

Dhutanga as Buddhist Peacebuilding: Adhivāsana-khanti and ‘Silent Preaching’ in the ‘Walk for Peace’ Project

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Abstract

The thirteen ascetic observances (dhutaṅga-vatta), directed at the eradication of defilements and the cultivation of contentment, support the Threefold Training (tisikkhā) of morality (sīla), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā) through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna). This article examines their contemporary application through a case study of the ‘Walk for Peace’ project, in which nineteen Theravāda monks from Vietnam, Thailand, and Laos undertook a 3,700-kilometre pilgrimage from Texas to Washington, D.C. (October 2025–February 2026), observing several austerities strictly while adapting them to the American context through mindful walking and the radiation of boundless loving-kindness (appamaññā-mettā). The study finds that noble patience-forbearance (ariya-khanti) - specifically adhivāsana-khanti, grounded in right view, morality, loving-kindness, and wisdom was decisive in sustaining moral discipline and in the project’s outcome. This is exemplified by Venerable Maha Dam Brahmasaro, who employed adhivāsana-khanti and wise reflection (yonisomanasikāra) to transmute the acute suffering of a severe traffic accident into unconditional forgiveness, dissolving ill-will and dismantling the cycle of retaliation. The project nonetheless depended upon external supporting conditions, including volunteer networks, local coordination, and risk management. Three contributions are proposed: 1) the revitalisation of dhutaṅga-vatta as ‘Silent Preaching’ communication through exemplary conduct and as ‘Somatic Peacebuilding’, which addresses psychological distress through embodied awareness; 2) adhivāsana-khanti as the mechanism linking ascetic observance with Buddhist propagation and positive peacebuilding, reducing ‘othering’ in plural societies; and (3) the ‘Dhutaṅga for Peace Model’, a cyclical five-stage framework PREPARE, PRACTICE, CULTIVATE, TRANSMIT, and EXPAND offering a practical Buddhist praxis for reconciliation and conflict transformation.

Keywords: Dhutaṅga; Adhivāsana-khanti; Buddhist Peacebuilding; Walk for Peace; Silent Preaching

Introduction

Although Gaidhani (2025) observes that khanti is polysemous across the Pali texts, Ktiyotavongs (2025) emphasizes that Theravāda Buddhism recognizes two principal categories: adhivāsana-khanti, the forbearance that upholds moral discipline, and titikkhā-khanti, the patient endurance that eradicates mental defilements. Together these constitute noble patience-forbearance (ariya-khanti), a transcendent virtue aimed at soteriological progression toward noble personhood (ariya) and ultimately toward Nibbāna, the complete cessation of suffering. Such liberation presupposes the systematic abandonment of the fetters (saṃyojana), for which ascetic training dhutaṅga practice among the most demanding forms provides one effective means, requiring the practitioner to cultivate mental discipline until the defilements are weakened and finally extinguished.

Scholarship on Buddhist peacebuilding has largely synthesized Nhat Hanh's (1991, 1998) socially engaged Buddhism, which established that contemplative practice may extend beyond the monastic enclosure into active social engagement, with Western peace theory—notably Galtung's (1969) distinction between negative and positive peace and Lederach's (2003) account of conflict transformation through moral imagination. Within the domain of monastic discipline, Buddhaghosācariya (1991) remains authoritative on the thirteen dhutaṅga observances, while Ktiyotavongs (2025) has proposed the two-dimensional architecture of ariya-khanti as a framework for understanding the soteriological function of patience.

Two lacunae nevertheless remain. First, studies of Buddhist peacebuilding have concentrated upon textual exegesis, institutional monastic roles, or localised Southeast Asian contexts; comparatively little empirical attention has been directed toward specific ascetic practices - particularly dhutaṅga - as active instruments of peacebuilding within non-Buddhist Western societies. Second, although the theoretical framework of ariya-khanti has been established, no study has yet examined how it operates empirically under the sustained physical, psychological, and cross-cultural pressures of a long-distance pilgrimage. The growing visibility of Buddhist pilgrimage in the United States - exemplified by Venerable Sutham Thitadhammo's dhutaṅga walks of 2019 and 2021 - indicates that contemplative practice increasingly functions as a mode of intercultural engagement, yet the phenomenon remains largely undocumented in the peer-reviewed literature.

The present study addresses this dual gap through a qualitative single-case design centered on the Walk for Peace Project, with documentary analysis as its principal method. Data were drawn from four categories of contemporary source: mainstream news reporting; statements and records of the organizations involved; live broadcasts and social media content produced by the monastic delegation; and interviews conducted by third parties. All material was triangulated to the extent the available sources permit and analyzed thematically under three conceptual frameworks: noble patience-forbearance (ariya-khanti), Galtung's positive peace, and Lederach's conflict transformation.

Buddhist Propagation and Peace Pilgrimage in the United States

The widely publicized dhutaṅga pilgrimages undertaken across the United States by Venerable Sutham Thitadhammo (Natee Thong) in 2019 and 2021 fostered intercultural solidarity within American society and furnished the immediate precedent for the present case. Nineteen Theravāda monks from Vietnam, Thailand, and Laos initiated the Walk for Peace project under the leadership of Venerable Paññākāra, a Vietnamese monk, who established dhutaṅga as its core practice (Ajanh Su Ron, 2026; Anna Life, 2026). Between 26 October 2025 and 13 February 2026 the delegation traversed 3,700 kilometres (2,300 miles) from Fort Worth, Texas, to Washington, D.C., crossing seven national parks and forests by way of interstate highways.

The monks practiced silent, mindful walking together with the regular recitation of boundless loving-kindness (appamaññā-mettā), a method serving the dual purpose of eradicating inner defilements and radiating peace outward (Thai PBS Now, 2026; PPTV HD 36, 2026). They were received with sustained attention and warm hospitality from diverse American constituencies, including interfaith leaders and local law enforcement (NBC4 Washington, 2026; PPTV HD 36, 2026). The pilgrimage also featured Aloka, a rescued Indian Pariah dog (Mann, 2026); when the animal was injured on 12 January 2026 the Charleston Veterinary Referral Center performed surgery pro bono (ETHOS Veterinary Health, 2026), and the support team maintained separate quarters for Aloka in strict observance of the Vinaya rule prohibiting monks from sharing lodging with animals for more than three consecutive nights. These favorable dynamics notwithstanding, the journey encountered substantial difficulties, analyzed in Section 3.

The Concept of Dhutaṅga and its Observance in the ‘Walk for Peace’ Project

Dhutaṅga etymologically combining dhuta (eliminating defilements) and aṅga (observance) denotes ascetic practices aimed at subduing inner defilements through radical contentment (Payutto, 2016). Authoritatively classified into thirteen observances regulating monastic robes (cīvara), alms-food (piṇḍapāta), and lodging (senāsana), these practices train the mind to dismantle attachments (Buddhaghosācariya, 1991). By replacing a preoccupation with comfort with rigorous self-discipline, dhutaṅga strengthens the threefold training of morality (sīla), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā), providing a necessary spiritual foundation for mental cultivation (citta-bhāvanā) and insight (vipassanā). While the project’s external objective focused on promoting mindfulness and peace among the American public, its internal dimension centered on this rigorous monastic cultivation; throughout the 3,700-kilometer journey, the 19 Theravāda monks strictly observed several dhutaṅga practices:

No.	The Thirteen Dhutanga Practice (Buddhaghosācariya . (1991).	Dhutanga Practices in The ‘Walk for Peace’ Project
1	Pamsukūlikanga (Refuse-Rag-Wearer's Practice)	Venerable Paññāthammo alone strictly observed the pamsukūla practice of wearing discarded, patched robes. This discipline directly embodies adhivāsana-khanti by requiring continual acceptance of discomfort and of the social stigma attaching to visibly worn garments, converting material renunciation into a silent statement of non-aggression..
2	Tecīvarikaṅga (Triple-Robe-Wearer's Practice)	All nineteen monks restricted themselves to possessing only three robes, declining any additional robes offered by devotees along the route—even in severe weather across markedly different climate zones..
3	Piṇḍapātikaṅga (Alms-Food-Eater's Practice)	The monks sustained themselves exclusively on alms, walking barefoot and accepting only what was voluntarily placed in their bowls, without solicitation. The practice placed the community in a posture of radical vulnerability—a key mechanism of conflict transformation through non-threatening presence.
4	Sapadānacārikaṅga (House-to-house-seeker's Practice)	Rather than favoring affluent neighborhoods or particular households, the monks kept to a consecutive house-to-house route, receiving alms-food from anyone wishing to make an offering..
5	Ekāsanikaṅga (One-Session-Eater's Practice)	The monastic community consumed only a single daily meal, preceded by mindful reflection on the nature of sustenance.
6	Pattapiṇḍikaṅga (Bowl-Eater's Practice)	All food items were mixed within a single alms bowl before consumption.
7	Khalupacchābhattika ṅga (Later-Food-Refuser's Practice)	Once their meal commenced, the monks declined any further food offerings.
8	Āraññikaṅga (Forest-dwelling Practice)	The route followed public roads through towns, cities, and developed counties, rendering residence in remote forest areas impracticable.
9	Rukkhāmūlikaṅga (Tree-root-dwelling Practice)	The predominantly urban and suburban itinerary made sustained dwelling at the foot of a tree geographically unfeasible, although the monks rested beneath trees where these were available along the way.

10	Abbhokāsikaṅga (Open-Air-Dweller's Practice)	Full observance was not possible. Although the monks rested in open-air spaces wherever circumstances allowed, hazardous winter weather and the logistical demands of the route required recourse to conventional shelter.
11	Sosānikaṅga (Charnel-ground-dwelling Practice)	Resting in cemeteries was legally unfeasible under local property law across a modern urban and suburban landscape. The project's priority on public interaction likewise rendered secluded charnel grounds incompatible with its mission.
12	Yathāsanthatikaṅga (Any-Bed-User's Practice)	The monks maintained complete detachment regarding their daily lodgings, accepting whatever accommodation was assigned.
13	Nesajjikaṅga (The Sitter's Practice)	Observed strictly by Venerable Paññāthammo alone, who maintained a sitting posture even during sleep.

Source: Classification of the thirteen dhutaṅgas follows Buddhaghosācariya (1991).

Observance data derived from participant observation records of the Walk for Peace Project. The collective observance of eight dhutaṅga disciplines within the United States reflects a considerable effort to preserve ancient ascetic norms. The four dwelling-related practices (ārañṇikaṅga, rukkhamaṇikaṅga, abbhokāsikaṅga, and sosānikaṅga) were necessarily set aside, precisely because the project's peacebuilding mission required sustained engagement with populated areas rather than retreat from them. The most formidable discipline nesajjikaṅga, the sitter's practice was maintained by a single member, Venerable Paññāthammo, in continuation of his unbroken thirteen-year observance. This pattern of adaptation is itself analytically significant: the practices most readily sustained by the collective were those governing food and robes, domains in which adherence both reinforced the monks' visible identity as renunciants and strengthened their capacity for adhivāsana-khanti, while permitting harmonious navigation of a contemporary Western environment.

In Theravāda thought, adhivāsana-khanti transcends passive tolerance or grudging endurance. It denotes a wisdom-directed resilience often rendered 'patient acceptance' derived from roots implying a mind that dwells above, and thus masters, its circumstances. It operates not by suppressing anger but through cognitive insight into the nature of suffering: both one's own and that inherent in the adversarial conditions the other faces. This dual insight generates a deliberate resolve to remain unshaken, preserving moral purity and mental equilibrium amid adversarial conditions (Ktiyotavongs, 2025).

Ktiyotavongs (2025) further elaborates how this mechanism functions as an internal circuit breaker. When the monks met unpleasant sensory input extreme weather, or political and religious provocation ordinary reactive instinct would issue in resentment (paṭigha); adhivāsana-khanti severs that loop. Yet this mechanism extends beyond self-directed defilement-eradication. By accepting and understanding the nature of phenomena arising within the other's mind their fear, conditioning, defensiveness the practitioner simultaneously cultivates understanding of the other. Mindfulness arising from this acceptance subdues dissatisfaction with them, enabling genuine forgiveness and a willing lifting of consciousness toward mettā: unconditional compassion extended with joy. Thus adversarial conditions are transformed into occasions for both inner purification and relational healing.

This internal mastery furnishes the foundation of the project's 'Silent Preaching'. The capacity to endure socio-political resistance without defensiveness or retaliation constitutes a non-verbal sermon on peace: the walk ceases to be a merely physical journey and becomes a living embodiment of Dhamma, whose visible and unyielding tranquility challenges the hostile presuppositions of onlookers, transforming suspicion into curiosity and, ultimately, into a shared recognition of peace.

Management of the 'Walk for Peace' Project

The study found that the Walk for Peace Project was managed in a highly systematic manner across four key operational dimensions:

1. **Dhutaṅga observance:** Prior to departure the community engaged collectively in the foundational disciplines, with particular emphasis upon moral purification (sīla), the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna), and the continuous cultivation of loving-kindness (mettā).

2. **Pilgrimage Walking:** The monks covered approximately thirty to forty kilometres daily, employing walking meditation as the primary spiritual anchor and sustaining unbroken awareness of movement and breath with each step.

3. **Communication and Coordination:** To facilitate logistics, the project leveraged real-time GPS live tracking shared via social media platforms. This digital transparency allowed lay supporters and volunteer teams across various states to monitor the monastic delegation's exact coordinates and schedule in advance, thereby streamlining the preparation of alms-food and daily accommodations.

4. **Risk Management:** Routes and accommodation were adjusted dynamically under hazardous winter conditions, shifting from outdoor spaces to secure indoor venues such as school gymnasiums and community halls.

Challenges Encountered

Despite thorough preparation, the project met several significant difficulties as follows:

1. **Safety and Traffic Accidents:** Owing to the absence of sidewalks along many stretches of American road, the community was obliged to walk on highway shoulders, incurring considerable traffic risk. This vulnerability materialised in a severe accident on 19 November 2025 in Texas, when a large pickup truck struck the delegation from behind. Two monks were injured; most critically, Venerable Maha Dam Brahmasaro sustained injuries requiring the amputation of a leg (Banmuang Newspaper, 2026). He rejoined the pilgrimage in January 2026 using a prosthetic limb and a wheelchair, a development widely reported in national and international media. Logistically, the Hương Đạo Vipassana Bhavana Center, together with Thai, American, and international Buddhist networks, mitigated subsequent risk by mobilizing a coordinated relay system; this cross-state volunteer network streamlined daily alms-food stations and secured official route permissions and police escorts for the remaining itinerary.

2. **Harsh Weather and Climate Conditions:** The journey from late November to February coincided with severe winter conditions, exposing the delegation to sub-zero temperatures, snowstorms, and freezing winds, particularly in Virginia and Washington, D.C. The monks sustained their dhutaṅga vows including the single daily meal through adhivāsana-khanti, adapting pragmatically with appropriate footwear and thermal garments where necessary. The abrupt transition from the extreme heat of Texas to freezing conditions further induced respiratory illness and elevated blood pressure among several members, compelling the delegation to reduce daily walking distances as medically required.

3. **Physical Limitations and Health:** Walking thirty to forty kilometres daily for more than one hundred consecutive days produced foot injuries, muscular inflammation, and cumulative fatigue. Rather than attending to bodily discomfort, the monks employed mindful walking meditation together with adhivāsana-khanti to regulate pain, anchoring awareness continuously upon the breath. Volunteer medical teams provided essential evening care, treating blisters and administering therapeutic massage.

4. Crowd Management and Logistics: As the project attracted viral attention, large welcoming crowds occasionally generated traffic congestion and safety hazards. The organising team therefore maintained strict coordination with municipal police departments across each state to secure active escorts, and used social media to establish participant guidelines—maintaining noble silence and walking in orderly lines thereby preserving the pilgrimage’s objectives of safety and peacefulness. The challenge peaked at the final destination in Washington, D.C., which drew tens of thousands of participants; the team coordinated with the Metropolitan Police Department and implemented a strategy of ‘crowd transformation’, channelling collective energy into a shared walking meditation while confining major activities and rest periods to high-capacity venues such as the Washington National Cathedral and Bender Arena.

5. Belief and culture. This was not the first adaptation of dhutaṅga into a peace walk on American soil. Venerable Sutham Thitadhammo established the precedent, traversing the continent from west to east along the historic Route 66 through the Bible Belt, a region of predominantly conservative Protestant communities. Although the route carried evident potential for intercultural misunderstanding, his sustained practice of mindful walking and mettā projected a spirit of universal compassion (Voice of America, 2019). The present project encountered comparable conditions in states such as Alabama and Georgia, where Venerable Maha Dam Brahmasaro’s unconditional forgiveness following his accident resonated deeply among local Christian communities. Numerous churches consequently offered shelter to the delegation despite minimal prior exposure to Buddhism a notable milestone in interfaith relations. As Venerable Paññākāra emphasised, the pilgrimage sought not religious conversion but the cultivation of the universal values of love and compassion.

6. Opposition and political sentiment. The project initially faced intense scepticism on social media concerning a supposed ‘hidden agenda’, and this distrust intensified as the route passed through regions of strong conservative Christian sentiment, where cultural difference prompted suspicion of covert proselytisation. Such resistance illustrates the difficulty of peace propagation within a highly polarised society. As communities directly encountered the monks’ calm, simple, and non-proselytising conduct, however, opposition gradually gave way to curiosity and acceptance. Two universally legible elements drove this attenuation: walking itself, a practice intelligible across cultures and carrying no doctrinal payload, and the behavioural expression of mettā and karuṇā, which deprived the oppositional narrative of evidential basis no pamphlets were distributed, no conversions sought, no political positions advanced. When the predicted agenda failed to materialise, the conspiratorial frame lost coherence and yielded to a more benign reading of the pilgrimage as genuine spiritual devotion. The efficacy of this process should not be overstated: it operated most strongly where resistance arose from unfamiliarity rather than deep ideological commitment, and its long-term effect on community attitudes remains an open empirical question.

Analytical Framework: Five Interrelated Themes

The success of the project can be analytically understood through the framework of noble patience-forbearance (ariya-khanti), organized into five interrelated themes presented in sequential order. Each theme addresses a different layer of inquiry from what unfolds within the practitioner to what manifests in the wider society and together they lead to the synthesis presented in Section 5.

Theme 1 - Inner Cultivation: Pilgrimage as Embodied Satipaṭṭhāna

The essence of dhutaṅga practice driven by adhivāsa-khanti lies not in the display of physical endurance but in a technique of inner purification directed at relinquishing greed, hatred, and delusion. This is accomplished through walking meditation (caṅkama), in which mindfulness of the body (kāyagatāsati) is anchored to bodily movement and the breath with every step (Nhat Hanh, 1991), transforming the long journey from a test of the body into a continuous training ground for the mind.

Systematically, the practice rests upon the fivefold restraint (pañca-saṃvara): restraint by the monastic code (pātimokkha-saṃvara), restraint of the senses (indriya-saṃvara), moderation in eating (bhojane-mattaññutā), dedication to wakefulness (jāgariyānuyoga), and persistent effort. These restraints uphold the purity of sīla, which in turn allows adhivāsa-khanti to mature into the power of patience (khanti-bala), supporting the cultivation of mind (citta-bhāvanā) and of wisdom (paññā-bhāvanā) and contributing to the accumulation of the spiritual perfections (pāramī). Through their daily observances the delegation thus attests empirically to fundamental doctrine the Threefold Training (tisikkhā), the Four Noble Truths (ariya-sacca), and the Three Characteristics (tilakkhaṇa) reflecting the quality of the Dhamma as directly visible to the practitioner (sandiṭṭhiko) and substantiating the principle that outer peace originates in inner self-development.

Theme 2 - The Mechanism of Patience: Transmuting Suffering into Forgiveness

The analytical core of this case lies in adhivāsa-khanti as the mechanism by which the experience of pain is transmuted into a non-violent response. The case of Venerable Maha Dam Brahmasaro furnishes the clearest empirical anchor.

In the immediate aftermath of the amputation, the Venerable confronted a dual crisis: acute physical suffering demanding rapid psychological adaptation, and the spontaneous arising of aversion (paṭigha) toward its causal agent an affective state which, left unaddressed, initiates the cycle of resentment and vengeful ideation. At this first stage adhivāsa-khanti was activated. Through systematic recollection (anussati) of the Buddha's teaching he restrained the reactive impulse, employing contemplation of death (maraṇānussati), mindfulness of the body (kāyānupassanā), and mindfulness of feeling (vedanānupassanā) not as an escape from pain but as deliberate instruments of mental mastery. Here he was still exerting volitional effort to forestall the reactive cascade precisely the defining character of adhivāsa-khanti: disciplined moral restraint maintaining the integrity of the precepts amid psychological turbulence.

Over the subsequent weeks of recovery a second stage emerged as insight deepened into anuloma-khanti, the wisdom-based patience that bridges restraint and liberation. Through sustained contemplation the Venerable came to perceive the Three Characteristics (tilakkhaṇa) within the event itself:

Anicca (impermanence): both the moment of impact and his own reactive impulse were momentary phenomena, arising and passing away without enduring solidity. Dukkha (suffering): his suffering issued from the heedlessness (pamāda) of the driver a striking exemplar of the truth that heedlessness is itself a calamity from which suffering inevitably springs. Compelled to encounter suffering as the direct consequence of another's negligence, he recognized a volitional threshold: he must not himself perpetuate the heedlessness that generates suffering but must exert vigilant and steadfast effort (viriya) in the firm establishment of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna) - the direct path to the cessation of suffering (dukkha-nirodha) and to Nibbāna.

Anattā (non-self): the driver's act expressed no permanent, unified self of stable malevolent character, but arose from causes and conditions ignorance (moha), heedlessness, or circumstantial error rather than deliberate malice.

Through this reframing the injury became a pedagogical summons rather than a personal injustice: suffering itself the teacher, disclosing the peril of pamāda in the driver and the necessity of vigilant mindfulness (satimanasikāra) in the practitioner. As the scaffolding of resentment dissolved, the Venerable's unconditional forgiveness (ahosi-kamma) ceased to be strained forbearance and became an authentic act of karuṇā and mettā, the dichotomy of perpetrator and victim yielding to a recognition of mutual vulnerability. At the level of volition (cetanā), forgiveness was no victory won through restraint but the continuous generation of wholesome states (kusala), severing the cycle of revenge by redirecting intention toward compassion rather than suppressing aversion - titikkhā-khanti in its mature form: the natural overflow of a heart no longer bound to defend itself.

Forgiveness of this order constitutes the active generation of goodwill toward the very source of suffering a capacity not culturally bounded, which accounts for the depth of response the act elicited among Christian communities in states such as Alabama and Georgia, who recognized in it a moral vocabulary continuous with their own faith. Adhivāsana-khanti, once matured into forgiveness, thus operates as a universal ethical mechanism capable of bridging doctrinal difference. The transformation did not remain a private attainment but became publicly visible when the Venerable rejoined the pilgrimage, generating the conditions for the somatic peacebuilding examined in Theme 3.

Theme 3 - Silent Preaching as Somatic Peacebuilding

If one asks how inner cultivation is transmitted to the public, the study finds that the bodily composure and conduct of the monastic delegation function as a form of non-verbal communication transcending linguistic and religious boundaries. This process may be termed 'Silent Preaching', and it operates through a mechanism here called 'Somatic Peacebuilding'. Somatic Peacebuilding is proposed as a working concept denoting the cultivation of peace through bodily experience that is collectively perceived. It draws upon the notions of a felt sense of safety and of neurological co-regulation articulated in Porges's Polyvagal Theory, whereby the composure of one individual helps to settle the nervous systems of those nearby. This remains a theoretical proposal requiring further empirical verification, though it is noted that Porges's theory itself is subject to ongoing debate within neuroscience.

Concretely, stillness and restraint serve as universal symbols of inner peace, accessible without explanation. The presence of Aloka, bearing a heart-shaped marking upon its forehead, further softened the perceived austerity of the monks and rendered them more approachable. The silent dhutaṅga pilgrimage, undertaken amid a society fractured by war and protest, thereby offered a counter-narrative grounded in Buddhist pacifism, demonstrating that the cultivation of inner stillness can serve as a social exemplar of non-violence (ahiṃsā) and mettā.

Theme 4 - Enabling Conditions: Legitimacy, Transparency, and Pure Intention

The peace-related outcomes observed here did not arise in a vacuum but depended upon three supporting conditions. First, digital transparency through Facebook Live and TikTok, broadcasting the unembellished reality of the pilgrimage in real time, generated a form of virtual empathy that crossed national borders. Second, the protective escort furnished by local and state law enforcement provided both physical safety and a measure of public legitimacy. Third, the delegation maintained a policy of refusing solicitations and avoiding commercial activity of any kind, thereby reflecting pure intention (kusala-cetanā) and fostering public trust.

This observation carries a critical implication. The outcomes did not arise from the intrinsic value of dhutaṅga alone but depended significantly upon external supporting structures. Acknowledging the condition guards against the overgeneralization that pilgrimage directly produces peace, and indicates that applying the model in contexts lacking such structures may yield substantially different results.

Theme 5 - Cross-Cultural Reception in a Pluralistic Society

It remains to consider how a non-Buddhist and deeply polarised American society received the project. In its initial phase the pilgrimage encountered scepticism concerning a possible hidden agenda, particularly where the route passed through conservative Christian regions in which the propagation of Buddhism was viewed with suspicion. Once communities directly experienced the monks' composure, simplicity, and conspicuous absence of proselytising, however, resistance gradually gave way to curiosity and acceptance.

From a Western sociological perspective, the public interpreted the delegation's steadfastness in *adhivāsana-khanti* amid adversity as an expression of moral courage and active compassion (cf. Gandhi, 1965; Rosenberg & Chopra, 2015). This reception may reflect a reduction of 'othering' and the emergence of what might be termed a trans-cultural compassion infrastructure resonant with Nhat Hanh's (1998) *Interbeing*, Lederach's (2003) moral imagination, and Galtung's (1969) positive peace.

Synthesis: From the Five Themes to the Model

Taken together, the five themes reveal that noble patience-forbearance (*ariya-khanti*) operates on two levels: *adhivāsana-khanti*, which preserves the purity of body, speech, and mind; and its elevation into *titikkhā-khanti*, which eradicates the fetters (*saṃyojana*) with *anuloma-khanti* serving as the bridge of wisdom between them. This dynamic moves from within the individual (Themes 1 - 2) to transmission into the public sphere (Theme 3), operates under specific enabling conditions (Theme 4), and culminates in social reception (Theme 5). Although this article foregrounds the Theravāda framework, the researcher notes that the concept of patience (*adhivāsana-khanti*) in Mahāyāna Buddhism likewise appears as one of the perfections, as expounded by Śāntideva in the *kṣānti-pāramitā* chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, which emphasizes endurance in the face of suffering and the refusal to respond with anger. This parallel suggests that patience constitutes a shared foundation across Buddhist traditions for the transformation of conflict, even where the doctrinal details diverge (Ktiyotavongs, 2025). The five themes outlined above can be synthesized into a cyclical five-stage framework, presented in the following section. The correspondences are: Theme 1 → PREPARE; Theme 2 → PRACTICE; Theme 3 → CULTIVATE and TRANSMIT; Theme 4 functions as an enabling condition operating across all stages; and Theme 5 → EXPAND

The Dhutanga for Peace Model

The following section presents the Dhutaṅga for Peace Model as a proposed framework for the practical application of this study's findings.

Figure 1: Dhutanga for Peace Model: A Cyclical Five-Stage Applied Framework for Buddhist Peacebuilding



Note: The visual design of this figure was generated with the assistance of AI. The conceptual framework, stage definitions, and all textual content within the figure are the original intellectual contribution of the author.

This cyclical framework integrates dhutaṅga disciplines, noble forbearance (ariya-khanti), and loving-kindness (mettā) with contemporary peacebuilding, operationalizing the core principle that 'Peace Begins Within,' and thereby, bridging Engaged Buddhism with Galtung's (1969) paradigm of positive peace. The diagram demonstrates how internal ascetic restraint ripples outward through five operational phases toward public non-violence and cross-cultural reconciliation. Each stage is analyzed below, beginning with foundational internal preparation.

Stage 1: Prepare (Intrapersonal Cultivation)

This foundational stage corresponds to truthfulness (sacca) and determination (adhiṭṭhāna), which secure mental commitment and spiritual preparedness. It initiates with the systematic study of the Dhamma-Vinaya, the cultivation of right view (sammā-diṭṭhi), and the internal development of moral conduct. Practitioners must cultivate sīla (morality), samādhi, and paññā (wisdom) in balanced manner so as to minimize psychological vulnerability and strengthen resilience before confronting external conflict, establishing the inner stability indispensable to both personal transformation and sustainable social peacebuilding.

Stage 2: Practice (Embodied Monastic Restraint)

This stage operationalizes adhivāsana-khanti through dhutanga observances and walking meditation, integrating mindful endurance into daily conduct. Employing recollection (anussati) and insight meditation (vipassanā) as its primary instruments, the phase rests upon moral discipline (sīla-saṃvara), sense restraint (indriya-saṃvara), moderation in eating (bhojane-mattaññutā), and dedicated wakefulness (jāgariyānuyoga). Through these disciplines practitioners experientially transmute physical suffering into wisdom, fostering the inner stability necessary to respond constructively to adversity (Ktiyotavongs, 2025).

Stage 3: Cultivate Boundless Loving-Kindness

This stage expands mettā into universal benevolence without boundary, in accordance with the principle of boundless loving-kindness (appamaññā-mettā) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 1996, Vol. 35, Nos. 642–682, pp. 426–432). The practice reduces the mental hindrances (nīvaraṇa) and induces deep tranquility while generating positive emotion that broadens the scope of awareness. From a psychological

perspective this alignment accords with Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory, which holds that positive emotions expand cognitive awareness and build enduring social resources (Fredrickson, 2004). Within peace studies, mettā functions as a mechanism neutralising prejudice and hostility, thereby fostering social cohesion, reconciliation, and sustainable positive peace

Stage 4: Transmit (Public Projection & Somatic Integration)

This stage converts internal cultivation into public transmission. Through 'Silent Preaching' and symbolic action, the monks' mindful walking, unconditional forgiveness, and compassionate conduct operate as a mode of non-verbal communication transcending linguistic and religious barriers. Such somatic projection establishes a trans-cultural compassion infrastructure fostering cross-cultural trust and mutual understanding, directly operationalizing Nhat Hanh's (1998) Interbeing and Lederach's (2003) moral imagination, and demonstrating that peace is transmitted not through rhetoric but through embodied action.

Stage 5: Expand (Structural Peacebuilding & Legacy)

This final stage carries peacebuilding from individual mastery to macro-level social structure. In the Walk for Peace project, digital media, shared narrative, and monastic exemplars served as the principal mechanisms for disseminating and reinforcing peaceful values. Practitioners thereby transmute internal stillness into external civic catalysis; through exemplary conduct the values of compassion, forgiveness, and non-violence embed themselves within broader cultural frameworks. The process converts personal spiritual practice into collective social influence, creating a ripple effect from individuals to families and communities, so that peacebuilding evolves from a localized endeavor into a sustainable social movement grounded in ethical conduct and mutual understanding.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, as a single-case study of an event still in progress, the conclusions cannot yet be generalized. Second, the data derive principally from contemporary media and live broadcasts, which carry inherent limitations of comprehensiveness and verifiability. Third, because evidence regarding Venerable Maha Dam Brahmasaro's inner transformation derives primarily from secondary sources (Banmuang Newspaper, 2026), the connection drawn between his forgiveness and the subsequent reduction in community opposition is offered as doctrinal interpretation rather than causal conclusion, pending verification through primary-source interviews. Fourth, the study has not incorporated in-depth interviews with stakeholders directly involved, nor quantitative measurement of shifts in community attitude; claims regarding impact therefore remain preliminary interpretations. Future research should be strengthened through interviews with key participants and through empirical testing of the proposed model.

Conclusion

Sustainable peace originates at the individual level, rooted in the inner tranquility cultivated through mindful self-development. By anchoring awareness in the body and the breath, practitioners learn to meet adversity with wisdom, compassion, and equanimity. This inner transformation radiates outward, reducing tension at familial and communal levels while fostering reconciliation and cross-cultural understanding though whether individual inner change can scale into durable structural peace remains an open question.

Within the global Buddhist context, the Walk for Peace project offers a notable instance of socially engaged Buddhism. It reframes the monastic role from a figure of contemplative stillness within temple walls into an active catalyst for social engagement, manifested in three dimensions: mindful walking (caṅkama) as a public practice; universal compassion (mettā) transcending socio-cultural boundaries; and a Buddhist diplomacy rooted

in monastic simplicity and dhutaṅga observance, which carves out spiritually safe space amid political polarisation.

The case also highlights significant challenges in transplanting dhutaṅga into a Western context. As shown in Theme 4, the project's dependence upon volunteer infrastructure and state protection raises a tension between accessibility and the radical edge of Buddhist pacifism (ahimsā). In a media-saturated society prone to turning religiosity into spectacle, moreover, rigorous ascetic observance exposed the monks to genuine physical risk and invites a further question, beyond the present scope, concerning authenticity and performative symbolism. Finally, although the ideological suspicion the project encountered was followed by warm public reception, that reception may reflect provisional curiosity rather than deep structural change.

Ultimately, the dhutaṅga pilgrimage of nineteen Theravāda monks across the United States represents a significant case in engaged Buddhist peacebuilding. In demonstrating how rigorous ascetic observance and noble patience (adhivāsana-khanti) may serve as instruments of both inner purification and outer harmony, the project offers an empirical exemplar and a preliminary model for future peace initiatives. While important challenges remain, it lends support to the proposition that the ancient path of dhutaṅga may contribute meaningfully to the work of healing a divided world.

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