the theory of Buddhist teachings but also apply them in daily life. This aligns with the vision and mission of both State Buddhist Colleges, which aim to nurture students' moral and spiritual character. Making *Atthasīla* activities a mandatory or routine part of programs, especially for new students, helps develop not only competent scholars but also ethically and spiritually resilient Buddhist individuals.

Discussion

The Raden Wijaya Wonogiri State Buddhist College (STABN Raden Wijaya) in Central Java Province held its first *Atthasīla* (*Upasakka-Upasikka Ratana*)

Training from August 18 to 22, 2023. This activity was attended by 84 people consisting of students, educators, and educational staff. The purpose of the activity was to train participants in practicing the eight precepts (*Atthasīla*), practicing almsgiving (*pindapata*), and meditation to enhance noble values such as cleanliness, neatness, politeness, discipline, and concentration. The opening ceremony was held on August 18, 2023, in the hall of STABN Raden Wijaya Wonogiri. The highlight of the event on the last day (August 22, 2023) was when participants performed puja bhakti, circled the temple (*pradaksina*), and meditated together at Borobudur Temple. The event was held in collaboration between the Indonesian Mahanikaya Buddhist Council (MBMI) and STABN Raden Wijaya Wonogiri.

From September 23 to 27, 2023, the Sriwijaya Tangerang Banten State Buddhist College (STABN Sriwijaya) also held a *Ratana* (*Atthasīla*) *Upasaka/Upasika* training course attended by students, as part of its long-standing collaboration with the Indonesian Mahanikaya Buddhist Council (MBMI). The objectives of the *Atthasīla* activity included practicing Buddhist teachings directly as outlined in the eight precepts (*Atthasīla*), meditation, cleanliness, tidiness, politeness, discipline, concentration, and almsgiving (*pindapata*). The highlight of the activity was a joint meditation session with all participants, mentors, and committee members.

Researchers have found that revitalizing moral values is not just about ritual observance but involves a transformation of consciousness. This aims to cultivate a generation of Buddhists who are not only knowledgeable but also highly conscious, ethical, and peaceful in an increasingly complex world. The perspective of tradition revitalization has several key ideas, including: 1). Traditions are considered "revitalizable" when social changes threaten their continuity; 2). Revitalization occurs through conscious efforts to revive old values, practices, and rituals in new contexts; 3). It involves reinterpretation, institutional reorganization, and cultural innovation (8).

The relevance of this study is that *Atthasīla* activities are a classical Buddhist ethical tradition that has now been revived in the modern campus environment. The revitalization process can be analyzed through the organization, drivers, and participants of *Atthasīla* activities, namely the

Indonesian Mahanikaya Buddhist Council, leaders, lecturers, educational staff, and students. The strategy for implementing *Atthasīla* activities is as stipulated in the implementation curriculum. Changes in spiritual values and behavior can be proven and examined through changes in students' religious practices. Campus program innovations (retreats, student *Upasatha*, moral guidance activities) and others.

Focusing on the religious and spiritual foundations of an individual's moral framework is essential when conceptualizing and addressing moral injury (9). In Buddhist teachings, mindfulness is embedded within a context that includes compassion, kindness, joy, equanimity, wisdom, ethical behavior, and much more (10).

The revitalization of spiritual values aligns with the broader concept of spirituality, which describes the subjective, tangible, and emotional experience of closeness and connection with what is considered sacred or transcendent (11). These activities influence the search for meaning, inner depth, and connection with the transcendent. This search seeks peace of mind, serenity, and inner tranquility. On the journey of spiritual growth, individuals rise above the material world in pursuit of self-actualization (12). The Buddha's teachings emphasize the importance of ethical and moral behavior and enriching spiritual values to achieve balance and happiness, addressing the problem of unsustainability in our modern world (13).

This is in line with the Perspective of Values Education and Moral Education, which has the following main ideas: Character building takes place through integration; and Moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions (14). Values education can be effective when there is internalization, habituation, role modeling, and a supportive community. The relevance of this study is that *atthasīla* activities contain ethical values that can be understood as character values. Buddhist colleges are formal educational spaces that can shape spiritual character. Character building can be done through the *Dhamma* curriculum, student *Upasatha* practices, meditation retreats, and spiritual guidance. Related to this, the following are the benchmarks for the success of the revitalization of these values: changes in student attitudes (calmness, discipline, simplicity, morality), the effectiveness of habit

formation programs (retreats, daily meditation, ethics classes), and the role of lecturers as role models.

Buddhist students believe that the Buddha's teachings are an illuminating light. By practicing the *Dhamma* correctly, spiritual progress will develop within them. The *Dhamma* is a teaching that must be understood, accepted, and practiced to improve the quality of life by cleansing the human mind of greed, hatred, and defilements. Buddha *Dhamma* can be understood in everyday life and is relevant to society (15).

The importance of revitalizing moral values lies in the effort to think positively, which is both an attitude or behavior and a perspective that is always optimistic when dealing with life. Positive thinking provides positive energy, making life's challenges feel lighter than they actually are. After adopting positive thinking, it should be complemented by a positive attitude toward change. These two approaches to thinking help us become more optimistic in life. Positive thinking is an individual's belief in their ability to overcome obstacles, make behavioral changes, and achieve self-determined goals (16). Positive thinking which is derived from an optimistic view toward the universe and plays an important role in the incidence of better and a more targeted behavior among human beings (17). It primarily focuses on a person's positive view of themselves and their positive thoughts about key aspects of life. Spiritual values can serve as a source of meaning for people and influence their feelings, behavior, and mental health (18).

In examining the values of spirituality, religious practices, morality, and personal identity in the implementation of *Atthasīla* activities, researchers need to manage sensitive information while paying attention to the potential for power imbalances among participants, because the data collected often includes personal experiences, moral dilemmas, hierarchical relationships, and opinions about religious institutions. Therefore, researchers must provide transparent informed consent, maintain confidentiality, secure data storage, and limit the use of information to only what is relevant, while remaining sensitive to the personal nature of spiritual experiences so that participants do not feel pressured or exposed. Differences in position, such as between lecturers, teaching staff and student participants, spiritual leaders and

practitioners, or seniors and juniors, need to be addressed by emphasizing that participation is voluntary, does not affect academic assessment or spiritual status, and that participants have full control over their stories and the boundaries they set during the research.

A student's life, in harmony with their material and spiritual dimensions, will result in actions that tend to be balanced and logical. This aligns with the understanding that mindfulness promotes curiosity, openness, and acceptance, enabling one to develop a non-judgmental attitude toward internal sensations (19). This demonstrates that the spiritual dimension inherent in a spiritually sound soul will always produce good actions and deeds.

Atthasīla activities for lay people are more intense ethical practices on *Upasatha* days or retreats, which can be carried out according to a specific schedule, as implemented by the two State STABs. The context of revitalization emerged as a response to the decline of traditional moral practices amid modern lifestyles. The general objective is to encourage lay people to deepen their *sīla* periodically so that they abandon consumptive patterns, excessive entertainment, and sensory attachments. The main objective is to restore the core of Buddhist practice: morality, concentration, and wisdom, bridging lay people to experience the simple quality of life like monastic practitioners. The relevance of *Atthasīla* activities is: to serve as a "spiritual brake" amid the decline of social ethics; to form the foundation for more effective meditation practice; and to encourage collective awareness of the importance of a moderate lifestyle (middle way living).

Revitalization of *Upasatha*. Buddhists are familiar with what is known as *Upasatha* day (a day of spiritual purification); it is synonymous with introspection, precepts, and contemplation of the *Dhamma*. The revitalization of *Upasatha* can be carried out in many places, but *Upasatha* is only understood as a "day of coming to the monastery," not as a day of deep practice. There is a movement to restore *Upasatha* as a tool for spiritual transformation. The main objective of revitalizing *Upasatha* is to strengthen the spiritual community through regular practice and to rebuild the rhythm of collective practice as in the time of the Buddha. Its relevance is to become the foundation of consistency in periodic practice towards gradual

spiritual depth. It becomes a space for quality *Dhamma* learning (*Dhamma* talks, guided meditation, *sila* practice), and strengthens the social cohesion of the Buddhist community.

Lay Meditation Movement. Meditation activities (*samatha* or *vipassana*) have spread widely in various parts of the world. In this context, revitalization can occur when meditation is no longer considered the exclusive domain of monks. Great teachers such as Mahasi Sayadaw, Goenka, Ajahn Chah, and others have opened the door to practice for lay people. The main goal is to bring meditation into modern life: schools, offices, homes, creating broad access to the “core teachings”: mindfulness and insight. Its relevance is to become a more universal spiritual bridge, even reaching out to non-Buddhists, responding to modern needs for mental health, tranquility, and clarity, and building a contemplative culture in urban communities.

Overall, these three practices have complementary emphases: *Atthasīla* Revitalization focuses on strengthening morality and self-control as the basis of ethics, *Upasatha* Revitalization emphasizes spiritual routines that serve to collectively purify the mind, while the Lay Meditation Movement emphasizes the development of concentration (*samādhi*) and mindfulness (*sati*) through systematic meditation practice. The combination of the three forms a complete set of spiritual practices—morality as the foundation, collective discipline as the support, and inner training as the maturation of awareness. These three practices have different but complementary effects on the development of the sangha. *Atthasīla* plays a role in strengthening individual moral integrity by fostering discipline and suppressing unhealthy behavior, thereby shaping a character that is more in line with Buddhist values. *Upasatha*, on the other hand, helps restore the rhythm of communal practice and improves the culture of life in the monastery through joint activities that reaffirm the spiritual commitment of the sangha. Meanwhile, the practice of meditation for lay people has a broader influence by improving mental and spiritual well-being through the development of inner peace, clarity of mind, and wisdom in daily life. Thus, all three contribute to the formation of a more moral, harmonious, and spiritually balanced community.

For modern society, these three practices have different appeals: *Atthasīla* is often seen as challenging because its moral rules are considered strict and require strong commitment, while *Upasatha* is considered more moderate and easy to follow because it is practiced communally in a regular rhythm. Conversely, meditation has the greatest appeal because of its flexible nature, ease of adaptation to secular contexts, and relevance to the mental well-being needs of today's society.

Regarding the Revitalization of Spiritual Values in *Atthasīla* Spiritual Culture and referring to the theory of symbolic interactionism developed specifically concerning society, symbolic interactionism states that life is continuous, involving efforts to adapt to one's environment, which leads to ongoing changes in self-concept (20). Through the *Atthasīla* culture, practices such as meditation, self-control, and a deep understanding of Buddhist teachings can positively influence interactions with others. This can include increasing empathy, patience, appreciation for diversity, and the ability to contribute positively to society. It is very helpful for participants in social interactions with the community. The broader goal is not only to reactivate what has happened before but also to improve it, covering structures and working mechanisms that adapt to current and modern conditions. Revitalization involves enhancing various aspects of human life, including physical, economic, social, educational, spiritual, and religious facets. When a person tends to admire materialism, his spiritual level begins to decline. Therefore, revitalization of religious moral values must be carried out (21).

To highlight the development of self-awareness or identity through experience and social activities during the self-discovery stage (20), two phases are included: the self-discovery stage and the self-stage. This ability manifests through language, both verbal and non-verbal, which is called a symbol. Like the human mind, the self is also a conscious process with various abilities that continue to evolve through interactions with others. Additionally, it is believed that the combination of self-help forms shares values in society. Developing oneself toward a mature stage is essential. Therefore, each participant must be capable of taking a stance in their thinking to develop awareness based on internal

consciousness that grows through social interactions with other humans. This appears in a series of social activities as members of society, interacting with others in social groups, and creating symbols of unity (20). In social life, symbols created collaboratively become mutual agreements. These symbols serve as a strong foundation for others in the process of creating and building social relationships. Every individual engages in role-playing behaviors as they take on roles within society.

This finding aligns with spirituality, which refers to the word spirit or *spirius*, meaning the breath of life. In a broader sense, spirit can be understood as the nature of consciousness, will, and intelligence that resides within humans. Spirituality encompassed a broad belief system that included human rights, religion, experiences, and culture (22). However, this study found that revitalizing

spiritual values in the *atthasila* culture is becoming increasingly important within the context of Buddhist higher education. This is because *Atthasila* activities are not merely ritualistic but play a strategic role in internalizing the noble values of Buddhism in a practical and contextual way.

Spiritual meditation centers on gaining a deeper understanding of spiritual or religious meaning and connecting with a higher power. It can be practiced following the rituals of one of the major religious traditions or within a single spiritual tradition (23). Practices like prayer, meditation, attending religious services, spending time in nature, and reading sacred texts can improve mental health (24). Values are cherished beliefs, standards, and ethics, and they align with the three main aspects of human spirituality: universality, prayer fulfillment, and connectedness (25).



Figure 1: Implementation of Meditation at (A) Sriwijaya State Buddhist College, Tangerang, Banten, (B) Raden Wijaya State Buddhist College, Wonogiri, Java Central

Although *Atthasila* activities draw on the universal teachings of Buddhism, the approach is highly contextual and adaptable, integrating spirituality, ethics, environmental consciousness, and a disciplined, organized lifestyle. The active involvement of clergy, the variety of activities, and the specialized materials also enrich students' experiences in understanding and practicing Buddhist teachings holistically. This activity functions as a means of comprehensive self-transformation for students, morally, spiritually, and socially. Therefore, the implementation of this activity significantly contributes to shaping a generation of Buddhists who are resilient, ethical, and capable of serving as role models in society.

Figure 1 shows that students are encouraged not only to understand religious teachings theoretically but also to internalize and practice

them directly, such as through meditation and mindfulness. In meditation, the four attitudes of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity are often cultivated and extended to other living beings one by one (26). Mindfulness practice then becomes a way to calm the mind's constant chatter and to keep a record of observed facts (27). The *Kalama Sutta* states that the purpose of *Dhamma* practice is to enable one to abide with a mind filled with loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity (28). Mindfulness is not just passive, non-judgmental attention to the present moment, but an actively engaged and thoughtful awareness capable of recalling past words and actions (29).

In recent years, mindfulness has been seen as a potential source of pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors (30). The effectiveness of

mindfulness is shaped by both internal and external factors. External factors in mindfulness generally refer to biological, physical, social, and environmental influences that affect our existence and come from the outside environment (31). In today's traditional mindfulness practices, it is primarily associated with two main teachings, the *Ānāpānasati* and the *Satipaṭṭhāna-Sutta*. Both offer guidance on how to develop meditation and awareness of our body and mind experiences. These practices are based on an ethical foundation, aiming to transform our core tendencies from greed, anger, and delusion to generosity, compassion, and wisdom (32).

Providing mindfulness training can be an effective part of a broader student mental health strategy (33). Meditation is a valuable activity that supports mental well-being. However, this should not overshadow the fact that meditation can also have both positive and negative effects (34). A short, two-week mindfulness training program is gaining popularity as a way to reduce negative affectivity (35). This process significantly contributes to developing students who are intellectually intelligent and morally and spiritually mature. This activity generally benefits adolescents, protecting them from negative impacts like risky behavior and mental illness, while promoting positive adolescent development and well-being (36). Therefore, this activity is highly relevant for supporting the creation of a generation of outstanding Buddhists with strong character in both religious and social life in Indonesia.

Moreover, the *Atthasīla* activity affects students' focus on developing their spirituality. Each participant needs to be in a state of mind to consciously and mindfully observe what is happening in the moment, including thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the environment, without judgment. Mindfulness is typically seen as focusing on what is happening in the present moment with kindness and non-judgment, intentionally. Mindfulness can help improve understanding and support sustainability, not only at the individual level but also across all scales, and as such, should be a core concept in sustainability science, practice, and teaching (37). Similarly, mindfulness as the cultivation of ways to become attentive to the present moment has grown exponentially in some areas of the global north over the past decade or so (38).

Given these conditions, the implementation of *Atthasīla* has a very significant and positive impact on students, specifically in developing spiritually and emotionally resilient individuals. At the institutional level, the STABN reinforces its identity as a leading Buddhist educational institution. Socially, this activity strengthens the Buddhist community and supports the preservation of Buddha's teachings in the context of modern life. Thus, *Atthasīla* is not merely a ritual or religious activity, but a transformative tool that fosters conscious, caring, and meaningful Buddhists, which can be applied in their personal, academic, and social lives.

The transmission of the spiritual values of *Atthasīla* in the modern era is no longer limited to direct practice during *Upasatha* at the monastery, but has evolved through a variety of more flexible methods. *Dhamma* sermons, whether through thematic lectures or interactive discussions, serve to convey a contemporary understanding of *sīla*, including issues related to the use of gadgets, social relationships, and digital discipline. On the other hand, the Buddhist school curriculum plays a strategic role by integrating *Atthasīla* into religious lessons, character building projects, regular *Upasatha* practices, and ethical dramas that make it easier for students to understand the application of *sīla* in everyday life. These values are also reinforced through social media, podcasts, and other digital platforms, through educational content, online campaigns, and precept reminder apps, so that they can reach young people who rarely attend the temple. Meanwhile, communal ritual traditions such as pilgrimages, *Dhamma* camps, and mass *Upasatha* remain important means of building emotional closeness and shared awareness.

In addition to these mechanisms, charismatic monks and nuns, as well as Buddhist influencers, also serve as moral role models, inspiring followers through sermons, writings, and digital content. Their presence not only deepens ethical understanding, but also encourages consistent practice of the *Atthasīla* in daily life. The effectiveness of these various mechanisms can be analyzed through a variety of approaches, such as participatory observation of sermon congregations, evaluation of student behavior before and after participating in school programs, analysis of digital interaction data, in-depth

interviews after major rituals, and ethnographic studies to observe changes in the behavior of communities influenced by spiritual leaders. Thus, the transmission of *Atthasīla* values occurs through the synergy between traditional and modern methods that reinforce each other.

Various methods of disseminating and reinforcing teachings have different levels of effectiveness depending on their respective characteristics. Sermons continue to play a significant role because they are able to convey teachings in depth, even though their limited reach and the requirement to be present in person affect their effectiveness. School curricula have a major impact from year to year and are an important long-term strategy because they instill understanding from an early age, although they still need to be adjusted to the developmental stages of students. Social media excels in terms of its vast reach and its proximity to Generation Z, but its content is often superficial. On the other hand, pilgrimages and rituals offer emotional experiences that support community renewal, although their effects are not always long-lasting. Meanwhile, well-known monks or nuns can provide strong encouragement and inspiration for the faithful, although this has the potential to create dependence on certain figures.

The revitalization of spiritual values within the *Atthasīla* culture is an urgent and crucial need for students at the Sriwijaya State Buddhist College in Tangerang, Banten, and the Raden Wijaya State Buddhist College in Wonogiri. Through this activity, students are not only formed into academically strong individuals but also excel spiritually and socially. *Atthasīla* activities serve as an integrative means of connecting Buddhist teachings with practical practice, fostering awareness, inner peace, and a commitment to living a moral, meaningful life that positively impacts the wider community. Therefore, this revitalization is not only spiritually important but also essential in creating a complete and competitive Buddhist human capital in the future. The implementation of *Atthasīla* training at two PTABNs in 2023 (STABN Raden Wijaya Wonogiri and STABN Sriwijaya Tangerang) shows that the direct practice of precepts, meditation, cleanliness, discipline, and ritual activities such as *pradaksina* or mass meditation are not only ceremonial events, but also serve as a means of systematically passing on spiritual values. Empirical data in the form of

large participation (84 participants in Wonogiri and more than 100 participants in Tangerang), the involvement of the Mahanikaya institution (MBMI), and the peak of collective ritual activities show that *Atthasīla* is taught through direct experience, community strengthening, and spiritual authority.

These findings are in line with the theory of religious value transmission, which states that ethical internalization occurs through multichannel mechanisms such as *Dhamma* sermons, formal education, digital media, rituals, and authoritative figures. Each has different effectiveness in shaping participants' ethical behavior, understanding, and commitment. Thus, empirical data from the two *Atthasīla* activities reinforce the theoretical conclusion that the revitalization of spiritual values in a modern context requires a layered approach that combines direct experience, structured learning, and digital reach.

The results of the study show that *Atthasīla* training at two State Buddhist Universities with hundreds of participants involving the practice of *śīla*, meditation, cleanliness, and discipline confirms that moral values are more effectively instilled through direct experience (embodied practice) than through cognitive knowledge alone. The collaboration between STABN and MBMI, as well as the involvement of religious leaders and officials strengthens the legitimacy of ethical values through spiritual authority, while mass rituals at Borobudur Temple and *Upasatha* activities deepen moral commitment through collective emotional experiences. The transmission of values is also carried out through various channels, including sermons, school curricula, digital media, pilgrimages, and sangha figures, which emphasize the importance of a multi-channel approach to remain relevant in the modern era. An analysis of effectiveness shows that the curriculum has a long-term impact, digital media has a wide reach, famous monastic figures increase motivation, and rituals provide emotional experiences. These findings support the theory of cultural adaptation, that the revitalization of *Atthasīla* must be flexible and contextual in order for spiritual values to be effectively transmitted.

This study has several limitations that should be considered, including: First, the scope was limited to a specific community during the period when

Atthasila was actively practiced, so the results cannot be generalized to all Buddhists. Second, the qualitative approach used emphasized subjective interpretation, making it heavily influenced by the perceptions and experiences of the individuals interviewed. Third, constraints of time and resources meant data collection was limited to a specific period, which may not reflect the overall spiritual and cultural dynamics of *Atthasila* over time. Therefore, further research with a broader scope and more diverse methods is highly recommended to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

Conclusion

Atthasila activities aim to internalize and directly practice the *Dhamma*, enabling students to understand Buddhist teachings beyond theoretical knowledge. This process significantly helps develop students who are not only intellectually capable but also morally and spiritually mature. These activities are especially relevant in supporting the creation of a stronger generation of Buddhists with solid character in religious and social life in Indonesia. *Atthasila* activities adopt a contextual and flexible approach. Their uniqueness lies in combining spirituality, ethics, environmental consciousness, and a structured, disciplined lifestyle. The active involvement of clergy, diverse activities, and specialized materials also comprehensively enhances students' experiences in understanding and practicing Buddhist teachings. Overall, *Atthasila* activities play a vital role in cultivating a resilient and ethical generation of Buddhists, making a positive impact on students, Buddhist higher education institutions, and Buddhism in Indonesia.

Therefore, revitalizing spiritual values within the *Atthasila* culture is essential for cultivating a superior, ethical generation of Buddhists who positively impact society. Acting as a bridge between Buddhist teachings and practical application, it fosters awareness, inner peace, and a commitment to living a moral, meaningful life that benefits society at large. Efforts should focus on reviving, strengthening, and actualizing the Buddhist spiritual values present in the practice of *Atthasila* so that they remain relevant, understood, and practiced by the younger generation, especially students, amidst the challenges of

modern life, which include moral degradation, materialism, and spiritual disorientation.

Abbreviations

DPP-MBMI: Dewan Pimpinan Pusat- Majelis Agama Buddha Mahanikaya Indonesia/ Central Executive Board Indonesian Mahanikaya Buddhist Council, MBMI: Majelis Agama Buddha Mahanikaya Indonesia/ Indonesian Mahanikaya Buddhist Council, PTABN: Perguruan Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri/ State Buddhist Higher Education Institution, STABN: Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri/ State Buddhist College.

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Author Contributions

Sapardi: conceptualization, introduction, methodology, data collection, data processing, analysis/interpretation, discussion, conclusion, writing, Dika Arya Yasa: data processing, discussion, references, conclusion.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest or competing interests related to the publication of this work. We affirm that there are no personal, professional, or affiliations that could be perceived as potentially influencing the objectivity and integrity of the research presented in the manuscript.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

The Process of Writing Articles does not use AI-assisted technology.

Ethics Approval

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and permission was granted by the Sriwijaya State Buddhist College and Raden Wijaya State Buddhist College. All respondents were adults, and no minors were involved in this study.

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