

ITALIAN BUDDHIST UNION  
RESEARCH CENTER

**Policy  
Document**



Research Center  
Italian Buddhist Union

**Sommario**

- 1 THE RESEARCH CENTER.....2
  - 1.1 The Center at a glance.....2
  - 1.2 The focus areas and unique activities of the Research Center.....2
  - 1.3 The need for the Italian Buddhist Union’s Research Center .....3
  - 1.4 Principles and guidelines.....5
  - 1.5 Areas and modes of operation.....7
  - 1.6 Organizational structure .....8
- 2 FIELDS OF INTEREST AND PROJECTS .....10
  - 2.1 Buddhist Studies .....10
  - 2.2 Contemplative Studies .....13

# 1 THE RESEARCH CENTER

## 1.1 The Center at a glance

The Research Center (henceforth RC) is a specialized department within the Italian Buddhist Union dedicated to fostering connections with various universities through promoting education, research, and the dissemination of scientific knowledge in disciplinary fields related to Buddhism.

## 1.2 The focus areas and unique activities of the Research Center

- **Buddhist Studies**
  - Support for new teaching positions, degree programs and other education initiatives (including post-graduate programs, higher education courses, summer schools etc.).
  - Support for international dialogue and collaboration through organizing conferences, seminars and other opportunities for scholars to meet.
  - Translation and publication of primary and secondary literature in this field.
- **Contemplative Studies**
  - Support for new teaching positions and programs in the various areas of this interdisciplinary field.
  - Working toward a clearer definition and recognition of Contemplative Studies in Italy and Europe, such that it will be recognized as: 1) a new direction for research, 2) a field of education, and 3) a set of professional fields and areas of social engagement.
  - Organization of conferences and other opportunities for scholars to meet, aimed at fostering the growth and consolidation of an extensive network of international collaborations in this field.
  - Promoting the dissemination of scientific knowledge related to this field through publications and other media.
- **Other innovative research areas**
  - Exploration of the potential significance of Buddhism's philosophical and contemplative heritage, especially in relation to the fields of Consciousness Studies, Digital Studies, Ecological Studies, Gender and Diversity Studies, Death Studies, and Bioethics.

### 1.3 The need for the Italian Buddhist Union's Research Center

Throughout history, Buddhist teachings have demonstrated a remarkable adaptability by integrating with the diverse cultures it encounters and promoting the well-being of individuals and societies. This was always accomplished by encouraging study and knowledge, fostering a critical mindset, and triggering processes of introspection and transformation; inspiring individuals to question and reassess the underlying assumptions that guide human behavior and lifestyle choices.

In the modern world, this message, traditionally formulated as a path to liberation, takes on the significance of how vital it is to cultivate an awareness of interdependence in order to address and overcome the challenges of the new millennium. It represents a hermeneutic approach to understanding reality, whose impact, both theoretical and practical, is now more evident than ever before. In this light, the contributions of contemplative traditions such as Buddhism become increasingly crucial in offering alternative, healthy and future-oriented ways of thinking and acting.

The Buddhist Universities of Nālandā and Vikramaśilā, prominent study centers in ancient times, along with institutions like the Zen University of Komazawa in Japan, which continues to apply Buddhist teachings to modern education, serve as models of dedication to knowledge and openness to dialogue. Their tradition continues to inspire Buddhism's engagement in research and debate, reaching out not only to other religious traditions but also to the natural sciences and humanities. In recent decades, there has been a growing recognition within most fields of the crucial importance of adopting interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approaches. This evolving perspective recognizes the value of these approaches in acknowledging and transcending the limitations and assumptions that inevitably confine the scope of validity within any given paradigm. This profound and cross-cultural epistemological revolution, though slow and quiet, is proving to be crucial. It not only enables us to navigate the increasing complexity of reality, which grows alongside the rapid development of technology, but also ensures that the advancement of knowledge proceeds hand in hand with our ability to guide change in ethical and constructive directions.

In this regard, Buddhism is advocating one point in particular: the necessity of integrating the "third-person" approach, prevalent in modern fields of knowledge, with "first-person" phenomenological inquiry, specific to contemplative traditions. This integration seeks to deepen our understanding of the nature of experience, encompassing its philosophical, ethical, psychological, pedagogical, therapeutic and socio-political implications. Contemporary Buddhism has been making contributions by not reverting to its strictly doctrinal dimension, but rather offering up its wide range of conceptual tools and contemplative methodologies to be integrated with the terminologies and epistemic practices of modern fields of knowledge. In this way, it has been giving rise to new knowledge, approaches, perspectives and practical applications in a wide variety of disciplinary fields.

Through the creation of the RC, the Italian Buddhist Union aims to facilitate the integration of the knowledge and contemplative practices handed down by Buddhist traditions within the framework of contemporary secular culture, by promoting their study and facilitating dialogue with other

disciplines in academic research and education. The Italian Buddhist Union, as a broad and ecumenical religious organization, is well-positioned to pursue these goals; with its extensive representation of Buddhist traditions and international network of traditional and secular institutions, the Union can provide the appropriate long-term resources and expertise needed for the integration of contemplative knowledge, practices and values into contemporary society.

## 1.4 Principles and guidelines

### 1.4.1 General principles

As a department of the Italian Buddhist Union, the RC follows the Union's [code of conduct](#). In addition to the points included in that document, the following principles, which are specifically related to the activities of the RC, are included:

- i. **Secularism.** The RC draws inspiration from the scientific method and critical approach that characterize modern forms of knowledge, while maintaining independence from any religious affiliation or profession.
- ii. **Interculturalism.** The RC aims to promote interaction between and mutual transformation of knowledge from diverse cultures, encouraging *each* party involved to question its own assumptions.
- iii. **Interdisciplinarity.** The RC intends to facilitate the encounter and integration of different disciplines and approaches, with particular emphasis on the phenomenological inquiry that characterizes Buddhism. It is also committed to embracing the epistemological and methodological challenges that arise from such an enterprise, promoting the development of terminology and methods capable of facilitating dialogue between this approach and modern disciplines.
- iv. **Anti-reductionism.** The RC aims to emphasize the central role of the philosophical, existential, social and ethical dimensions of contemplative experiences. It adopts a critical stance toward any inadequate representation of these experiences, recognizing the potential risk of reducing or distorting their transformative impact.
- v. **Accessibility.** The RC is dedicated to making classical and modern sources of Buddhism, as well as tools promoting contemplative knowledge and practice in a broader context, more accessible. This commitment involves the production, translation and publication of materials for the general public, in multiple languages and through various media. Additionally, the RC aims to promote the adoption of contemplative-inspired practices and principles into different sectors of society.
- vi. **Applicability and innovation.** The RC is dedicated to addressing the scientific, philosophical, ethical, social, environmental, and professional challenges of the modern world, by seeking fruitful interactions between its fields of interest and the most innovative forms of knowledge, cutting-edge technologies, and emerging professions.
- vii. **Inclusiveness and pluralism.** The RC values and promotes diversity of perspectives, experiences and traditions, encouraging dialogue among individuals of different geographical, cultural, and religious backgrounds. It seeks to promote inclusiveness and pluralism, while condemning all forms of exclusion and discrimination, explicit or implicit.
- viii. **Quality of research.** The RC is committed to promoting rigorous and high-quality research in the fields of Buddhist and Contemplative Studies, as well as other related fields.

It seeks to support innovative and in-depth scholarly inquiries that contribute to the growth and dissemination of reliable and relevant information.

- ix. **Community and collaboration.** The RC aims to establish a diverse and inclusive learning community that brings together scholars, students and practitioners from around the world. It actively encourages collaboration with other educational and research institutions and organizations, fostering knowledge exchange, talent mobility and mutual growth.
- x. **Social and environmental responsibility.** The RC recognizes the responsibilities of both individuals and organizations toward society and the environment. Therefore, it is committed to promoting practices and values that enhance individual and collective well-being, as well as ecological sustainability – principles deeply rooted in Buddhism.

#### 1.4.2 Training guidelines

In addition to the above general principles, the education initiatives promoted by the RC are inspired by the following guidelines.

- i. **Experiential and interactive pedagogy.** Particularly in the context of Contemplative Studies, the RC promotes the integration of academic study, meditative practice and interactive activities such as debate and sharing of experience. This follows the principles of Contemplative Pedagogy, an approach based on the recognition of the experiential nature of contemplative knowledge. While scientific knowledge, philosophical understanding, and historical-religious perspectives are important for a rigorous exploration of the contemplative dimension, they alone are insufficient to fully grasp this type of knowledge without a firm and corroborated first-person experience.
- ii. **Accreditation of study programs.** The RC seeks accreditation by university institutions for its study programs, emphasizing the importance of Contemplative Studies within modern society. By doing so, the value and contributions of its study and practice are highlighted, leading to greater recognition from and integration with modern academic institutions, rather than being considered as a marginal element.
- iii. **Connection with professional fields.** In addition to training scholars and researchers, the RC aims to develop pathways for training new professionals who can actively contribute to the dissemination and integration of practices, lifestyles, perspectives and values associated with the contemplative dimension in diverse societal contexts, such as healthcare, education, corporate environments, sport and personal growth.

## 1.5 Areas and modes of operation

### 1.5.1 Education

The RC actively supports the study and integration of disciplines and subjects related to Buddhist and Contemplative Studies within the academic world, working to create teaching positions, develop study programs, as well as training new professionals.

Modes of operation:

- Creation of new teaching positions in the above areas;
- Collaboration with universities in designing academic pathways (bachelor's degree programs, post-graduate programs, higher education courses etc.) geared toward the creation of new research profiles and professions;
- Contribution to the establishment of university consortia aimed at undertaking the institutional processes necessary for the development of new disciplinary fields, degree classes and professions.

### 1.5.2 Research

The RC actively supports academic research and collaboration among scholars in relevant disciplines and subjects.

Modes of operation:

- Funding scholarships, doctoral fellowships and research positions;
- Conducting research projects in collaboration with academic institutions;
- Organizing conferences, symposia, seminars and think-tanks as platforms for scholars from all over the world to engage in reflection and debate.

### 1.5.3 Dissemination

The RC engages in outreach activities to stimulate scientific debate and provide information to the general public in its areas of expertise.

Modes of operation:

- Publishing research outcomes in both Italian and English through the *Ubiliber Academia* series;
- Promoting the translation of classical and modern works relevant to its fields of interest, either through the *Ubiliber Academia* series or other publications;
- Production of multimedia materials aimed at informing and raising awareness among the general public.



## 1.6 Organizational structure

The RC is a department of the Italian Buddhist Union and therefore its legal structure accords with the Union's [Statute](#). Nevertheless, it is given a level of internal regulatory and organizational autonomy designed to facilitate the efficient execution of its activities. The key elements of these are:

- **The Management Committee**

This is the main committee of the RC, with the responsibility of making decisions regarding its objectives, strategies, projects and activities. The committee consists of four members who are appointed by the Board of Directors of the Italian Buddhist Union: two Scientific Directors, a Project Manager and a Delegated Member of the Board of Directors of the Italian Buddhist Union.

- **Scientific Directors**

With the support of the Scientific Committee, the Scientific Directors are responsible for setting goals and guidelines for research and training, selecting and developing projects of significant interest in related areas, and supervising ongoing projects (either directly or in collaboration with the Project Manager).

This role is currently held by Dr. Chiara Mascarello and Dr. Francesco Tormen.

- **Project Manager**

This position serves as the operational lead of the RC and is responsible for organizing and coordinating its various activities. Working closely with the Scientific Directors, the Project Manager helps define strategies and procedures, oversees the implementation of projects, and acts as a liaison between the RC and other departments of the Italian Buddhist Union, as well as with external individuals and organizations.

This role is currently held by Dr. Emma Bano.

- **Delegated Member of the Board of Directors of the Italian Buddhist Union**

This position is responsible for supervising the activities of the RC, ensuring their alignment with the aims and guidelines of the Italian Buddhist Union. Additionally, this role serves as the point of communication between the RC and the Board of Directors of the Italian Buddhist Union.

This position is currently held by Dr. Filippo Scianna.

- **The Scientific Committee**

Appointed by the Management Committee, this committee consists of leading international scholars in the relevant research fields of the RC. It performs an advisory role, offering guidance, contacts and useful proposals for RC initiatives.

- **Administrative Secretary**

This position has responsibility over the drafting of documents and administrative paperwork, taking care of official correspondence, and providing financial reports of the RC's activities.

This position is currently held by Dr. Clara De Giorgi.

- **Press Office**

This position is responsible for managing RC communications, including the creation and distribution of information materials, promotion of events, and handling media and press relations.

This position is currently held by Dr. Stefano Davide Bettera.

- **Web Communication Manager**

This position is in charge of website management and communication through social media.

This position is currently held by Dr. Alessia Gemma.

- **Head of Fundraising**

This position is responsible for managing the financial and fundraising strategies of the RC, through researching funding opportunities, developing and implementing fundraising strategies, and building good relationships with current and prospective donors.

This role is currently held by Dr. Enrica Lobina.

## 2 FIELDS OF INTEREST AND PROJECTS

### 2.1 Buddhist Studies

#### 2.1.1 Perspectives on the development of the field

Buddhism is now the world's fourth largest religion by number of followers and demonstrates remarkable vitality by continually giving rise to new forms of worship, thought and practice. In recent decades, Buddhism has seen an increase in popularity in Western societies, where it is often perceived as a life-philosophy and is associated with meditation practice. However, to understand the comprehensive and intricate nature of this tradition, including its more recent forms, it is important to explore its historical, religious, philosophical and linguistic foundations.

Significant work is still required to elevate Buddhist Studies to the level of more established fields within Religious Studies. It is worth noting that a considerable portion of the texts included in the Buddhist canon remain untranslated into European languages, posing a significant obstacle to the study and practice of this tradition. As such, the RC intends to facilitate the comprehensive translation of the Buddhist canon, alongside the textual sources of other traditions, from their primary languages. This objective closely aligns with another of the RC's key priorities: supporting the education and training of scholars and translators with extensive and diverse skills, first and foremost by creating training pathways and research positions within Italian universities.

One emerging field that shows great promise for the study and translation of textual sources is Computational Philology, which is bringing about a methodological revolution in all disciplines related to philology and linguistics. With the aid of artificial intelligence, operations such as identifying textual authorship, historical mapping, and identifying intertextual connections are becoming faster and more accurate. However, as a budding field, it requires support to unleash its full potential; leading the RC to prioritize supporting and advancing this field in the coming years.

By focusing efforts, allocating appropriate resources, and the aid of these new digital tools, including state-of-the-art machine translation, it is feasible to envision providing comprehensive access to the entire literary corpus of Buddhist traditions in the world's major languages within a reasonable timeframe. This would enable even novice users to have the necessary tools for efficient and convenient consultation of source materials as well as tools such as multilingual dictionaries, glossaries for Buddhist terminology, and systems for textual correspondence searches.

The RC also aims to address the weaknesses and limitations currently present in the field of Buddhist Studies and contribute toward their resolution. One such challenge is the tendency toward excessive specialization and compartmentalization of research, where experts focus on specific disciplinary approaches and narrow their scope to individual traditions or schools. This can lead to a fragmented understanding of Buddhism, overlooking its multifaceted nature and the connections and disconnections between its different historical manifestations. To counter this, the RC intends to encourage interdisciplinary and cross-cultural studies of Buddhist traditions, and studies that recognize these traditions' differences as well as their common ground, providing a more holistic and comprehensive representation. This approach can have broader implications beyond academia,

offering an ecumenical framework for understanding contemporary Buddhism as a hybrid and cross-cultural phenomenon that transcends individual contexts and cultures.

### 2.1.2 Projects

#### **International Conference: “Dharma Today: Faces of Contemporary Buddhism,” Venice (2022)**

Endorsed by Ca’ Foscari University Venice, the FISPPA Department of the University of Padua, and the Veneto Region.

This conference facilitated a multidisciplinary and multi-perspective exploration of the identity, roles, and potential of Buddhist traditions in the modern world. The event took place from March 5 to 13, 2022, featuring a series of both remote and in-person sessions held at the Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti in Venice. Twenty-three scholars, representing both the Italian and international academic communities, participated in the conference and spoke on various topics, such as: the sociological and doctrinal transformations within Buddhist traditions as a result of their encounter with the modern West; the role of Buddhism in the dissemination of meditative practices and its contributions to scientific research, particularly in the field of Contemplative Studies; and the insights of Buddhist thought on contemporary philosophy, ethics, gender studies, ecology, technology, and other important issues related to the complex relationship between human beings, technology, and the environment.

#### **Funding for a research position related to the Tucci Archives, La Sapienza University (ongoing: 2022-2025)**

The RC has funded a three-year Type-A fixed-term research position for cataloging Tibetan texts belonging to the Tucci Archive in the library of the [Department of the Italian Institute of Oriental Studies](#). A lecture series relating to the Tucci Archive is planned as part of this project, organized by the RC in collaboration with the aforementioned department.

#### **Funding for four doctoral fellowships at DREST, Ca’ Foscari University Venice (ongoing: 2022-2026)**

The RC has co-funded four doctoral fellowships at Ca’ Foscari University Venice, specifically for the Doctoral School of Religious Studies ([DREST](#)), on the following subjects:

- Buddhism and the Environment: Historical and Modern Case Studies (ongoing: 2022-2025);
- Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna: Texts, Rituals and Practitioners (ongoing: 2022-2025);
- Buddhist and Modern World: Engagements with Analytic Philosophy, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Language, Epistemology, Phenomenology, Contemplative Studies (ongoing: 2023-2026);
- Buddhism and Technological Innovation: Historical and Modern Case Studies (ongoing: 2023-2026).

As part of the PhD program, the doctoral students will have the opportunity to engage in research and educational activities in collaboration with the RC.

**Inauguration of the *Ubiliber Academia* series (2024)**

The *Academia* series, set to launch in 2024 under [Ubiliber](#) (the publishing house of the Italian Buddhist Union), will showcase the research outcomes of the RC alongside other relevant works. The series will commence with the first volume “Dharma Today,” featuring the key contributions from the conference of the same name held in March 2022.

## 2.2 Contemplative Studies

### 2.2.1 The potential of this emerging field

Contemplative Studies, inspired by Buddhism and other contemplative traditions, is an interdisciplinary field of research and education dedicated to exploring contemplative experience, practices, and their transformative effects on individuals and communities. While still in the process of definition, this emerging field exhibits rapid growth and immense potential for both research and practical applications in society.

The methodological approach of Contemplative Studies integrates:

- **Third-person** research, characteristic of the humanities and sciences, providing a comprehensive understanding of the cultural, historical, philosophical, psychological and neuroscientific foundations of contemplative experience;
- **First-person** phenomenological inquiry, involving the introspective techniques and methods employed in contemplative traditions to explore consciousness, its contents, and its states through self-observation; and the
- **Second-person** approach, emphasizing the dialogic and intersubjective dimension that facilitates the description, sharing and investigation of contemplative experience through interpersonal interaction.

Contemplative Studies represents a powerful avenue for integrating Buddhist philosophical views, ethical values and practices, alongside other contemplative traditions, into the modern world. This field has the potential to positively impact both the individual and society, while also contributing to cultural transformation and expanding scientific knowledge in various fields. The implications of this extend beyond simply understanding the mechanisms of contemplative practice and their effects on physical and mental well-being, encompassing research and philosophical discussions on the subject of consciousness, its states, and its neurophysiological foundations.

In other words, Contemplative Studies has the potential to breathe new life into and expand the knowledge handed down by Buddhism and other contemplative traditions, updating its terminology and exploring its practical implications. However, it is essential to move beyond a narrow focus on psychological and neuroscientific aspects of the research, as was often the case in the early stages of this field. The contributions of the humanities are crucial for an adequate contextualization of contemplative practices within their historical, philosophical and religious frameworks. Similarly, experiential knowledge cultivated by experienced practitioners holds significant value. The interplay between these different forms of knowledge necessitates collaborative efforts and the development of shared methodologies and terminologies that are sufficiently articulate and rigorous to handle the complexity of contemplative experience and their academic study through traditional sources.

The RC aims to address these challenges by actively contributing to the in-depth study of the epistemological and methodological issues that characterize the current foundational phase of Contemplative Studies. This will be achieved, in large part, through various means of facilitating collaboration among scholars, such as organizing meetings, ongoing discussions, recurring

conferences and long-term think-tanks. The extensive international network of the Italian Buddhist Union, which includes major centers of excellence in traditional Buddhist education and a wide range of scholars and experienced practitioners worldwide, will be utilized to foster collaboration between phenomenological knowledge derived from meditative practice, on the one hand, and modern scientific knowledge and practice, on the other.

Furthermore, the RC is committed to promoting the recognition and integration of Contemplative Studies in the academic world. This involves actively participating in the development of both research and training programs in the field; efforts are already underway to develop study pathways focused on Contemplative Studies. Additionally, in response to a growing demand for such expertise in various sectors, the RC aims to facilitate professional placements for those training in this field and to raise its overall level of professionalism.

### 2.2.2 Projects

#### **Two-year first-level Postgraduate Program: “Contemplative Studies. Meditation from Ancient Traditions to Contemporary Age,” University of Padua (ongoing: from 2022 onwards)**

The RC’s first major project in the field of Contemplative Studies, born out of its collaboration with the FISPPA (Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Psychology) Department of the University of Padua, led to the development of a [two-year first-level Postgraduate Program in Contemplative Studies](#). The RC played a crucial role in designing the curriculum, recruiting faculty, arranging suitable locations for retreats and other activities, and providing scholarships. The Program is focused entirely on meditation. It aims to promote a sustainable and conscious approach to our lifestyles and practices by exploring the benefits of contemplative practice in different sectors of society, such as education, healthcare, work and personal growth. Through over 200 hours of guided meditation practice, students engage in six types of training that encompass both traditional and modern approaches. The interdisciplinary approach integrates insights from the fields of psychology and neuroscience, which offer a modern perspective on meditation, with insights from philosophy, sociology and history of religion, which help contextualize meditative practices within the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Hellenistic and Islamic traditions. Students develop the skills required to guide meditations for both individuals and groups, as well as the critical thinking skills needed to address the cultural and ethical challenges associated with the spread of meditation in modern society. The faculty consists of leading international experts in the field and the Program incorporates various learning formats, including in-person and online, to facilitate meditative trainings, retreats, discussions and experience-sharing sessions.

The first round of the program, which began in November 2022, reached its maximum capacity of 60 participants, while the second round is scheduled to start in November 2023. In addition, new projects are stemming from the Program that will not only foster further collaboration between the RC and the University of Padua, but also involve other universities and international organizations related to Contemplative Studies. Some of the more notable initiatives are mentioned below.

### **Funding for a doctoral fellowship in Contemplative Studies, University of Padua (ongoing: 2022-2025)**

In order to promote the development of Contemplative Studies within the University of Padua, the RC has awarded a grant for the [Doctoral Program in Social Sciences](#) to conduct research on the topic of “Contemplative psychology and non-reductionist approaches to meditation, mindfulness, or other related contemplative practices: psychosocial, ethical, and spiritual aspects”. Collaboration has already begun with the grant recipient, who will be conducting qualitative research over the next few years to assess the psychological impact of the Program on students (see next item). Moving forward, the RC plans to continue providing funding for doctoral fellowships on such topics, ensuring ongoing support for research in this field.

### **Research on meditation in collaboration with the Postgraduate Program in Contemplative Studies, University of Padua (ongoing: 2023-2025)**

The unique pedagogical structure of the Program in Contemplative Studies, with its diverse meditative trainings, retreats and interactive activities, as well as its large number of participants, offers the ideal setting for conducting interdisciplinary research on the mechanisms and effects of various forms of contemplative practice. Through this research, which has already started with the involvement of the recipient of the RC-funded doctoral fellowship (see previous point), we aim to contribute to an ongoing shift within the field of Contemplative Studies. In contrast to the recent research trends, which have been heavily focused on neuroscience, we seek to move away from the reductionist approach toward a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to the genuine benefits mindfulness practices bring to its practitioners, including exploring their philosophical, ethical, relational and psychosocial dimensions. Such an approach requires a multidisciplinary research environment, a deeper understanding of traditional contemplative sources, and the integration of qualitative methods alongside the prevalent quantitative methods.

### **International Symposium: “Buddhist Perspectives on Consciousness, Evolution, and AI,” Padua (November, 16-19, 2023)**

This international symposium will explore how Buddhist resources contribute to understanding and addressing emerging challenges related to scientific, technological, and societal change. The symposium focuses on three interrelated arenas of intersection along the frontiers of science, societal transformation, and ethics: consciousness, evolution, and digital transformation. The project will result in an edited volume that will be published through Ubiliber, as well as a documentary based on the footage realized as the symposium unfolds.

### **International conference: “The Elephant in the Room: Investigating Consciousness beyond Reductionism,” Padua (February 21-23, 2024)**

Through a collaborative effort between the RC, the University of Padua, Ottawa University, Mind and Life Europe and the India Foundation, this conference will host distinguished scholars in the field of consciousness research and focus on discussing some of the most compelling non-



reductionist hypotheses regarding the nature of consciousness from the fields of neuroscience, physics, philosophy of mind, and contemplative research.

**International conference on the epistemological foundations of Contemplative Studies, Padua (June 20-23, 2024)**

This conference, involving prominent international organizations in the field of Contemplative Studies, will bring together leading scholars to address the epistemological and methodological challenges facing this field of research. The primary focus will be to establish clearer definitions and boundaries for Contemplative Studies, taking into account its accomplishments, ongoing challenges, and future directions for development and application. Discussions will include guidelines for training in this field, as well as potential and critical issues surrounding the integration of contemplative practices and perspectives into different sectors of society and professional settings.

The RC aims to maintain the momentum of these discussions by organizing the conference biennially and by establishing a permanent think-tank. This will provide a platform for ongoing and in-depth study of the issues discussed. In addition, the RC plans to create the first university handbook on Contemplative Studies, inspired by the insights and discussions of this conference, with the goal of involving a diverse range of scholars in its collaborative development.