

# An Analytical Study of the Kalamasutta in Theravāda Buddhist Philosophy and Its Application in Contemporary Society\*

Phra Anop Kovito (Yutlert)<sup>1</sup> and Phra Kwai Rung Panyavachiro<sup>2</sup>

*Mahamakut Buddhist University, Thailand*

<sup>1</sup>E-mail: [anopkovito@gmail.com](mailto:anopkovito@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>E-mail: [anopkovito@gmail.com](mailto:anopkovito@gmail.com)

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## Abstract

This research article has the following objectives: 1) to study the general beliefs, 2) to study the principles of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy, and 3) to analyze the value of the principles of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy in order to apply them in the present society. This research aims to study and research the principles of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy and analyze various issues according to the objectives set regarding the principles of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy.

The research results found that general beliefs are: 1) Belief in nature, gods, spirits, religious teachings, and superstitions. Beliefs arise from doubt, fear, inheritance of power, and hope for good fortune. Current Thai society believes in traditions, culture, and social media. 2) Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy is the teachings of the Lord Buddha to use reason and wisdom before deciding to believe. There are 10 principles: Do not believe because you claim to have heard it. Do not believe because you claim to have practiced it. Do not believe because you claim to be a rumor. Do not believe because you claim to have come from a book or scripture. Do not believe because you claim to be consistent with logic. Do not believe because you claim to be consistent with inference. Do not believe because you claim to have considered the symptoms. Do not believe because you claim that it is consistent with your own opinions or theories. Do not believe because you claim that the speaker looks credible. Do not believe because you claim that this monk is our teacher. The value of the Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy 3) The value of promoting wisdom and traditional beliefs Human curiosity initially has its roots in human ignorance. Because of ignorance, one is suspicious. Because of doubt, one is curious. Because of curiosity, one seeks knowledge about the thing in question. The Kalama Sutta is a principle that teaches about using wisdom and reason before making a decision because beliefs that arise from doubt may be uncertain beliefs. Therefore, one must use judgment before believing. The Kalama Sutta says: Do not believe in what others hear. Believe that it is true by hearing what others hear.

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## Introduction

The evolution of human beliefs initially had a belief in spirits that were born from nature (Animatism) that had special powers that could bring about both good and bad things, coupled with human fear, which led to people worshipping and praying (Rawipawilai, 2543). Later, humans began to have more doubts and thought that there might be someone behind the powerful people, so they turned to believe in ghosts, spirits, or animism (Animism), spirits, or spirits (spirit) because these powers could bring about suffering or happiness. In addition, belief in gods and angels and humans also had beliefs about ghosts, which was a belief in ancestral spirits (Ancestor Worship) that the spirits of ancestors who had died did not go anywhere, but still existed to protect and take care of their children. Later, there were rituals to worship the spirits of ancestors (Manee Phonyomyong, 1993: 70) (all beliefs Most of them originated from the Indian social concept of believing in many gods or polytheism. They created images of gods according to their own ideas, thinking about what nature should look like and how each nature has higher or lower power. Each god has different power and different duties. Belief in one god of a group of people or henotheism is the worship of gods according to their caste group without mixing them. Belief in one god or monotheism is the belief that in this world there is only one supreme god, the great god who created all things, has great power and is a hero. (Suwattana Chanchamnong, 1997: 1-2) In Buddhism, beliefs are classified into 4 types: Kammasaddha means belief in the law of karma, Vipākasaddha means belief in the reality of the results of karma, Kammasakatasaddha means belief that all beings have their own karma, and Tathāgatabodhisaddha means belief that the enlightenment of the Buddha is real (Ang.Sattaka. 23/4/3).

The current society is modern and advanced, considered a modern society, a world of social networks. The current beliefs are so diverse that it is hard to know what to believe. Although there are many modern beliefs flowing in, the current political situation is not much different from the past because humans are still greedy, angry, and deluded. Therefore, humans still have doubts about the original belief system by believing in the earth, sky, air, ghosts, and angels because they may still think that these beliefs can inspire happiness and suffering (Suwat Chanchamnong, 1997). Therefore, beliefs are a part of people in today's society. Beliefs are passed down through the educational process, through textbooks, scriptures, words, listening, believing, inheriting, and passing on. Although there are modern scientific principles used in development, the phenomenon of beliefs is still inconclusive, especially beliefs about mental states, religion, textbooks, and listening to each other, in which each person believes in what they have studied. In addition, these beliefs are used to express opinions to debate and indicate the situation of differences in opinions, where each side often cites principles or theories that they hold. To support the correctness of one's own thoughts and indicate absolute confidence. If the debate does not reach a conclusion, there will often be a mediator or an expert who will be above the issue being debated. The belief systems that often have problems are beliefs in traditional systems, beliefs in nature, beliefs in gods, spirits, and spirits, beliefs in the law of karma, beliefs in witchcraft, beliefs in traditions, beliefs in culture, beliefs in politics and government, and beliefs in the modern world. The world of social networks, especially today,

communication is very efficient. When there is an interesting event happening, no matter where in the world, in just a moment, the news can be spread around the world. Every day, we receive a lot of news and it is not certain that it is all correct and good. Therefore, when receiving news, we should consider it first so as not to make mistakes or distort them. Therefore, we should adhere to the principle of mindfulness and wisdom, think and contemplate what is happening in our country right now. There are many things or events that make us wonder whether it is true or not, correct or incorrect, whether it is harmful or not, and how much we should trust it. But most people do not think or doubt it. They will immediately believe or accept what they say is good and correct. If it is like this, we can say that our society is very weak and can easily be manipulated.

The Kalama Sutta is a Buddhist principle that the Lord Buddha used as the first teaching for the Kalama people of Kesaputta in the Kosala region, where there was a debate about various beliefs (Belief) that could not be proven (Anguttara Nikaya 20/505/179-184). (The Kalama Sutta is a teaching that the Lord Buddha taught, emphasizing the knowledge of learning to gain wisdom in various matters that are still uncertain about what is right and what is wholesome and what is unwholesome and should not be believed. The principle is to consider goodness and to reduce and abandon unproductive beliefs because if believed and put into practice, it will cause more harm than good. Considering the truth to clearly see the truth according to the natural state, which is a belief or truth that already exists and no one created or embellished it, but it occurs by the truth of nature that has been done or created by itself according to the factors of nature. The truth of nature, beliefs or truths that are different from human creation, such as the creation of the belief that humans created the world (Fuen Dokbua, 1990). Most of the current society refers to it in textbooks. From the scriptures of creating sacred objects to create fear, creating textbooks, creating scriptures to create beliefs through verbal expressions, creating various traditions and introducing modern culture until it became the current values (Suwan Sathanan, 1994), the various belief systems that exist today cannot be proven to be true or false, good or bad. Some beliefs can be trusted, some beliefs cannot be proven by sight. Belief arises from mental states. The principle of Kalama Sutta is a principle of Buddhism that the Lord Buddha has shown as a principle to be used to search for facts until true wisdom is gained before deciding to believe (Ang. Satthaka. 20/505/179-184)

For this reason, the researcher is interested in studying and analyzing the principles of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy to apply in the present society. The research results will be used as information and as a guideline for developing knowledge to apply in the present society.

## Objective

1. To study the general beliefs
2. To study the principle of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy
3. To analyze the value of the principle of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy to apply in the present society

## Literature review

### 1. The Kalamasutta: Historical and Scriptural Context

The *Kalamasutta*, found in the Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN 3.65), is often referred to as the "Charter of Free Inquiry" within Theravāda Buddhist tradition. The Buddha's discourse to the Kalamas emphasized independent reasoning, critical thinking, and experiential validation over blind faith or tradition (Bodhi, 2005). This sutta was delivered in the town of Kesaputta, where the Kalama people expressed confusion about conflicting religious teachings. The Buddha responded not with doctrine, but with a method of discerning truth through direct understanding, ethical consequences, and personal experience.

### 2. Core Teachings and Philosophical Implications

The sutta outlines ten epistemological sources that should not be accepted uncritically—such as tradition, scripture, or the reputation of teachers—if they lead to unwholesome consequences. Instead, individuals are encouraged to evaluate teachings based on whether they promote greed, hatred, and delusion or their opposites (Rahula, 1974). This approach aligns with the Theravāda emphasis on *paccattaṃ veditaṃ viññūhi*—personal verification through wisdom.

Kalupahana (1992) highlights the *Kalamasutta* as a foundational text demonstrating the Buddha's pragmatic and empirical outlook. Rather than constructing a rigid metaphysical system, the Buddha proposes a path toward liberation grounded in ethical conduct and mindfulness.

### 3. Kalamasutta and Rational Inquiry

The sutta's emphasis on rationality and inquiry has attracted the attention of modern scholars and philosophers who see parallels with Enlightenment ideals. According to Jayatilke (1963), the *Kalamasutta* exemplifies an early form of scientific thinking, where belief must be tested through reason and ethical consequences. This perspective supports the notion of Buddhism as a rational religion, appealing to modern secular audiences.

Furthermore, Gombrich (2009) argues that the sutta is a reaction against the dogmatism and ritualism prevalent in Brahmanical traditions of the Buddha's time. By placing ethical outcome and experiential knowledge at the center of spiritual practice, the Buddha presented a revolutionary epistemology that challenged both orthodoxy and superstition.

### 4. Application in Contemporary Society

The message of the *Kalamasutta* is profoundly relevant today, particularly in the context of information overload, religious pluralism, and social polarization. In an age of digital misinformation and ideological extremism, the call for critical thinking, ethical evaluation, and personal inquiry is both timely and necessary (Keown, 2013). Moreover, the sutta can inform ethical decision-making in education, interfaith dialogue, and even public policy, where rational scrutiny and compassion should guide actions. As Kaur (2021) points out, Buddhist epistemology, as exemplified in the *Kalamasutta*, offers valuable frameworks for inclusive and humane social discourse.

The *Kalamasutta*, a discourse found in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, is often regarded as a foundational teaching in Theravāda Buddhism that promotes free inquiry and critical thinking. Delivered by the Buddha to the Kalama people in the town of Kesaputta, the sutta addresses their confusion caused by conflicting religious teachings. Rather than imposing a doctrine, the Buddha encourages the Kalamas to evaluate

teachings through personal experience, reason, and ethical outcomes. The core message of the Kalamasutta discourages blind reliance on tradition, scripture, hearsay, or authority figures if such reliance leads to unwholesome results. Instead, it urges individuals to reflect on whether teachings reduce greed, hatred, and delusion, and whether they lead to personal and communal well-being. This approach underscores the importance of wisdom and direct understanding in the Buddhist path. Philosophically, the sutta illustrates a pragmatic and empirical method that emphasizes ethical conduct and mindfulness over metaphysical speculation. Its rational tone has drawn comparisons to scientific thinking, where beliefs are tested through experience and practical outcomes. The Kalamasutta also represents a critique of dogmatism and superstition, highlighting a revolutionary framework centered on ethical consequences and lived experience. In modern society, characterized by information overload, social division, and ideological extremism, the teachings of the Kalamasutta remain profoundly relevant. It provides a guide for cultivating critical thinking, making ethical decisions, and fostering compassionate dialogue. Its principles can be applied in various areas such as education, social engagement, and public decision-making, where reasoning and compassion are essential for harmonious coexistence and personal growth.

### **Methodology**

In this research, the researcher studied the principle of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy from the Thai Tripitaka, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya Edition, printed in honor of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit on the auspicious occasion of her 5th cycle birthday anniversary in 1996, and studied documents, namely general books, journals, articles, theses, and related research, to be used as the scope of this research.

#### **Data collection stage**

- 1) Research on the principle of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy
- 2) Survey research documents written by experts and research on the principle of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy

#### **Data collection stage**

- 1) Collect data from primary sources, namely the Thai Tripitaka, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya Edition Printed in honor of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit on the auspicious occasion of Her Majesty's 5th cycle birthday anniversary in 1996
- 2) Collect secondary documents (Secondary Sources) from commentaries, commentaries, and special articles and arrange them in order of relevance, importance in terms of reasons and sources to separate them into categories.
- 3) Collect data from research documents related to the Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy.

#### **Data analysis stage**

- 1) Study and analyze data on the meaning, types, and principles related to the Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy according to the set objectives.
- 2) Study and analyze various issues according to the set objectives regarding the Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy.

Data presentation stage the researcher will present the research results in a descriptive and analytical format.

## Results

1. General beliefs Development of beliefs: Belief in nature or other things that have power over oneself Belief in theism Belief in the gods Belief in power over humans can control human behavior Belief in karma Belief means the mental state of a person or society that believes that something is true, good and beautiful, which leads to the behavior of that person or society as a model of behavior that leads to the organization of society in the form of religion or various theories of knowledge. Types of beliefs Belief in spirits in nature Belief in the belief in ghosts, angels or animism Belief in ancestral spirits Belief in many gods or polytheism Belief in one god of a group of people or hypertheism (Henotheism) Belief in one god or monotheism (Monotheism) and belief in human intelligence Use reason not to depend on the power of things that are invisible and cannot be proven Divided into 3 types: (1) Belief in Buddhism (2) General beliefs and (3) Superstitions

Characteristics of beliefs arise from feelings Insecurity from supernatural power, inspirational power

2. Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy The teachings of Buddhism that the Lord Buddha taught to be used in making decisions. Consider carefully before believing, which consists of ten points: 1) Do not believe just because you claim to have heard it from others, that is, believe in what has been heard from others, believe that it is true by listening to others. 2) Do not believe just because you claim to have practiced and passed down characteristics, that is, something that has been passed down from one generation to another for a long time. 3) Do not believe just because you claim to be a rumor, that is, a method that has more disadvantages than advantages because this method is heard, heard from being told or spoken to. 4) Do not believe just because you claim to be from a book or scripture, that is, a written text, which should cover all writings. 5) Do not believe just because you claim to be in line with logical principles, that is, it is a matter of thinking, pondering, finding reasons, and using reasons to prove the facts. 6) Do not believe just because you claim to be in line with inference principles, that is, it is a matter of thinking, pondering, finding reasons. And using reason to prove the facts 7) Do not believe just because it claims to be considered according to the symptoms that appear. It is a way of thinking that is still stuck with reason, circling around the framework of using reason and does not go far. There is some knowledge that cannot be explained by thinking along the lines of reason. 8) Do not believe just because it claims that it is consistent with one's opinion or theory, which is a stubborn thought, opinion, theory of belief, the principle of wrong view (wrong view). 9) Do not believe just because it claims that the speaker looks credible, which is a possible appearance, looking at the possibility or looking at the external form. And 10) Do not believe just because it claims that this monk is our teacher. The relationship between the teacher and the student has the Buddha's words showing neutrality that the teacher cannot help the student in every case. But the teacher's duty is only to advise and teach. But the person who tells people to proceed will be free from the bonds of Mara. (Phra Maha Prabhas Parichano (Kaewketphong), 2010)

3. Analyze the value of the Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy to apply in the present society. Belief is something that humans create. When it is systematically established in society, it is often called religion. It plays an important role in linking various institutions in politics, economics, and society. Religious beliefs are therefore the main institutions of culture and direct social development. Most Thai

beliefs and human beliefs arise from the relationship between humans and nature. When something happens, it affects human life.

Value of fostering wisdom Traditional beliefs are the curiosity of humans. Initially, it was rooted in human ignorance. Because of ignorance, they are curious. Because of curiosity, they seek knowledge about the things they are curious about. The principle of Kalama Sutta is a principle that teaches about using wisdom and reason before making a decision because beliefs that arise from doubt may be uncertain beliefs. Therefore, they must use judgment before believing. The Kalama Sutta states that do not believe in what others hear. Believe that it is true by listening to others.

Value of fostering wisdom Natural beliefs are beliefs in nature. The lowest level of human belief is belief in nature because nature is adjacent to humans. When humans are born and open their eyes to the world, the first thing humans see and touch before anything else is nature around humans and nature. Today's society believes in nature. They believe only because they claim to have practiced and passed it on because natural beliefs are something that has been passed down from one generation to another. They have been practicing for a long time. Whether it is belief, thoughts, opinions, culture, traditions and customs, these things will go through the process of social transmission. According to the Kalama Sutta, we should have belief with reason and wisdom before making a decision. The value of fostering wisdom, belief in gods and angels, it was found that the evolution of human beliefs occurred along with other surrounding developments. Humans are suspicious of darkness, light, heat, cold, sun, moon, sky, rivers, even mountains and large trees that can cause various changes in nature and cause happiness and suffering to humans. The beliefs of Thais in the past were probably no different from other nations, that is, believing in things that cannot be seen that have power over people and can cause both good and bad. Such beliefs are beliefs in ghosts and angels. Buddhism has mentioned the principle of belief in this matter as follows: Do not believe just because.

## Discussion

1. Belief, as a psychological and sociocultural phenomenon, plays a foundational role in shaping individual and collective behavior. It arises from the innate human response to uncertainty, the search for meaning, and the desire to explain experiences that transcend empirical understanding (Durkheim, 1915). The development of belief systems—such as belief in natural forces, deities, karma, and metaphysical entities—has historically served to reduce existential insecurity and foster a sense of control over the environment. These beliefs have, over time, evolved into complex religious structures and moral philosophies that guide societies and cultures across generations (Eliade, 1959).

Beliefs can be categorized in several ways. First, **naturalistic beliefs**—such as animism and nature worship—emerge from early human attempts to interpret natural events and phenomena. This type of belief attributes agency to trees, rivers, the sun, and other elements of nature, often viewing them as conscious beings or spirits (Tylor, 1871). Second, **theistic beliefs**—including polytheism, henotheism, and monotheism—reflect more developed theological systems that posit divine beings with moral and creative authority. Third, **superstitions and folk beliefs** often combine elements of religion, mythology, and tradition, relying on rituals and taboos to ward off misfortune

or gain blessings (Frazer, 1922). Lastly, modern secular beliefs in **rational human intelligence** emphasize the use of reason and empirical evidence, often rejecting reliance on supernatural forces altogether. These belief systems reflect a move toward epistemologies grounded in logic, skepticism, and science (Jayatilleke, 1963).

In Theravāda Buddhist philosophy, particularly in the *Kalama Sutta* (Aṅguttara Nikāya 3.65), the Buddha addresses this plurality of beliefs by offering a framework for evaluating them critically. The sutta emphasizes the importance of **not accepting beliefs based solely on tradition, hearsay, scripture, reasoning, or the credibility of the teacher**, but instead urges individuals to consider whether such beliefs lead to wholesome or unwholesome results (Rahula, 1974). This method of epistemological inquiry aligns with a **pragmatic and ethical standard**—namely, that one should believe in what leads to the cessation of suffering and promotes well-being (Bodhi, 2005). The ten criteria presented in the *Kalama Sutta* serve as a safeguard against dogmatism and gullibility, encouraging mindfulness and personal verification.

The value of the *Kalama Sutta* lies in its enduring applicability, especially in contexts where misinformation, superstition, and ideological manipulation are rampant. It serves as a philosophical tool for **fostering critical thinking, rational inquiry, and ethical awareness** (Gombrich, 2009). For example, many traditional beliefs in spirits, ancestral influences, or astrological powers persist in Thai and Southeast Asian cultures, often influencing everyday decision-making. While such beliefs may provide cultural identity and comfort, they can also lead to fear-based behaviors and social rigidity. Through the lens of the *Kalama Sutta*, such beliefs can be respectfully examined and reassessed in light of personal experience and ethical outcomes (Kalupahana, 1992).

Furthermore, the principle of **self-reliant wisdom (paccattam veditabbo viññūhi)** as taught in the *Kalama Sutta* highlights the Buddhist emphasis on individual discernment. This is particularly significant in today's pluralistic society, where individuals encounter diverse and often conflicting belief systems. The sutta promotes a middle path: neither dismissing belief entirely nor accepting it blindly, but instead using mindfulness and ethical reflection as the basis for belief adoption (Keown, 2013).

In conclusion, belief systems—whether religious, superstitious, or rational—continue to shape the moral and cultural framework of society. The *Kalama Sutta* offers a timeless method of belief evaluation that can bridge traditional spirituality with modern critical inquiry. It invites individuals to examine not only the content of their beliefs but also the **consequences** of holding them, ultimately guiding both personal conduct and societal harmony.

2. The *Kalama Sutta* (Aṅguttara Nikāya 3.65) presents one of the most intellectually rigorous and ethically profound teachings of the Buddha within the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. Its central theme is the critical examination of beliefs before accepting them as truth. This discourse was given to the Kalama people, who were confused by the diverse religious claims they encountered. Rather than promoting dogma, the Buddha presented a set of **ten guidelines** to help them evaluate teachings independently. These guidelines continue to serve as a philosophical and ethical compass for personal decision-making and epistemological inquiry.

The Buddha's tenfold counsel includes instructions such as: do not believe something merely because it has been **heard from others, passed down by tradition,**



is **part of scripture**, aligns with **logical or inferential reasoning**, or is spoken by a **respected authority figure** (Bodhi, 2005). He even warns against belief formed solely from personal preferences or external appearances. Importantly, the final caution—**not to believe simply because the speaker is a revered teacher**—highlights the radical individualism in Buddhist epistemology. Each person must examine truth for themselves and apply reason, direct experience, and ethical consequence as criteria for belief (Rahula, 1974).

Phra Maha Prabhas Parichano (2010) explains that these ten cautions are not a rejection of all forms of belief, but rather a **systematic method** to eliminate blind faith and encourage self-reliance in wisdom (*paññā*). The *Kalama Sutta* thus emphasizes a balance between **skepticism and confidence**, where beliefs must be tested against their real-world impact, particularly their tendency to reduce or increase **greed, hatred, and delusion**—the three poisons in Buddhism. This alignment with pragmatic ethics rather than abstract metaphysics makes the *Kalama Sutta* unique in religious philosophy (Gombrich, 2009).

Kalupahana (1992) further notes that the *Kalama Sutta* reflects the **empirical and experiential** core of Buddhist thought. Rather than urging passive acceptance, it promotes **critical inquiry**, asking individuals to adopt beliefs that result in personal well-being and social harmony. The framework is, therefore, not only spiritual but also applicable to broader epistemological systems, as it resonates with scientific and rational methods of investigation (Jayatilleke, 1963). This elevates the sutta beyond religious doctrine and into the realm of **universal ethics and rational thought**.

In contemporary society—characterized by misinformation, ideological polarization, and blind adherence to charismatic figures—the *Kalama Sutta* offers essential guidance. Its relevance is especially significant in educational, political, and religious discourse, where authority is often unquestioned, and traditions are followed without reflection. The *Kalama Sutta* reminds us that **truth must be discerned not by authority, heritage, or appearance**, but by critical reasoning and by the ethical impact of one's actions (Keown, 2013). This teaching encourages responsible autonomy in spiritual development, making it one of the most progressive and human-centered doctrines in world religion.

3. Belief is a human construct rooted in existential inquiry and cultural experience. When beliefs are formalized and institutionalized within society, they become the foundation of religion—shaping moral behavior, cultural identity, and social organization (Durkheim, 1915; Eliade, 1959). In Thai and other traditional societies, belief systems are often deeply intertwined with nature, spirits, deities, and unseen forces. These beliefs offer explanations for life events and natural phenomena, fulfilling psychological needs for security and control (Tylor, 1871). However, while such beliefs serve social functions, they can also become rigid, unquestioned traditions that limit critical thought and ethical development.

The *Kalama Sutta* offers a vital antidote to uncritical belief by encouraging the use of **wisdom (*paññā*) and reason (*yoniso manasikāra*)** before accepting any doctrine. The Buddha's teaching in this sutta specifically warns against believing something solely because it is widely accepted, passed down through generations, supported by scriptures, or endorsed by charismatic figures (Bodhi, 2005). Instead, he advises evaluating beliefs based on their outcomes—whether they reduce suffering,

cultivate compassion, and promote peace (Rahula, 1974). In this way, the *Kalama Sutta* fosters a type of wisdom that transcends mere intellectualism, integrating ethical reflection with experiential insight (Kalupahana, 1992).

One of the key values of the *Kalama Sutta* in contemporary society is its role in **fostering discernment amidst inherited traditional beliefs**. Many beliefs in Thai society, for example, stem from animistic traditions involving nature spirits, ancestral powers, or supernatural beings like ghosts and angels. These beliefs often go unchallenged due to their deep cultural roots and intergenerational transmission (Frazer, 1922). However, when such beliefs are accepted without reflection, they may perpetuate fear, superstition, or discriminatory behavior. The *Kalama Sutta* teaches that such beliefs should be **scrutinized based on reason, direct experience, and their impact on ethical behavior**, allowing for a respectful yet critical engagement with tradition (Gombrich, 2009).

Furthermore, the *Kalama Sutta* is especially relevant in **the age of information and digital media**, where misinformation spreads rapidly and ideological extremism can manipulate collective belief. The tenfold criteria in the sutta encourage individuals to avoid being swayed by charisma, groupthink, or emotional appeal and instead **evaluate beliefs through mindful awareness and ethical outcomes** (Keown, 2013). This principle has application beyond religion—it can be applied to education, politics, science communication, and public discourse, promoting a more thoughtful, responsible society.

Additionally, the *Kalama Sutta* promotes **epistemic humility**—the awareness that not all things can be understood by logic alone. While reason is central, the sutta also recognizes the limitations of inference and deduction, thereby balancing rational inquiry with contemplative insight. This balance makes it especially adaptable to pluralistic societies that accommodate both scientific rationality and spiritual values (Jayatilleke, 1963).

In conclusion, the *Kalama Sutta* offers timeless guidance for navigating belief in both traditional and modern contexts. It does not deny the value of cultural heritage or spiritual faith but encourages that such beliefs be evaluated through the lens of **wisdom, compassion, and ethical clarity**. In doing so, the sutta serves as a universal framework for belief formation—supporting individual freedom, intellectual autonomy, and collective well-being in today's interconnected and complex world.

## New knowledge



Figure 1 New knowledge, 2024

The image is a visual diagram summarizing different types of beliefs and the key teachings of the Kalama Sutta in Theravāda Buddhism. It appears to be organized into two major sections:

### 1. Types of Beliefs

On one side of the diagram, it outlines a classification of human beliefs, such as:

- Belief in nature (animism)
- Belief in spirits and ancestral beings
- Polytheism (belief in many gods)
- Henotheism (belief in one main god among many)
- Monotheism (belief in one supreme god)
- Rationalism (belief in human reason and logic)

These beliefs are connected visually to human emotions and psychological needs, such as fear of the unknown, hope for protection, and the search for meaning.

### 2. The Kalama Sutta's Ten Guidelines

Another side of the image depicts the ten points from the Kalama Sutta, which caution against accepting beliefs on these bases:

- Oral tradition
- Scripture
- Logical reasoning alone
- Popular opinion
- Teacher's authority, etc.

It encourages evaluation based on ethical outcomes, personal experience, and the reduction of greed, hatred, and delusion.

### Central Message:

At the center of the diagram is a Buddhist principle of discernment—that beliefs should be adopted through wisdom, self-inquiry, and mindful reflection, not merely because of tradition or authority. The layout visually contrasts blind belief with wisdom-based discernment, reinforcing the core of the Kalama Sutta.

### Recommendation

#### 1. Policy recommendations

1.1 A center for studying and disseminating the Kalama Sutta principles should be established to all levels of the community.

1.2 A Kalama Sutta practice center should be established and open to interested persons to practice and conduct the center's activities.

1.3 A policy should be established to apply the Kalama Sutta principles in the process of business administration and conflict resolution at various levels.

#### 2. Suggestions for future research

2.1 Comparing the efficiency and achievements of agencies that apply the Kalama Sutta principles to their agencies.

2.2 A paradigm for applying the Kalama Sutta principles to all levels of society.

2.3 Applying the criteria for judging beliefs in the Kalama Sutta to the current conflicts in Thai social beliefs.

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