

Dhammas Relative to Arising Phenomena

Compiled and Edited

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Preface

Most modern-day philosophers and scientists would be reluctant to accept that the Buddha and his followers (both in the Buddhist era and in later commentaries) had explained and clarified the causal dependent arising of all conditioned phenomena, for the simple reason that the cause and effect explanations and relations outlined in the *Abhidhamma* wholly transcend the logical and rational limits of the methodology of modern science.

More specifically, the epistemological problem lies in the fact that modern science lacks the capacity to isolate, analyse and confirm that mental phenomena are mere accumulations of instantaneously, concomitantly arising and disappearing, of unperceived, infinitesimally-minute, indivisible *dhammas* or energy-units, as flowing moments (occasions) of radiations (vibrations) coming together, which cannot be conceived of as actually 'existing,' in the sense of enduring reality, in any way, other than as rapidly-flowing, continually-changing, inter-dependently passing continuum, occurring in accordance with the totality of factors effecting the four basic elements, due to conditional relations, proximate to arising perceptions of phenomena of the senses and leading to emerging 'accumulations' of impermanent body and mind formations in the passing flow of human consciousness.*

*[If this above thesis statement sounds somewhat too compound/complex, with rather too much subordination and far too many inter-relations and interconnections for immediate comprehension, just continue-on speed-reading and then come back to this thesis later. Once you have read further and accumulated a more firm, concentrated, coherent and unified overview of the *Abhidhamma* system of analysis, the above sentence may make more coherent sense.]

Furthermore contemporary methodology, , lacks the capacity (especially, in so-called depth-psychology) to know if there is any discoverable process or empirically-known pattern of inter-related motivational or underlying intentional (volitional) forces causing natural confluences of such energy units, (physically and mentally), to flow in one way rather than another, thereby, resulting in beneficial or unbeneficial, harmless or harmful results and effects.

There are two schools of thought representing the two opposing points of view in the matter of appearing phenomena, which are:

On the one hand,

- The hypothetical laws of corporeal materialists and determinists, and

On the the other hand,

- The theory that there are imperceptible energy forces acting within the universe which perpetually cause things to move out of and then and then back into level balance.

Since the former point of view is purely speculative and not the subject of our analysis, we shall proceed to examine some explications delineating the pattern of energy and balance in the latter position, which we shall call the *dhamma theory*.

We shall leave it up to the reader to decide where he stands on any issues herein discussed.

Introduction

In this compendium of related-articles on the *dhmmas and arising phenomena*, we shall be quoting from a number of erudite authors and scholars who will break-down and discuss the ultimate paradox of seemingly permanent and fixed phenomena being fleeting accumulations of miniscule *dhmmas* — which are instantaneously coming-together in momentarily arising phenomena which, at the very same time, are irrevocably (and irreplaceably) falling apart and disappearing once again.

Since we are going to delve into an impermanent phenomenal realm, (wholly lacking in any spirit of intrinsic absolute ideals or noumenal essences thereby providing an intellectual frame of worldly-self-reference), let's, first, begin by reading a generally understandable introduction to the 'fleeting impermanence of phenomena' from the much-beloved Bhante G., — to give ourselves at least a temporary-sense of solid-footing — before the ground, is ripped again, (almost immediately), right out from under us.

[Editor's note: In all texts we have retained individual authors' Pali renderings without trying to standardize them.]

That Which Is Impermanent Is Unsatisfactory

by

Bhante H. Gunaratana

Everything is changing. Changes are astronomical, physical, psychological, and there is no end to it. One form of matter changes into another form. One situation changes into another. One experience changes into another. Some changes are inconceivably rapid and some very slow. At the blink of your eye an incalculable number of things change all over the universe and all over you.

This whole world once was a part of the sun without any living being on it. Then it cooled-down and was covered with ice. When the ice melted it was covered with water. When the water-level went down, a mass of land with mountains and lowlands appeared. This one land mass, through natural changes over millions of years, is divided into continents.

Wet lands at one time became a dry land at another time. A cold country at one time became a very hot country at another time. A very prosperous green land at one time became a desert at another time. The space once occupied by the sea and sea animals is now full of mountains with many trees and numerous land animals.

This process of change in this world is going-on forever. One day this world will become unsuitable for living beings. From the beginning of human civilization this change has been accelerating.

If you travel by airplane, within seconds you could be moving from 98 degrees Fahrenheit temperature zone to 10 degrees Fahrenheit temperature zone. The change of weather directly affects your body and mind. If the weather is hot with polluted air, sticky, muggy, humid, cold, windy, snowy, rainy, or cloudy, you experience a lot of pain. The change can take place quickly or slowly and smoothly. As your body and mind are surrounded by the atmosphere, any change in the atmosphere affects your mind and body. It does not matter where the change takes place – within you or without you; you are changing.

Every moment, every second, all the great forces of earth, water, fire and air are changing. At the same speed they are changing within you. You may not notice any of them.

At every heart beat, arteries in your body carry blood away from the heart and veins carry blood to the heart. Oxygen-rich blood from the lungs is pumped by the heart to the tissues and the returning 'oxygen-poor' blood is sent to the lungs by this process. At any given moment your blood in your body is recycling.

Every time you breathe in, you bring oxygen to your lungs. Every time you breathe out, you discharge carbon dioxide from your lungs. Every moment, your body is putting out waste material through the pores of your skin. Every moment, every cell, every sub-atomic particle in your body is dying-out and new particles are born.

The food that you consume in solid form or liquid form replaces all the dying minerals, vitamins, protein, iron, calcium, etc. in your body. While this process is going-on with full cooperation of everything else in your body, you are aging, your internal organs are aging; your skin is growing, maturing, forming wrinkles and flaking off. Through this process of change your hair is turning gray; your teeth are decaying, your eyes are becoming weak, your hearing is becoming weak, your taste buds are becoming weak; your nails are becoming harder and more brittle, your bones are becoming more porous and weak; and your joints are losing their grease.

Millions and millions of activities are going on in your body and mind at any given moment. You can never be aware of all of them.

Similarly you could not find the feeling you had at the moment you woke up in the morning. The feeling you had ten minutes after you woke up would not be there fifteen minutes later. All your feelings from the moment you woke up till you go to bed change continually. In the same manner all your perceptions, all your thoughts and all states of consciousness change, as well. At the very moment we are born we start our journey of change which is known as growing, maturing and dying.

At the very moment you enter into what you call a “happy life of marriage,” impermanence begins to hover over your head, reminding you that you will be separated by death, for every union ends-up in separation. In this ‘space-age,’ some people may even have to prepare for the inevitable ending of their new “happy life” by divorce due to the fact that their sensual pleasure is subject to the law of diminishing return. Your love changes, your hate changes, your body changes and your mind changes. Nothing remains the same for two consecutive moments.

Any physicist or chemist possesses this knowledge. Pre-Socratic philosophers, like Heraclitus of Ephesus, have spoken of incessant and universal flux. However, the knowledge of change itself does not do any good for you if you do not use it for growing, maturing and understanding the very nature of your own predicament.

You should incorporate your knowledge of change into your life and use it as a means of liberation from suffering. It is not the knowledge of impermanence itself but the way you handle it or the way you use it that opens your mind to the understanding of reality. When you know things are impermanent, you prepare for the reality of impermanence.

Knowledge of constant change should help you realize the danger of clinging to changing objects. When you cling to anything which is subject to change, you experience pain. It is not by deceiving yourself by trying to defy this process of change but by clear understanding and accepting it that you can let-go of your hatred and be calm, relaxed and peaceful.

“Resisting the law of change is the cause of friction and pain.” Going with the change is the way to relieve that friction in your own mind.

All your experiences are unsatisfactory because they are impermanent. Everything, without exception, is changing all the time. No one can stop it. Seeing with wisdom the impermanence of all things is a way to purification of the mind [1] In the same vein, we read, “Whenever one reflects on the rise and fall of all the aggregates, one enjoys peace and joy comparable to that of immortality.” [2] “That which is impermanent is unsatisfactory” [3] is one of the most fundamental axioms in the Buddha’s teaching. The First Noble Truth is directly related to this eternal Dhamma. “Whether Buddhas appear or do not appear, there is this established condition of Dhamma, this fixed Law of Dhamma. All that is conditioned is impermanent, unsatisfactory and all dhammas are without self. To this a Buddha fully awakens and fully understands. So awakened and understanding, He announces, points out, declares, establishes, expounds, explains and clarifies it: all that is conditioned is impermanent, unsatisfactory and all dhammas are without self.” [4]

When you read this it may occur to you, “Oh! Yes, when my pain changes, I experience pleasure and joy right then and there. When I think of it, I experience joy and happiness.”

Well, it is not all that simple. There is much more to it. The change of pain to pleasure is certainly a pleasant experience. If that pleasant experience remains unchanged, you would be very pleased and joyful for the rest of your life.

Unfortunately things don't happen that way. When you were young, you were healthy, vigorous, active and free from obligations. Almost all of us have felt that way. That was the time you perhaps 'wishfully' thought that only others become old, but you would remain young. Only they become sick but you would remain healthy forever.

“Did you never see in the world a man, or a woman, eighty, ninety, or a hundred years old, frail, crooked as a gable-roof, bent down, resting on crutches, with tottering steps, infirm, youth long since fled, with broken teeth, gray and scanty hair or none, wrinkled, with blotched limbs? And did the thought never come to you that you also are subject to decay, that you also cannot escape it?”

“Did you never see in the world a man, or a woman who, being sick, afflicted, and grievously ill, wallowing in his own filth, was lifted-up by some and put to bed by others? And did the thought never come to you that you also are subject to disease, that you also cannot escape it?”

“Did you never see in the world the corpse of a man, or a woman, one or two or three days after death, swollen up, blue-black in color, and full of corruption? And did the thought never come to you that you also are subject to death, that you also cannot escape it?” [5]

As you grow older and older you lose your youthfulness, health, vigor, and agility. Then you begin to see impermanence face to face, very vividly, and you may not like it. Because of your memory of doing things with some agility and flexibility, you build up your courage. Because of your strength and pride, you may think that you [were able] to perform everything much better and faster when you are young.

When you are older, because of your accumulated experiences in life, you might understand things much faster and more easily than when you were young. Nevertheless, the body and mind do not cooperate with your 'wishful thinking' or desire. You wish to be consistent in your abilities of hearing, seeing, tasting, touching, speaking, movements, thinking and so on. Soon you begin to realize, however, that your body and mind have changed even though you may like to think that you are still young in heart and spirit. Because of your past good kamma you even wish to defy change, growth and decay. You wish to learn more and more new things and retain what you have learned. Not withstanding your pride of youth, health, and strength, you humbly surrender to the truth of Dhamma and learn from your mature experience to meet it face to face.

You may know some very healthy people at the age of 70 or 80 who say “I will live 120 years.” A few days or a couple of weeks later, they drop dead. Sometimes people say “If you think young, you never grow old and live forever.” Unfortunately, the reality of impermanence hits them very hard at a most unexpected-moment in life, despite their positive thinking.

This reminds me of a story of somebody who went to a very remote and primitive part of the world and found a very old-looking man. This sophisticated and most ambitious visitor asked this man “How old are you?” He said, “130.” He asked him, “What is

the secret of living so long?” He said, “I always think young.” This ambitious man returned to his rocket-age society and started giving lectures; telling people, “If you think young, you will never die. I met 130-year-old people in such and such a region. The secret of their long life is that they always think young.” Another more realistic visitor happened to [have been] in the same vicinity and he found out that people in that region do not keep [any] birth records. When he asked another very old-looking man how old he was, he got a similar reply. While he was interviewing this man he saw a younger man laughing, holding his stomach. He approached him and asked him why he was laughing. He said “This is my uncle and he is only 70 years old. He does not know his birth date.” Everybody in that region thinks that they are twice as old as they really are because they do not know their birth day.

Absolutely no one has ever been able to defy the truth of impermanence, which exists eternally. All beings are subject to the same law of impermanence. All who have lived on earth in the past have obeyed and surrendered to this sacred law. What you cherish today in your memories are the most insignificant fraction of some of the thoughts, words, deeds, events and things left behind in the past by a small fraction of beings that lived in the past. You have no knowledge of those who have not left any record.

Change is not a feeling but pain is. Therefore, change itself is neither pleasant nor unpleasant nor neutral. Your mind shifts from one feeling to another, depending upon your mood. When you have a pleasant feeling, for instance, you cling to it with greed, for you are unaware of the fact that the pleasant feeling will change. When it changes you become unhappy.

If you experience the pleasant feeling with mindfulness, [however] the change of the pleasant feeling does not make you unhappy, for you are aware of the change and you anticipate the change of the pleasant feeling. If your attitude toward the feeling is guided by your mindfulness, then the change of one feeling or another does not make you unhappy.

You are often unaware that it is your desire for permanent pleasure from impermanent things that causes your unsatisfactoriness. How can you have permanent pleasure from impermanent experience? Any change is painful. When a pleasant feeling – whether physical or mental – arises, you wish that it would not change at all or you wish that it would change as slowly as possible. You wish the unpleasant feeling would change as fast as possible. Unfortunately, change does not obey your wish.

Everything, pleasant or unpleasant, within you or without you, things near to you or far away from you, gross or subtle, is changing. When change goes on defying your wish and crushing everything under its most powerful weight, you experience very unpleasant feelings of not getting what you wish.

You know that the sameness of anything is dull and boring; you need a change. Then you change it and the new situation changes as well. Then you change it again, hoping “This time I will be happy for ever.” The change does not make any concession or discrimination. It remains fair-and-square with everything, everybody and all the time, and continues to change everything.

Nothing in your body and mind remains the same for two consecutive moments. The change is absolutely necessary for your improvement, growth, maturity, understanding, courage, determination, knowledge and wisdom; in short, even for your existence. Even the attainment of enlightenment is not possible without the process of 'psychological' changes.

If you do not, however, experience any physical or mental pain directly as cause of change in your body, feeling, perception, thoughts or your consciousness, then why is it said, "Change causes pain?"

As you may notice, this axiom does not say that you experience pain while the change is taking place. What it says is "That which is subject to change is painful." If the pleasure is subject to change, it is necessarily and intrinsically also subject to pain. "But how?" is our question. It is not the change itself that creates pain, but your desire for the things you enjoy. It is your desire for permanent enjoyment from impermanent experience that causes pain. When pain changes, you experience pleasure. You welcome it. When pleasure changes, you experience pain. The change of pain into pleasure is more desirable. You go through this 'yo-yo' experience or pendulum of experience, between pain and pleasure.

When you practice mindfulness of change in your body and mind, you will not be affected by the change. You endure cold and heat, hunger and thirst, wind and sun, attacks by gadflies, mosquitoes and reptiles. [6] Those who are capable of seeing this simple truth are the ones who are really peaceful and happy.

The knowledge you gain from this experience of change of pleasure and pain helps you grow and mature. You remember [the recurrence of] such monotonous and repetitious occurrence in your life from your youngest days. This memory of change of things in the past makes it easy for you to face and accept whatever comes up in your life.

In a much deeper and more complete sense, you understand change when you mindfully watch all your activities in life. You do only three things in your entire life – having (i) thoughts, (ii) words and (iii) deeds. All of them have changed in the past, are changing now and will be changing in the future. There is no way that anybody can stop this constant flux of activities in your life. Therefore, you can say without hesitation that no person can do the same activity twice in the same manner. As life is like a river, nothing remains stagnant. If you cannot penetrate into the depth of this simple truth, this constant flow or constant change may make your life very painful.

Natural change is known as 'evolution' and forced-change is called 'revolution.' The underlying truth in both is pain. You may try to resist change. When you think you have perfected your mindfulness and learned to remain the same under all circumstances, then you imagine you will not react to any change. This, of course, is impossible for someone who has not attained enlightenment. The enlightened beings have the same experience as anybody else. However, they do not suffer because they have eliminated both the desire for pleasure and the resentment for displeasure. Desire and ignorance are the causes of suffering.

He who binds himself to joy

Does the winged-life destroy
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sun rise.

William Blake

[We thank the Bhavana Society Newsletter (October, 1994) for the above-quoted talk by Bhante G., which, incidentally, appeared shortly after the demise of Venerable Nyanaponika Maha Thera]

Bhante G.'s talk (*which we have edited slightly for English sentence coherence*) is an authoritative introduction to the impermanence and lack of substance of all known-phenomena and may arouse interest, in at least some seekers of knowledge, about the nature of ultimate truth, and such seekers may then try to attain further insight through reading the following series of textual explications about the teachings outlined in the *Abhidhamma*.

[Editor's Note: While the wording and terminology in some of the following texts and references may prove very hard-going, as we continue our learning-process about the Buddha-Dhamma method of analysis — perseverance may pay off, to the point, where the reader, slowly but surely, gets at least the general idea, without having to commit to memory the complete contents and substance, detail-by-detail of the actual Abhidhamma itself — which is often-times likened to a long but useful catalogue of dhammas.

If you come to a point in your reading of an article where the going gets too tough because of a lot of strange new vocabulary, just stop where you are and go on to read the first part of the next section and keep reading, until the language, once again, starts to get too tough and, then, skip ahead again, to the introduction of the next subsection, and so on, and keep doing the same, right through to the end.

Once you have begun to get the larger picture then you can start come back to the earlier articles, having become better prepared, for them; and, then, persist with diligence until you know you are attaining definite insight.

It is probably safe to say that there are few people (aside from experts who know everything already) who can read and study this compendium of essays and excerpts and comprehend it all in one sitting.]

Forward

Cassius A. Pereria has written in his forward to *A Guide through the Abhidhamma*, by the **Venerable Nyanatiloka**,

“The root of the Buddha-Dhamma is that here in this cosmos, is nothing permanent, nothing truly happy,] nothing of an enduring soul entity. Though these truths underlie the doctrine of the Buddha right through the *Tipitaka*, the method of approach in the second basket, the *Sutta Pitaka*, is graduated to suit the mind of the average man. Here, the ordinary ‘worldling’ finds beautiful language, the unsurpassed poetry of the Pali literature pointing to high ideals to simplicity of life, charity, virtue, contentment, loving-kindness and mind culture. But it is all in understandable language, *samutti*

sacca, the language of apparent or ‘conventional truth,’ though it appeals ultimately even to the highest intellectuality that results from close study, *sutta-maya-panna*.

Here men are called ‘men,’ trees, ‘trees,’ and stones are yet ‘stones.’ Slowly, the *putthujjaanna*, the wordling, is introduced to truth and the value of higher life that alone opens the path to deliverance. The value of analytic knowledge is slowly revealed, gradually developed and cultivated. The student realizes that the Buddha is really a teacher, a *Vibhajjavadin*, of a doctrine of analysis, right up to the ultimates, but the student feels, all along, that he himself sees differently. He feels that his seeing [still] falls far below the intuitive insight of *patisambhida*, the exact individual analysis of the noble disciple, who has tasted the fruit of the paths. He [the student] longs for some view, however dim, of that true vision.

It is to such a student that the *Abhidhamma* comes as a wonderful revelation, for even the *Abhidhamma* can only be that, a revelation and not a realization for a ‘worldling,’ however high he may have climbed up this ladder of knowledge. Here he feels that he at last enjoys a picture of truth, [but] it is not seeing the truth face to face. It is a picture, a true picture, which is but a glimpse, however faint, of the truth that the Noble Ones have attained.

This is the nearest that a worldling’s study can approach to *paramattha-sacca*, the real or ultimate truth that is the exclusive heritage of the ‘complete coming into’ *abhisamaya*, the enlightenment, the penetration or realization of an Arahant.

But the *Abhidhamma* is not a tale told to fools, and few worldlings ever come to revel in its depths.”

Cassius A. Pereria, (in his above-mentioned Forward) illustrates with an analogy:

“A soaring royal swan spied a lowland crane puddling in a mudpool. Out of compassion, he descended and told this inglorious feathered kinsman of the Himalayan heights, of cool mountain streams, the translucent crystal waters and their shining jewels.

‘But I live on mudfish. Are there any mudfish there?’ asked the crane.

‘No, there are no mudfish there,’ replied the crane.

‘Then, I don’t want your mountains and your jewels,’ said the mudfish.

And the *Abhidhamma* does not mention mudfish. Here we find no gods, no men, no devils, no trees no stones and so forth. All there are mere appearances, and we find that an ‘individual’ has no real existence.”

The resolution of the seeming paradox between the views of the swam and the crane is that in terms of ultimate truth, there are, indeed, no worldly ‘persons,’ (the equivalent to ‘crane’); and there are no ‘mudfish,’ either, (the equivalent of worldly objects of craving.)

In short, the analogy means that an ultimate understanding of evolving ‘dhammas relative to arising phenomena,’ reaches far beyond the mere bounds and limitations of conventional and worldly objects, concepts and language.

So the question for the enquiring ‘worldling’ becomes: “Where do we start understanding what is actually beyond understanding of the language of the conventional view of things in the world?” That is a fair question, and the answer is that the realm of ultimate realities is described in detail, for those who can follow, in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, and he may enquire further:

What is Abhidhamma Pitaka?

In partial answer to this question, the website <www.abhidhamma.org> presents the following description as a general guideline to the body of knowledge analyzed and delineated:

It is the Higher Teaching of the Buddha

It is a huge collection of systematically arranged, tabulated and classified doctrines of the Buddha, representing the quintessence of his Teaching. It is unique in its abstruseness, analytical approach, immensity of scope and conduciveness to one’s liberation.

In *Abhidhamma*, *dhammas* are no longer taught in a conventional terms (*sammuti sacca*) making references to persons and objects as ‘I,’ ‘we,’ ‘he,’ ‘she,’ ‘man,’ ‘dog,’ ‘tree’ etc. Here the *dhammas* are treated entirely in terms of ultimate reality (*paramattha sacca*).

Analysis of phenomenon are to its ultimate constituents and all relative concepts such as man, mountain, etc. are precisely defined, classified and systematically arranged.

Thus in *Abhidhamma*, everything is expressed in terms of *khandhas*, five (5) aggregates of existence; *ayatanas*, five sensory organs and mind, and their respective sense objects; *dhatu*, elements; *indriya*, faculties; *sacca*, fundamental truths; and so on.

Relative conceptual objects such as man, woman, etc. are resolved into ultimate components of *khandhas*, *ayatanas*, etc. and viewed as an interpersonal psycho-physical phenomenon, which is conditioned by various factors and is impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) and is without a permanent entity (*anatta*).

The *Abhidhamma* approach is a more thorough [and] more penetrating, breaking-down of each corporeal or mental component into the ultimate, the most infinitesimal unit.

For a broader, more thorough approach we may turn to the former Editor and President of the Buddhist publication Society, the Venerable Nyanaponika in his

The Abhidhamma

Its Estimation in the Past and its Value for the Present

The High Esteem of Abhidhamma in Buddhist Tradition

The *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, or the Philosophical Collection, forms the third great section of the Buddhist Pali Canon (*Tipitaka*). In its most characteristic parts it is a system of classifications, analytical enumerations and definitions, with no discursive treatment of the subject matter. In particular its two important books, the *Dhammasangani* and the *Patthana*, have the appearance of huge collections of systematically arranged tabulations, accompanied by definitions of the terms used in the tables. This, one would expect, is a type of literature scarcely likely to gain much popular appreciation, yet there is the fact that the *Abhidhamma* was, and is, highly esteemed and even venerated in the countries of Theravada Buddhism.

Two examples taken from the chronicles of Ceylon illustrate that high regard for the *Abhidhamma*. In the 10th century A.C. on the order of king Kassapa V of Ceylon, the whole *Abhidhamma Pitaka* was inscribed on gold plates, and the first of these books, the *Dhammasangani*, was set with jewels. When the work was completed, the precious manuscripts were taken in a huge procession to a beautiful monastery and deposited there. Another king of Ceylon, Vijaya Bahu (11th century), used to study the *Dhammasangani* in the early morning before he took up his royal duties, and he prepared a translation of it into Sinhalese, which however has not been preserved.

What were the reasons for such an extraordinary esteem for material that appears at first glance to consist of no more than dry and unattractive text books? And what actual importance do the two basic works of the *Abhidhamma* in particular, the *Dhammasangani* and the *Patthana*, still have today? These are the questions that we shall attempt to answer here.

In considering the reasons for this high esteem and regard for the *Abhidhamma*, we may leave aside any manifestation of faith, more or less unquestioning, that evokes in the devotee a certain awe owing to the very abstruseness and bulk of these books. That apart, we may find a first explanation in the immediate impression on susceptible minds that they are faced here by a gigantic edifice of penetrative insight, which in its foundations and its lay-out cannot well be ascribed to a lesser mind than that of a Buddha; and this first impression will find growing confirmation in the gradual process of comprehending these teachings.

According to the Theravada tradition the *Abhidhamma* is the domain proper of the Buddhas (*Buddha-visaya*), and its initial conception in the Master's mind (*manasa desana*), according to the *Atthasalini*, is traced to the time immediately after the Great Enlightenment. It was in the fourth of the seven weeks spent by the Master in the environs of the Bodhi tree that the *Abhidhamma* was conceived. These seven days were called by the teachers of old 'The Week of the House of Gems' (*ratana-gharasattaha*). 'The House of Gems' is indeed a very befitting expression for the crystal-clear edifice of *Abhidhamma*-thought in which the Buddha dwelt during that period.

The Abhidhamma as System and Method

Those who have an eye for the ingenious and the significant in the architecture of great edifices of thought will probably be impressed first by the *Abhidhamma's* structural qualities, its wide compass, its inner consistency, and its far-reaching implications. The *Abhidhamma* offers an impressive systematisation of the whole of reality as far as it is of concern to man's liberation from passion and suffering, and the way thereto; for it deals with actuality from an exclusively ethical and psychological view-point, and with a definite practical purpose.

A very striking and deeply impressive feature of the *Abhidhamma* is the analysis of the entire realm of consciousness.

It is the first time in the history of human thought that this was undertaken so thoroughly and realistically, without admixture of any metaphysics and mythology.

This system provides a method by which the enormous welter of facts included or implied in it, can be subordinated to, and be utilized by, the *liberating* function of knowledge, which in the Buddha's teaching is the essential task and the greatest value of true understanding.

This organizing and mustering of knowledge for such a purpose cannot fail to appeal to the practical thinker.

The *Abhidhamma* may also be regarded as a systematisation of the doctrines contained, or implied, in the *Sutta-Pitaka*, the *Collection of Discourses*. It formulates these *Sutta*-doctrines in strictly philosophical (*paramattha*) or truly realistic (*yathabhuta*) language that as far as possible employs terms of a function or process without any of the conventional (*vohara*) and unrealistic concepts assuming a personality, an agent (as different from the act), a soul or a substance.

These remarks about the systematising import of the *Abhidhamma* may perhaps create the impression in the reader that the *Abhidhamma* is no more than 'a mere method with only a formalistic function.' Leaving aside the fact that this is not so, as we shall see later, let us first quote, against this somewhat belittling attitude, a word of Nietzsche, himself certainly no friend of rigid systematisation: 'Scientific spirit rests upon insight into the method.'

For the preeminently practical needs of the Buddhist the *Abhidhamma* fulfils the requirements stated by Bertrand Russell:

'A complete description of the existing world would require not only a catalogue of things, but also a mention of all their qualities and relations' (*Our Knowledge of the External World*). A systematical 'catalogue of things' together with their qualities, or better 'functions,' is given in the first book of the *Abhidhamma*, the *Dhammasangani*, a title that could well be rendered by *A Catalogue (or Compendium) of Things*; and the relations, or the conditionality, of these things are treated in the *Patthana*.

Some who deem themselves 'strong-minded' have called systems 'a refuge of feeble minds.' It is to be admitted that the conceptual labels supplied by systems (and also in *Abhidhamma*) have often been misused as a surrogate for the true comprehension of a changing, and not at all rigid, world. But if cautiously and critically used, it is precisely one of the advantages of systematic thought that it provides, as it were, 'weapons of defence', [and] means of protection, against the overwhelming assault of innumerable internal and external impressions on the human mind.

This unceasing influx of impressions, by sheer weight of number and diversity alone, has an influence, even on 'strong minds,' that tends to be either overpowering and fascinating, or confusing, intimidating, distracting, even dissolving, unless this vast world of plurality (*papanca*) is at least partly assimilated by the human mind with the help of systematic and methodical thought. But systems may also be 'aggressive weapons' when wielded by a mind that through its power of understanding tries to control and master the numerous experiences, actions and reactions occurring in man's inner and outer world, subordinating them to his own purpose.

The *Abhidhamma* system, however, is not concerned with an artificial abstract world of 'objects in themselves.' In so far as it deals with external facts at all, the respective concepts refer to the relation of those 'external facts' to the bondage or liberation of the human mind; or they are terms auxiliary to the tasks of the understanding and mental training connected with the work of liberation.

The basically dynamic character of the *Abhidhamma* system, and of the concepts it employs, goes far in preventing both rigidity and any artificial simplification of a complex and ever-changing world - the faults that those inimical to them find in all 'systems.'

System and method bring order, coherence and meaning into what often appears to be a world of isolated facts which only becomes amenable to the purposes of man by a methodical approach. This holds true for the system of the *Abhidhamma* too, in regard to the highest purpose; man's liberation from ignorance and suffering.

Clarification of Terms

Many thinkers of all times and climes have insisted that a clarification of concepts and terms must be the basis of all realistic and successful thought, action, and, as Kungfutse says, even of government. But as shown by the widespread confusion of ideas throughout the centuries, this has been neglected in nearly all branches of life and thought - a fact responsible for much of man's unhappiness.

It is another evidence of the scientific spirit of the *Abhidhamma* that the definition of its terms and of their range of application occupies a very prominent place. In particular, the *Dhammasangani* is essentially a book of classifications and definitions. In addition, a very elaborate and cautious delimitation of terms is given in the sixth book of *Abhidhamma* the *Yamaka*, which to our modern taste appears even over-elaborate and over-cautious in that respect.

The *Suttas*, serving mainly the purpose of offering guidance for the actual daily life of the disciple, are mostly (though not entirely) couched in terms of conventional

language (*vohara-vacana*), making reference to persons, their qualities, possessions, etc. In the *Abhidhamma*, this *Sutta* terminology is turned into correct functional forms of thought, which accord with the true 'impersonal' and everchanging nature of actuality; and in that strict, or highest, sense (*paramattha*) the main tenets of the Dhamma are explained.

While vague definitions and loosely used terms are like blunt tools unfit to do the work they are meant for, while concepts based on wrong notions will necessarily beg the question to be scrutinized and will thus prejudice the issue, the use of appropriate and carefully-tempered conceptual tools will greatly facilitate the quest for liberating knowledge, and is an indispensable condition of success in that quest.

Hence the fact that *Abhidhamma* literature is a rich source of exact terminology is a feature not to be underestimated.

Analysis of Consciousness

One of the *Abhidhamma's* most important contributions to human thought, though still insufficiently known and utilized, is the analysis and classification of consciousness undertaken in the first of the *Dhammasangani*. Here the human mind, so evanescent and elusive, has for the first time been subjected to a comprehensive, thorough and unprejudiced scrutiny, which definitely disposes of the notion that any kind of static unity or underlying substance can be traced in mind. However, the basic ethical layout and purpose of this psychology effectively prevents conclusions of ethical materialism or theoretical and practical amorality being derived from its realistic and unmetaphysical analysis of mind.

The method of investigation applied in the *Abhidhamma* is 'inductive,' being based exclusively on an unprejudiced and subtle introspective observation of mental processes. The procedure used in the *Dhammasangani* for the analysis of consciousness is precisely that postulated by the English philosopher and mathematician, A. N. Whitehead:

'It is impossible to over-emphasize the point that the key to the process of induction, as used either in science or in our ordinary life, is to be found in the right understanding of the immediate occasion of knowledge in its full concreteness...In any occasion of cognition, that which is known is an actual occasion of experience, as diversified by reference to a realm of entities which transcend that immediate occasion in that they have analogous or different connections with other occasions of experience' (*Science and the Modern World*).

Whitehead's term 'occasion' corresponds to the *Abhidhamma* concept *samaya* (time, occasion, conjunction of circumstances), which occurs in all principal paragraphs of the *Dhammasangani*, and there denotes the starting point of the analysis. The term receives a detailed and very instructive treatment in the *Atthasalini* the commentary to the aforementioned work.

The Buddha succeeded in reducing this 'immediate occasion' of an act of cognition to a single moment of consciousness, which, however, in its subtlety and evanescence,

cannot be observed, directly and separately, by a mind untrained in introspective meditation. Just as the minute living beings in the microcosm of a drop of water become visible only through a microscope, so, too, the exceedingly short-lived processes in the world of mind become cognizable only with the help of a very subtle instrument of mental scrutiny, and that only obtains as a result of meditative training.

None but the kind of introspective mindfulness or attention (*sati*) that has acquired, in meditative absorption, a high degree of inner equipoise, purity and firmness (*upekkha-sati-parisuddhi*), will possess the keenness, subtlety and quickness of cognitive response required for such delicate mental microscopy. Without that meditative preparation only the way of inference from comparisons between various complete or fragmentary series of thought moments will be open as a means of research. But this approach too may yield important and reliable results, if cautious and intelligent use is made of one's own introspective results and of the psychological data of meditative experience found in *Sutta* and *Abhidhamma*.

In the *Anupada Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikaya* 111) it is reported that the Venerable Sariputta Thera, after rising from meditative absorption (*jhana*) was able to analyse the respective *jhanic* consciousness into its constituent mental factors. This may be regarded as a precursor of the more detailed analysis given in the *Dhammasangani*.

Let us listen to a voice from Indian antiquity appreciating the difficulty of that analytical work and the greatness of its achievement. We read in the *Questions of King Milinda*; "A difficult feat indeed was accomplished, O great King, by the Exalted One" -- "Which was that difficult feat, O venerable Nagasena?" - "The Exalted One, O king, has accomplished a difficult task when he analysed a mental process having a single object as consisting of consciousness with its concomitants, as follows: 'This is sense-impression, this is feeling, perception, volition, consciousness.'" - "Give an illustration of it, venerable sir" - "Suppose, O king, a man has gone to the sea by boat and takes with the hollow of his hand a little sea water and tastes it. Will this man know, 'This is water from the Ganges, this is water from such other rivers as Jamuna, Aciravati etc.?' - "He can hardly know that." - "But a still more difficult task, O king, was accomplished by the Exalted One when he analysed a mental process having a single object, as consisting of consciousness with its concomitants."

The rather terse and abstract form in which the *Dhammasangani* presents its subject matter, the analysis of mind, should not mislead the reader into making him believe that he is confronted with a typical product of late scholastic thought. When, in the course of closer study, he notices the admirable inner consistency of the system, and gradually becomes aware of many of its subtle points and far-reaching implications, he will become convinced that at least the fundamental outlines and the key notes of *Abhidhamma* 'psychology'* must be the result of a profound intuition gained through direct and penetrative introspection. It will appear to him increasingly improbable that the essence of the *Abhidhamma* should be the product of a cumbersome process of discursive thinking and artificial thought-constructions. This impression of the essentially intuitive origin of the *Abhidhammic* mind-doctrine will also strengthen his conviction that the elements of the *Dhammasangani* and the *Patthana* must be ascribed to the Buddha himself and his early great and holy disciples. What is called 'scholastic thought,' which has its merit in its own sphere and does not deserve

wholesale condemnation, may have had its share later in formulating, elaborating and codifying the teachings concerned.

*[Editor's note: Strictly speaking, we cannot speak of a 'Buddhist psychology' in an analytical system which teaches that there is no 'psyche' (or spirit or soul) which is separate and independent of the process actions in the the mind, per se, but, loosely, speaking, in conventional everyday terms, an analysis of the sequence of actions of the mind is sometimes called 'psychology' for want of a better-designating word.]

If we turn from the *Abhidhamma* to the highest contemporary achievements of non-Buddhist Indian thought in the field of mind and 'soul,' i.e. the early *Upanishads* and the early *Samkhya*, we find that apart from single great intuitions, they teem with mythological ritualistic terms, and with abstract speculative concepts. Against that background the realistic sober and scientific spirit of *Abhidhamma* 'psychology' (or its nucleus extant in the *Sutta* period) must have stood out very strongly. To those who could appreciate the import of that contrast, it will have sufficed to instil that high esteem and admiration for the *Abhidhamma* of which we have spoken.

But even if compared with most of the later 'psychological' teachings of the East or the West, the distance from *Abhidhamma* 'psychology' remains fundamentally the same, for only the Buddha's teaching on mind keeps entirely free from the notions of self, ego, soul, or any other permanent entity in, or behind, mind.

The Anatta-Doctrine

It is on this very doctrine of Non-self (*anatta*) that all *Abhidhamma* thought converges and this is where it culminates. The elaborate and thorough treatment of *anatta* is also the most important 'practical contribution of the *Abhidhamma* to the progress of the Buddha's disciple towards liberation. The *Abhidhamma* provides him with ample material for his meditations in the field of insight (*vipassana*), concerning Impermanence and Impersonality, and this material has been analysed down to the subtlest point and is couched in strictly philosophical language.

There will certainly be many to whom the degree of analytical details found in the *Suttas* will be quite enough for them to understand *anatta*, and sufficient for their use in meditative practice. But there are also minds that require repeated and varied demonstration and illustration of a truth before they are entirely satisfied and convinced. There are also others who wish to push their analysis to the greatest detail possible and to extend it to the very smallest unit accessible; in order to make quite sure that even the realm of the infinitesimal, of the material and psychical 'atoms,' does not hide any self or abiding substance. To such minds the *Abhidhamma* will be of great value. But also those who, in general, are satisfied with the expositions in the *Suttas*, may sometimes wish to investigate more closely a particular point that has roused their interest or presents difficulties. To them too the *Abhidhamma* will prove helpful.

Besides helping such individual cases, the *Abhidhamma* will in general render valuable aid in the slow and difficult change of thought and outlook from the viewpoint of 'self' to that of 'non-self.' Having once grasped intellectually the doctrine of non-self, one can certainly succeed in applying it to theoretical and practical issues if

only one remembers it in time and deliberately directs one's thoughts and volitions accordingly.

But except for such deliberate directing of thought, which in most cases will be relatively rare, the mind will continue to move in the old-accustomed ruts of 'I' and 'mine,' 'self' and 'substance,' which are deeply ingrained in our daily language and our modes of thinking; and our actions too will still continue to be frequently governed by our ancient egocentric impulses.

An occasional intellectual assent to the true outlook of *anatta* will not effect great changes in that situation. The only remedy is for bad or wrong habits of action, speech and thinking to be gradually replaced by good and correct habits until the latter become as spontaneous as the former are now.

It is therefore necessary that right thinking, that is, thinking in terms of *anatta*, is made the subject of regular and systematic mental training until the power of wrong habits of thought is reduced and finally broken. The *Abhidhamma* in general, and in particular the various Triads and Dyads of terms as listed in the *matika*, [or] 'Schedule', of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, provide ample material for such 'fluency exercises' of right thinking. Familiarity with the application of the 'impersonal' viewpoint of the *Abhidhamma* and with the terminology by which it is expressed will exercise a considerable formative influence on the mind.

***Abhidhamma* and Meditation**

A fertile soil for the origin and persistence of beliefs and ideas about a self, soul, god or any other form of an absolute entity, is 'misinterpreted meditative experience' occurring in devotional rapture or mystical trance. Such experience is generally interpreted by the mystic or theologian as revelation of, or union with, a godhead; or it is taken for a manifestation of man's true and eternal Self. Such interpretations are conceived and accepted all the more readily since such meditative experience so greatly transcends the average level of consciousness that the temptation is very great, indeed, to connect it in some way or other with a deity or some other eternal principle. The overwhelming impact of such meditative experience on the mind will produce a strong feeling of certainty of its reality and superiority; and this strong feeling of assurance will be extended to the theological or speculative interpretation, too. In that way these interpretations will obtain a strong hold on the mind, for they are imagined to correspond with actual, irrefutable experience, while, in fact, they are only superimposed on the latter.

The analytical method of the *Abhidhamma* gives immunity against such deceptive interpretations. In the *Dhammasangani* the consciousness of meditative absorption (*jhana*) is subjected to the same sober analysis as the ordinary states of mind. It is shown that meditative consciousness, too, is a transitory combination of impermanent, conditioned and impersonal mental factors, which differ from their counterparts accompanying ordinary consciousness, only in their greater intensity and purity. They do not, therefore, warrant at all any assumption of a divine manifestation or an eternal Self. It has already been mentioned how the Venerable Sariputta undertook such an analysis of his meditative experience.

It is characteristic of the spirit of the Buddha's teaching that the disciple is always advised to follow up his meditative absorption by an analytical retrospection (*paccavekkhana*) on the mental states just experienced, comprehending them by Insight (*vipassana*) as impersonal, evanescent, and therefore not to be adhered to.

By so doing, three main defilements of the mind (*kilesa*) are effectively warded-off, which otherwise may easily arise along with the overwhelming impact of meditative experience on the mind:

- 1) Craving (*tanha*) for these experiences, clinging to them and longing for them for their own sake (*jhana-nikanti*, 'indulgence in *jhana*');
- 2) the False View (*ditthi*) that these meditative experiences imply a self or a deity;
- 3) the Conceit (*mana*) that may arise through having attained these exalted states.

These remarks refer to the division of Buddhist meditation called Development of Tranquillity (*samatha-bhavana*), aiming at the attainment of *jhana*.

Turning now to the Development of Insight (*vipassana-bhavana*), the classificatory terms of the *Abhidhamma* Schedule (*matika*), as explained in the *Dhammasangani*, etc., provide numerous possibilities for including in them the various particular subjects of Insight. By such reference to the triads or dyads of terms in the Schedule a limited subject of Insight can easily be connected with the entire world of actuality, and will thereby gain in significance. Such a particular subject of Insight may either be deliberately chosen from the traditional subjects of meditation (*kammatthana*) or may consist in some incidental occurrence in life.

The latter again may be either some deeply stirring inner or outer experience or it may be quite an ordinary happening of every-day life taken as an object of Right Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension (*sati-sampajanna*), as is often reported of meditating monks of old. The impulse to deep religious commotion (*samvega*) or the stimulation for Insight derived from such incidental events may be easier retained, utilized and extended to general, universal significance, if that event can be referred at once to one of the triads or dyads of *Abhidhammic* terms, which comprise the entire actuality. Thus a single act of penetrative understanding starting from a limited object may acquire such intensity, width and depth as to either lead to, or effectively prepare for, that liberating Insight of which a great Buddhist thinker has said:

'The understanding of one single thing means the understanding of all; the voidness of one single thing is the voidness of all.' - Aryadeva (*Catuhstataka*, v.191).

Knowledge of *Abhidhamma*

A Requirement for the Preacher and Teacher of Dhamma

The preceding pages will have shown the importance of the *Abhidhamma* for clarity of thought, for correct understanding of actuality, and for individual inner progress. Yet, as far as those are concerned whose life is devoted exclusively to the realisation of Deliverance, a knowledge of the *Abhidhamma*, at least in the sense of the seven

books so-called, might well be regarded as optional. But it is different for those who wish to teach and explain the Dhamma to others. Here a familiarity with the *Abhidhamma* is deemed quite indispensable by the Theravada tradition. We read in the *Atthasalini*: 'Only monks who are proficient in *Abhidhamma* can be regarded as 'preachers of Dhamma (*dhammakathika*).' Others, even if they actually engage in preaching, cannot truly be so called. When giving a doctrinal exposition, they may, for instance, mix-up the various kinds of karma and karmic results or the various factors found when analysing body and mind. But those proficient in *Abhidhamma* do not make such mistakes.

Features that make the *Abhidhamma* so important for teachers of the Dhamma are especially these: systematisation of the huge amount of doctrinal material contained in the *Sutta Pitaka*; education in orderly and methodical thinking; clarification of terms; proficiency in, and habituation to, the application of the view-point of ultimate truth (paramattha) to various subjects of thought and situations of life; mastery of doctrinal detail.

The Evaluation of *Abhidhamma* and the Question of its Authenticity

Even in olden days opinions about the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* moved between the extremes of unquestioning veneration and entire repudiation. Very early there were doubts about the authenticity of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* as genuine Buddha word. The early sect of the Sautrantikas regarded, as their name indicates, only *Sutta* and *Vinaya* as canonical, but not the *Abhidhamma*.

It may have been a follower of that sect who is introduced in the *Atthasalini* as criticising the *Abhidhamma* lecture of a monk thus: 'You have quoted, O preacher, a long *Sutta* that seems to girdle Mount Meru. What is the name of it?' - 'It is an *Abhidhamma Sutta*.' - 'But why did you quote an *Abhidhamma Sutta*? Is it not befitting to cite a *Sutta* that has been proclaimed by the Buddha?' - 'And by whom do you think the *Abhidhamma* was proclaimed?' - 'It was not proclaimed by the Buddha.' Thereupon that monk is severely rebuked by the preacher, and after that the *Atthasalini* continues: 'He who excludes the *Abhidhamma* (from the Buddha-Word) damages the Conqueror's Wheel of Dhamma (*jina-cakkam paharam deti*). He excludes thereby the Omniscience of the *Tathagata* and impoverishes the grounds of the Master's Knowledge of Self-confidence' (*vesarajja-nana*) to which Omniscience belongs; he deceives an audience anxious to learn; he obstructs (progress to) the Noble Paths of Holiness; he makes all the eighteen causes of discord appear at once. By so doing he deserves the disciplinary punishment of temporary segregation, or the reproof of the assembly of monks.' This very severe attitude seems somewhat extreme, but it may be explained as a defensive reaction against sectarian tendencies at that period.

The main arguments of Theravada against those who deny the authenticity of the *Abhidhamma*, are as follows:

- 1) The Buddha has to be regarded as the first *Abhidhammika*, because, according to the *Atthasalini*, 'he had already penetrated the *Abhidhamma* when sitting under the tree of Enlightenment.'

2) 'The *Abhidhamma*, the ultimate doctrine, is the domain of the omniscient Buddhas only, not the domain of others' (Asl). These profound teachings are unmistakably the property of an enlightened being, a Buddha. To deny this is as senseless as stealing the horse of a World Ruler, unique in its excellency, or any other possession of his, and showing oneself in public with it. And why? Because they obviously belong to and are befitting for a king (Asl).

Even to non-Buddhists who do not regard the Buddha as an omniscient Enlightened One, but recognize him as a great and profound thinker it should appear improbable that the Buddha would have remained unaware of the philosophical and psychological implications of his teachings, even if he did not speak of them at the very start and to all his followers. Considering the undeniable profundity of the *Abhidhamma*, the world-wide horizons of that gigantic system, and the inexhaustible impulses to thought which it offers - in view of all this - it seems much more probable that at least the basic teachings of *Abhidhamma* derive from that highest intuition that the Buddha calls *Samma-sambodhi*, Perfect Enlightenment.

It appears therefore a quite credible as well as a reasonable and cautious statement when the old Theravada tradition ascribes the fundamental intuitions and the framework of the *Abhidhamma* (not more than that) to the Buddha himself. A quite different question, of course, is the origin of the codified *Abhidhamma* literature as we have it at present. But this problem cannot be dealt with here, and in any case the sources and facts at our disposal do not allow very much to be said about it with any definiteness.

Theravada tradition holds that the Buddha preached the *Abhidhamma* first to the assembled gods of the Tavatimsa heaven, headed by his mother. After that, having returned to earth again, he conveyed the bare method to the Arahata Sariputta. Whatever one may think about this tradition, whether, as the devout Eastern Buddhist does, one regards it as a historical account, or whether one takes it as a significant legend, one fact emerges fairly clearly from it; the originators of this very early tradition did not assume the *Abhidhamma* texts to have been expounded by the Buddha to human beings in the same way and as literally as the *Sutta* texts. If one wishes to give a psychological interpretation to that traditional account, one might say that the sojourn in the world of gods may refer to periods of intense contemplation transcending the reaches of an earth-bound mentality; and that from the heights of that contemplation its fundamental teachings were brought back to the world of normal human consciousness and handed over to philosophically gifted disciples like the Venerable Sariputta.

In a comparative evaluation of *Abhidhamma* and *Sutta* texts, the fact is often overlooked - which, however, has been repeatedly stressed by the Venerable Nyanatiloka-Mahathera - that the *Sutta Pitaka* too contains a considerable amount of pure *Abhidhamma*. This comprises all those numerous *Suttas* and passages where ultimate (*paramattha*) terms are used, expressing the impersonal (*anatta*) or functional way of thinking, for example, when dealing with the *khandhas*, *dhatu*s, *ayatana*s, etc.

One also frequently hears the question asked whether the *Abhidhamma* is necessary for a full understanding of the Dhamma or for final liberation. In this general form,

the question is not quite adequately put. Even in the *Sutta Pitaka* many different methods of practice, many 'gates' to the understanding of the same four Truths and to the final goal, Nibbana, are shown. Not all of them are 'necessary' or suitable in their entirety for all individual disciples, who will make their personal choice among these various methods of approach according to circumstances, inclination and growing maturity. The same holds true for the *Abhidhamma* both as a whole and in its single aspects and teachings.

Concluding Remarks and a Warning

Taking a middle path between overrating or underrating the *Abhidhamma*, we may say: The *Abhidhammic* parts of the *Sutta*, namely the teachings given there in ultimate (*paramattha*) terms, are certainly indispensable for the understanding and practice of the Dhamma; and the additional explanations of these teachings given in the *Abhidhamma* proper may prove very helpful, and in some cases even necessary, for both these purposes.

As to the codified *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, familiarity with all its details is certainly not a general necessity; but if it is studied and knowledge of it is applied in the way briefly indicated in these pages, this will surely richly enhance a true understanding of actuality and aid the work of liberation. Also, if suitably presented, the *Abhidhamma* can provide for philosophical minds a stimulating approach to the Dhamma that will prove helpful to them provided they take care to compensate it adequately with the practical aspects of the Dhamma.

Such an approach to the Dhamma should certainly not be blocked by the wholesale disparagement of *Abhidhamma* study sometimes found nowadays among Buddhists of the West, and even of the East. Dangers of one-sided emphasis and development lurk not only in the *Abhidhamma* but also in other ways of approach to the Dhamma, and they cannot be entirely avoided until a very high level of harmonious integration of mental qualities has been attained (cf. the 'Balance of the Five Spiritual Faculties'; *indriya-samata*).

To be sure, without an earnest attempt to apply the *Abhidhamma* teachings in such ways as intimated above, they may easily become a rigid system of lifeless concepts. Like other philosophical systems, the *Abhidhamma* can very easily lead to dogmatic and superstitious belief in words, for example, to the opinion that one really knows something about an object of cognition if one tacks a conceptual label on to it. The study of the *Abhidhamma* should therefore not be allowed to degenerate to a mere collecting, counting and arranging of such conceptual labels. In that way, *Abhidhamma* study (but, of course, not the *Abhidhamma* itself) would become just one more among the many existing intellectual 'play-things' which serve as an escape from facing stark reality, or as a 'respectable excuse' with which to try and evade hard work for one's own inner progress towards liberation, for which purpose alone the *Abhidhamma* is meant. A merely abstract and conceptual approach to the *Abhidhamma* may also lead to that kind of intellectual pride which often goes together with specialised knowledge.

If these pitfalls are avoided, there is a good chance that the *Abhidhamma* may again become a living force which stimulates thought and aids the meditative endeavour for

the mind's liberation. To achieve that, it is necessary, however, that the *Abhidhamma* teachings, which are extremely condensed in parts, are not merely accepted and transmitted verbally, but that they are carefully examined and contemplated in their philosophical and practical implications. This again requires the devotion of searching and imaginative minds; and as they will have to work on neglected and difficult ground, they should not lack the courage to make initial mistakes, which can be rectified by discussion and constant reference to the teachings of the *Sutta Pitaka*.

As to the relation of the teachings of the *Abhidhamma* to those of the *Sutta Pitaka*, two very apt comparisons given in a conversation by the late Venerable Pelene Vajiranana, Maha-Nayakathera of Vajirarama, Colombo, may be added, in conclusion:

The *Abhidhamma* is like a powerful magnifying-glass, but the understanding gained from the *Suttas* is the eye itself, which performs the act of seeing. Again, the *Abhidhamma* is like a medicine container with a label giving an exact analysis of the medicine; but the knowledge gained from the *Suttas* is the medicine itself which alone is able to cure the illness and its symptoms, namely craving rooted in ignorance, and the suffering caused by it.

(From the book: *Abhidhamma Studies: Researches in Buddhist Psychology*)

BuddhaNet Edition 1996

We hope the Venerable Nyanaponika's explanation helps the reader to gain a broader understanding the purpose of the *Abhidhamma* and why and how it needs to be applied.

With this in mind, it will be beneficial to, now, start with a good, authoritative introductory exposition illustrating the *Abhidhamma* method; and, — as good luck would have it — there is just such a text which was written with the guidance and encouragement of Bhante Gunaratana and Bhikkhu Bodhi through the auspices of the Washington Vihaara.

The following text, which will help to guide us towards an essential understanding of the Dhamma, may be found in the BPS Wheel Series Book No. 322-323.

The *Abhidhamma* in Practice

by

Dr.N.K.G. Mendis

Preface

This book is not a synopsis of the *Abhidhamma* which, in itself, comprises seven volumes of the Pali Canon. Here, some aspects of the *Abhidhamma* have been related to practice. If this little book helps the reader to appreciate that the teachings of the Enlightened One are never mere theories but always stand to reason and can be verified in the crucible of his or her experience, then its purpose will have been served.

Introduction

Namo Sammaasambuddhassa
Namo Saddhammassa
Namo Buddhasanghassa

Homage to the Supremely Enlightened One
Homage to the Sublime Teaching
Homage to the Buddha's Community of Monks

The *Abhidhamma* forms the third part of the Pali Canon, the *Tipi.taka*. The other two parts are the *Vinaya Pi.taka*, the code of discipline for monks and nuns, and the *Sutta Pi.taka*, which contains the Buddha's discourses. The word "*Abhidhamma*" means the higher teaching because it treats subjects exclusively in an ultimate sense (*paramatthasacca*), differing from the *Sutta Pi.taka* where there is often the use of expressions valid only from the standpoint of conventional truth (*vohaarasacca*).

In the *Abhidhamma* the philosophical standpoint of the Buddha is given in a pure form without admixture of personalities, anecdotes, or discussions. It deals with realities in detail and consists of numerous classifications. These may at first discourage the prospective student. However, if one perseveres one will be able to derive much benefit in life-situations from the practical application of the knowledge gained through study of the *Abhidhamma*.

Origins

Theravaada tradition holds that the Buddha conceived the *Abhidhamma* in the fourth week after his enlightenment, while still sitting in the vicinity of the Bodhi tree. Tradition also has it that he first preached the *Abhidhamma* to the assembly of deities in the Taavati.msa heaven; his mother, reborn as a deity, was present in the assembly. This can be taken to mean that the Buddha, by intense concentration, transcended the earth-bound mentality and rose mentally to the world of the deities, a feat made possible by his attainment of higher powers (*abhiññaa*) through utmost perfection in mental concentration. Having preached the *Abhidhamma* to the deities, he returned to earth, that is, to normal human consciousness, and preached it to the venerable Saariputta, the arahant disciple most advanced in wisdom.

From ancient times doubts have been expressed as to whether the *Abhidhamma* was really taught by the Buddha. What is important for us is to experience the realities described in the *Abhidhamma*. Then one will realize for oneself that such profound truths can emanate only from a source of supreme enlightenment, from a Buddha. Much of what is contained in the *Abhidhamma* is also found in the *Sutta Pi.taka* and

such sermons had never been heard by anyone until they were uttered by the Buddha. Therefore those who deny that the source of the *Abhidhamma* was the Buddha will then have to say that the discourses also were not uttered by the Buddha. At any rate, according to the *Theravaada* tradition, the essence of the *Abhidhamma*, the fundamentals, the framework, is ascribed to the Buddha. The tabulations and classifications may have been the work of later scholars. What is important is the essence; it is this we should try to experience for ourselves.

The question is also raised whether the *Abhidhamma* is essential for Dhamma practice. The answer to this will depend on the individual who undertakes the practice. People vary in their levels of understanding and spiritual development. Ideally, all the different spiritual faculties should be harmonized, but some people are quite content with devotional practice based on faith, while others are keen on developing penetrative insight.

The *Abhidhamma* is most useful to those who want to understand, who want to know the Dhamma in depth and detail. It aids the development of insight into the three characteristics of existence—(i) impermanence, (ii) unsatisfactoriness, and (iii) no-self. It will be found useful not only during the periods devoted to formal meditation, but also during the rest of the day when we are engaged in various chores. When we experience realities then we are deriving benefit from the study of the *Abhidhamma*. A comprehensive knowledge of the *Abhidhamma* is further useful to those engaged in teaching and explaining the Dhamma to others.

The Ultimate Realities

The *Abhidhamma* deals with realities existing in an ultimate sense, called in Pali *paramattha dhammaa*. There are four such realities:

1. *Citta*, mind or consciousness, defined as that which knows or experiences an object. *Citta* occurs as distinct momentary states of consciousness.
2. *Cetasikas*, the mental factors that arise and occur along with the *cittas*.
3. *Ruupa*, physical phenomena, or material form.
4. *Nibbaana*.

Citta, the *cetasikas*, and *ruupa* are conditioned realities. They arise because of conditions and disappear when their conditions cease to sustain them. Therefore they are impermanent. *Nibbaana* is an unconditioned reality. It does not arise and therefore does not fall away. These four realities can be experienced regardless of what name we give them. Any other thing — within ourselves, or without, past, present, or future, coarse or subtle, low or lofty, far or near — is a concept and not an ultimate reality.

Citta, *cetasikas*, and *nibbaana* are also called *naama*. The two conditioned *naamas*, *citta* and *cetasikas*, together with *ruupa* make up *naama-ruupa*, the psycho-physical organism. Each of us, in the ultimate sense, is a *naama-ruupa*, a compound of mental and material phenomena, and nothing more. Apart from these three realities that go to form the *naama-ruupa* compound there is no ego, self, or soul.

The *naama* part of the compound is what experiences an object. The *ruupa* part does not experience anything. When the body is injured it is not the body, which is *ruupa*, which feels the pain, but *naama*, the mental side. When we are hungry it is not the stomach that feels the hunger but again the *naama*. However, *naama* cannot eat the food to ease the hunger. The *naama*, the mind and its factors, makes the *ruupa*, the body, ingest the food. Thus neither the *naama* nor the *ruupa* has any efficient power of its own. One is dependent on the other; one supports the other. Both *naama* and *ruupa* arise because of conditions and perish immediately, and this is happening every moment of our lives.

By studying and experiencing these realities we will get insight into: (1) what we truly are; (2) what we find around us; (3) how and why we react to what is within and around us; and (4) what we should aspire to reach as a spiritual goal.

The Cittas

Awareness is the process of *cittas* experiencing objects. For a *citta* to arise it must have an object (*aaramma.na*). The object may be a color, sound, smell, taste, something tangible, or a mental object. These are the six external objects. Strictly speaking a mental object can be an internal phenomenon, such as a feeling, a thought, or an idea, but as forming the objective sphere of experience they are all classed as external. Corresponding to these external objects there are six internal sense faculties, called "doors" since they are the portals through which the objects enter the field of cognition. These are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.

Each of the five physical sense faculties can receive only its appropriate object; the mind door, however, can receive both its own proper mental objects as well as the objects of the five physical senses. When a door receives its object, there arises a corresponding state of consciousness, such as eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc. The union of the object, the door or sense faculty, and the consciousness is called "contact" (*phassa*). There can be no awareness without contact. For contact to occur, all three components must be present — object, door, and consciousness. If one is missing there will be no contact. The process of the arising of consciousness and the subsequent train of events is analyzed in detail in the *Abhidhamma*. A study of this analysis will show that only "bare phenomena" are taking place and that there is no "self" involved in this process. This is the no-self characteristic of existence.

The Arising of the Cittas

Cittas are classified in various ways. One such classification is according to their nature (*jaati*). In this classification we have:

1. *Cittas* which are resultant states of consciousness, *vipaaka*, the effects of previous kamma.
2. *Cittas* which are causes for action (*kamma*) through body, speech, or mind. We may call these "causative *cittas*." A wholesome *citta* (*kusala citta*) will issue in wholesome action and an unwholesome one (*akusala citta*) in unwholesome action.
3. *Cittas* which are neither kamma nor its result. These are called *kiriya cittas*. They are kammically ineffective, being merely functional. Some *kiriya cittas*

perform simple functions in the process of consciousness; others represent the actions and thoughts of arahants, who no longer generate fresh kamma.

When we see a form, hear a sound, smell, taste, or touch, it is a *vipaaka citta*, a resultant-consciousness that functions as the actual sense-consciousness. This *citta* is the result of some previous kamma. Thus, for example, when we hear an unpleasant sound, the ear-consciousness which actually hears the sound is the result of an unwholesome deed (*kamma*) previously done by that continuum of experience called a "person"; it is an *akusala-vipaaka citta*. If one sees a pleasant sight it is the result of a wholesome deed; the eye-consciousness that sees it is a *kusala-vipaaka citta*. This is a "bare phenomenon" that is taking place and there is no power that can stop the arising of this resultant *citta*. However, this resultant *citta*, having arisen, perishes in a moment.

To be aware of the momentariness of this *vipaaka citta* is of great practical importance. If one does not recognize the disappearance of this *citta* — and this can be done only by the practice of mindfulness — then subsequent cognitive processes having the same object as the *vipaaka citta* (which has already passed) can occur in the mind-door, bringing defilements into play. If the *vipaaka citta* had an unpleasant object, aversion can arise; and if the *vipaaka citta* had a pleasant object, attachment can arise. To make spiritual progress one should try to avoid the arising of those causative *cittas* associated with either aversion or attachment, which are both unwholesome mental factors building up further unwholesome kamma.

Mindfulness of the instant perishing of the *vipaaka citta* after it has arisen is of immense practical value. Only one *citta* can exist at a time. Thus the *citta* with mindfulness, occurring through the mind-door, taking the perished *vipaaka citta* as its object, will prevent the arising of causative unwholesome *cittas* that lead to future suffering.

When the mind is not experiencing objects through the five sense doors — the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body — it can still be active through the "mind door," taking as its object either something previously experienced through the five sense doors, recently or long ago, or some idea or image peculiar to itself. Past experiences are registered in the life-continuum (*bhava"nga*) in a subliminal form, where from time to time they can surface through the mind-door to serve as objects for the *citta*.

Kammically active *cittas* can follow this mental activity and, here, again, the practice of mindfulness — that is, being aware that there is thinking — will prevent the arising of unwholesome causative *cittas*. On the other hand, if mindfulness is absent there can be unwholesome mental activity, such as longing for things of the past, worry, remorse, regret, grudge, and doubt.

Cittas exhibit certain other interesting features which are dealt with in the *Abhidhamma*. Some of these are as follows:

Association with "roots." *Cittas* may be associated with certain mental factors called "roots" (*hetu, muula*), or they may be dissociated from roots. The former kind of *cittas* are called *sahetuka cittas*; the latter *ahetuka cittas*; these are, respectively, rooted and rootless states of consciousness. The roots are particular mental factors

(*cetasikas*) that arise together with the *citta*, often giving it a determinate ethical quality. Because the *citta* and its constituent factors, the *cetasikas*, arise together and because both have the same object and base, it is difficult to appreciate the subtle differences in their characteristics unless one's mindfulness and insight are very sharp.

There are six roots. Three are kammically unwholesome (*akusala*); the other three may be either kammically wholesome (*kusala*) or indeterminate (*abyaa-kata*), depending on the type of consciousness they arise in. The unwholesome roots are greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). The three roots which are wholesome in some *cittas* and indeterminate in others are greedlessness (*alobha*), hatelessness (*adosa*), and undeludedness (*amoha*). Though these last three roots are expressed negatively they have positive manifestations. Greedlessness manifests as generosity and renunciation, hatelessness as loving-kindness, and undeludedness as wisdom or understanding.

In the ordinary unenlightened worldling these six roots can occur in various combinations. When one enters the path leading to enlightenment, the unwholesome roots are eradicated in stages until final emancipation is achieved. For the arahant, the liberated one, the *cittas* that arise in him can no longer be associated with any unwholesome roots. The *cittas* that the arahant experiences are neither wholesome nor unwholesome; as he does not generate any further kamma, his *cittas* are exclusively indeterminate. These indeterminate *cittas* can be functional (*kiriya*), as on occasions when he is mentally active, or resultants (*vipaaka*) when he is experiencing the effects of past kamma or abiding in the meditative attainment of fruition.

For spiritual progress it is important to be aware of the roots associated with the *citta* that we are experiencing at any particular moment. This is possible only by the practice of mindfulness as expounded in the *Mahaa Satipa.t.thaana Sutta*. This awareness helps us get rid of the unwholesome roots and cultivate the wholesome roots. This practice will enable one to purify moral virtue, to develop concentration, and to achieve insight.

Association with feeling. *Cittas* differ according to the feeling associated with them. Every *citta* has a concomitant feeling, but the quality of this feeling differs from *citta* to *citta*. Some *cittas* are accompanied by a pleasant feeling (*sukhaa vedanaa*), some by a painful feeling (*dukkhaa vedanaa*), some by an indifferent feeling (*upekkhaa vedanaa*).

It is important to recognize the feeling that accompanies each *citta*, for feelings serve as a condition for defilements to arise. The mind's natural tendency is to develop attachment to a pleasant feeling and aversion to an unpleasant one. Any attachment will eventually cause suffering; for everything within and around us is impermanent, so when inevitable separation takes place, if there is attachment the result will be sorrow, lamentation, and despair. Aversion, apart from giving further nourishment to the unwholesome roots, is a totally futile response. We cannot change the essentially unsatisfactory nature of *sa.msaara*, but we can alter our reactions to our experiences in *sa.msaara*.

Therefore, the sanest attitude would be neither to get attached to anything pleasant nor react with aversion to anything displeasing. This would be an attitude of indifference.

Indifference, however, is of two kinds. One is the callous indifference which is a total disregard for one's own well-being and that of others. This type of indifference is born of the unwholesome roots and obviously should not be cultivated by the spiritual seeker. The other type of indifference is a highly refined mental state which might be better referred to as equanimity. This attitude, born of wisdom pertaining to the real nature of phenomena, is an attitude of mental calmness amidst all the vicissitudes of life. This is the kind of indifference that we must try to cultivate.

Prompted and unprompted cittas. A prompted *citta* (*sasankhaarika citta*) is an act of consciousness that arises either as a result of deliberation and premeditation on one's own part or through the inducement of another. If it is an unwholesome *citta* resulting in unwholesome action, then the result of such action will rebound on the agent in proportion to the degree of deliberation involved; for the one who induced it, his unwholesome *cittas* will also rebound on him, causing him future suffering. Therefore it is important not only that one should refrain from unwholesome deeds oneself, but that one also refrain from inciting others to perform such deeds.

If the prompted *citta* is a wholesome one resulting from one's own wise consideration, the actions issuing from such a *citta* will bear good results for the doer; if it was induced by one with good intentions, his wholesome *cittas* will bring good results for him. Therefore, whenever possible, we should not only foster our own welfare by performing wholesome deeds but whenever possible should also try to bring out the goodness in others.

An unprompted *citta* (*asankhaarika-citta*) is one which arises spontaneously, without deliberation or premeditation on our own part and without inducement by others. These unprompted *cittas*, too, may be unwholesome or wholesome.

There are some people in whom greed and hate are so strong that the *cittas* that arise in them need no prompting from within or without. They spontaneously cling to what they think they possess and try to enhance their belongings by exploiting others. They do not know what generosity is, they are quick to criticize others; if they get a chance they will destroy everything that stands in the way of their attempts to boost their own ego. On the other hand, there are others who give willingly and joyfully, who do not hesitate to help their needy fellow beings, and who will even risk their own lives to save those in distress.

These diverse characters — the misers, tyrants, murderers, heroes, and benefactors — are what they are because of their past tendencies built up in previous lives. However, the law of kamma and its fruit prevails at all times and a change can occur for the better or worse, as in the cases of Angulimaala and Devadatta. The former started off as a vicious murderer but later became an enlightened saint; the latter, the Buddha's cousin, entered the Order as a monk but later attempted to kill the Buddha and take control of the Sangha himself.

Mind in its passive and active forms

The mind occurs in both passive and active modes. The passive gives way to the active when a stimulus is received through one of the sense doors. The passive state of mind is called *bhava"nga*, *cuti*, or *paa.tisandhi* according to the occasion.

Bhava"nga. The *bhava"nga citta*, mentioned earlier, is the primary form of mind. It flows from conception to death except when interrupted by a stimulus through one of the sense doors. When a stimulus enters, consciousness becomes active, launching into a thought process (*citta viithi*). Thought processes have been analyzed in great detail in the *Abhidhamma*.

A complete thought process, occurring through the physical sense doors, is made up of seventeen thought moments (*citta kha.na*). These are:

1. A *bhava"nga* that flows by in a passive state when one of the five physical sense organs comes in contact with its object (*atiita bhava"nga*).
2. A *bhava"nga* that vibrates for one thought moment (*bhava"nga calana*).
3. A *bhava"nga* that cuts off the flow (*bhava"nga upaccheda*).
4. A *citta* that turns towards the object through the sense door that has been stimulated (*pañcadvaara-vajjana*).
5. The appropriate sense consciousness; in the case of the eye, for example, eye consciousness (*cakkhu viññāna*).
6. Next a thought moment — the *sampa.ticchana citta* — which has the function of receiving the object.
7. When the object has been received another thought moment, called the *santiirana citta*, arises, performing the function of investigating the object.
8. The act (*kamma*) itself, especially if it was a weighty one.

9 to 15.

The object having been determined, the most important stage from an ethical standpoint follows. This stage, called *javana*, consists of seven consecutive thought moments all having an identical nature. It is at this stage that good or evil is done, depending on whether the *cittas* have wholesome or unwholesome roots. Therefore, these *javana* thought moments have roots and also produce new *kamma*.

16 and 17.

Following the seventh *javana* the registering stage occurs, composed of two thought moments called *tadaalambane*. When the second registering *citta* has perished, the *bhava"nga* follows, flowing on until interrupted by another thought process.

These thought moments follow one another in extremely rapid succession; each depends on the previous one and all share the same object. There is no self or soul directing this process. The process occurs so rapidly that mindfulness has to be alert and brisk to recognize at least the determining thought moment — the *vottapana* — so that one can govern the *javana* thought moments by wholesome volition.

When the mind-door receives a mind-object, the sequence of events is a little different from that occurring through the physical senses. The mind-door-adverting *citta* is the same type of *citta* as the determining moment — the *votthapana* — that arises in a sensory process. This mind-door-adverting thought moment can cognize an object previously seen, heard, smelt, tasted or touched, thus making memories possible. Since the mind-object here has already been received and investigated, these functions need not be performed again and the mind-door-adverting thought moment gives way

immediately to the *javanas*. These are, again, of great ethical significance. For example, unpleasant words previously heard can suddenly come to mind and, unless proper mindfulness (*sammaa sati*) is practiced, call up *javana citta*s rooted in hatred, i.e., unwholesome kamma.

The mind at the time of death

When a person is about to die, the *bhava"nga* is interrupted, vibrates for one moment and passes away. The interruption is caused by an object which presents itself to the mind-door. As a result of this a mind-door-adverting *citta* arises. This is followed by five *javana* thought moments which are weak, lack reproductive power, and serve only to determine the nature of rebirth consciousness. The *javanas* may or may not be followed by two registering thought moments (*tadaalambana*). After this comes the death consciousness (*cuti citta*), which is identical in constitution and object to the *bhava"nga citta*. The *cuti citta* merely serves the function of signaling the end of life. It is important to appreciate the difference between the *cuti citta* and the *javanas* that precede it. The *cuti citta* is the end of the *bhava"nga* flow of an existence and does not determine the nature of rebirth. The *javanas* that occur just before the *cuti citta* arises form a kammic process and determine the nature of the rebirth consciousness.

The object that presents itself to the mind-door just before death is determined by kamma on a priority basis as follows:

1. Some weighty action performed earlier by the dying person. This may be meritorious such as a *jhaanic* ecstasy, or it may be demeritorious, some heinous crime. Either of these would be so powerful as to eclipse all other kammās in determining rebirth. This is called *garuka kamma*.
2. If there is no such weighty action, what has been done habitually — either good or bad — will ripen. This is called *aaci.n.na kamma*.
3. If habitual kamma does not ripen what is called death-proximate kamma fructifies. In this case the thought that was experienced at the time of a good or bad action in the recent past recurs at the time of death. This is referred to as *aasanna kamma*.
4. If the first three are lacking, some stored-up kamma from the past will ripen. This is called *ka.tatta kamma*.

Dependent on one of the above mentioned four types of kamma, the object that presents itself to the mind-door could be one of three kinds:

1. The act (*kamma*) itself, especially if it was a weighty one.
2. Some sign of the act (*kammanimitta*); for example, a butcher may see a knife, a hunter may see a gun or the slain animal, a pious devotee may see flowers at a shrine or the giving of alms to a monk.
3. A sign of the place where the dying person will be reborn (*gati nimitta*), a vision of heaven, hell, etc.

This brief account of what will happen to us at death should impress on us the urgency of avoiding all evil acts by deed, word or thought and of performing wholesome meritorious acts. If we do not do so now, we cannot do so at the moment

of death, which may come quite unexpectedly. As the *Dhammapada* states in verses 288 and 289:

There are no sons for one's protection,
Neither father nor even kinsmen;
For one who is overcome by death
No protection is to be found among kinsmen.

Realizing this fact,
Let the virtuous and wise person
Swiftly clear the way
That to nibbaana leads.

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Rebirth Consciousness

This is called *pa.tisandhi citta*, literally "relinking consciousness." The *pa.tisandhi citta* is the act of consciousness which arises at the first moment of life, the moment of conception. It is determined by the last kammic *citta* of the preceding life.

This kammic factor for the arising of a being operates through the *pa.tisandhi*. The accumulated tendencies of past lives are carried on to the *pa.tisandhi* and so the process of being born, dying and being born again goes on. Each *pa.tisandhi citta* is a new one, not the continuation of the old one in the previous life. Thus there is no place for a soul concept in rebirth. In the course of one particular life there is only one *pa.tisandhi citta*. Once the function of linking two existences has been performed by the *pa.tisandhi*, consciousness in the newly formed embryo immediately goes into the *bhava"nga* state. This flows along in the new existence with infinite interruptions by various stimuli and ends as the *cuti citta* of that particular existence.

The practice of chanting Buddhist scriptures in the presence of a dying person is intended to evoke *kusala kamma citta*s in him so that the last thought process will be a wholesome one and lead to a favorable rebirth.

Regardless of the conditions into which humans are born, be they handicapped or favored in various ways, birth in the human plane is the result of *kusala kamma*. It is only in the human plane that one can make a start to end all suffering. The Buddha has told us that, having left this human existence, not many will return to it for a long, long time. Therefore, it is up to us to make the most of this opportunity we have as human beings.

The *Jhaana citta*s

The *citta*s that occur through the five physical sense doors, and the mind-door *citta*s taking sense objects, belong to the sensuous plane of consciousness. They are called *kaamaavacara citta*s. The *jhaana citta*s are meditative states of consciousness. Their object is not a sense impression but a meditation object experienced through the mind-door. The *jhaana citta* may depend on subtle materiality (*ruupaavacara citta*) or, if more refined, may be independent of materiality (*aruupaavacara citta*).

There are five stages of *ruupa jhaana* and *four of aruupa jhaana*. No attempt will be made to analyze these stages except to state that each is more refined than its predecessor.

It is extremely difficult to attain even the first stage of *jhaana*. To do so one has to be well established in virtue (*siila*) and eliminate the five mental hindrances, at least temporarily. These five hindrances are: sense desire (*kaamacchanda*), ill-will (*vyaapaada*), sloth and torpor (*thiina and middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca and kukkuccha*), and doubt (*vicikicchaa*).

Though difficult, it is well worth attempting to attain *jhaana* by regular and ardent practice of *samatha bhaavanaa*, i.e., concentration-meditation. Even if we do not reach the first stage of *jhaana*, even a brief elimination of the five mental hindrances will give us a taste of a happiness which far surpasses that derived from the senses. When restlessness, anxiety and worry try to overwhelm us in our daily lives, we will benefit by sitting for a period and developing concentration. We will realize that nothing is more satisfying than the ability to keep a check on the frivolous, fickle mind.

Lokuttara cittas

The word *lokuttara* is derived from *loka* and *uttara*. In this context *loka* refers to the five aggregates; *uttara* means beyond. Thus *lokuttara* applies to those states of consciousness that transcend the world of mind and body, i.e., they are supra-mundane.

These states of supra-mundane consciousness are possessed by those who have developed insight into the three aspects of existence — impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and no-self. As a result of this insight, such a person passes beyond the level of a worldling (*puthujjana*) and becomes a Noble One (*ariya puggala*). With this transformation there is a radical change in the person's life and nature because a determinate number of defilements are totally eradicated, never to arise again. These defilements go to form the ten fetters (*sa.myojanaa*) that bind a person down to the wheel of existence. They are eradicated in stages as one becomes, in succession, a stream-winner (*sotaapanna*), once-returner (*sakadaagaami*), non-returner (*anaagaami*) and arahant. We shall refer to these states of supra-mundane consciousness again when we discuss nibbaana.

The Cetasikas

The second reality or *paramattha dhamma* is the *cetasikas*. The *cetasikas* are the mental factors or concomitants that arise and perish together with consciousness (*citta*), sharing its object and basis.

The *Abhidhamma* lists 52 kinds of *cetasikas*. One is feeling (*vedanaa*), another is perception (*sañña*). The remaining 50 are grouped together under the term *sa"nkhaaraa*.

Feeling (*vedanaa*)

In the *Abhidhamma* context the word "feeling" signifies the affective experience of an object; it does not imply emotion, which comes under a different heading. Feeling is associated with every type of consciousness. Like the *citta* itself it is of momentary duration, arising and perishing in an instant. This arising and perishing occur in rapid succession, so much so that they create an illusion of compactness and stability obscuring the momentariness. But the momentariness can be experienced through the practice of mindfulness.

It will then be realized that there is no self or agent that experiences the feeling. There is only the arising and disappearing of an impersonal process. As long as we do not see how this impersonal process occurs we will be led to believe that feeling is the self, or the self possesses feeling, or feeling is in the self, or the self is in feeling. These beliefs keep us bound to suffering — to sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair.

Feelings are commonly classified into three types: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. Pleasant feeling, in the absence of wise consideration (*yoniso manasikaara*) leads to attachment; unpleasant feeling to repugnance; and neutral feeling to ignorance. A pleasant feeling is pleasant while it lasts but when it changes, as it must, it yields to displeasure — i.e., an unpleasant feeling. An unpleasant feeling is unpleasant while it lasts, but when it passes a shallow satisfaction arises which misleads the average person into thinking: "Now, I am all right." A neutral feeling, in the absence of wise attention, can foster ignorance and a callous indifference to one's own and others' welfare. If, however, one has developed wholesome awareness based on insight, when a neutral feeling arises, the mind remains in equanimity, undisturbed in all circumstances. This balanced state of mind is one of the highest forms of happiness.

Relevant to the *Abhidhamma*, two other classifications of *vedanaa* must be mentioned.

Five Kinds:

1. bodily agreeable feeling — *kaayikaa sukhaa vedanaa (sukha)*
2. bodily disagreeable feeling — *kaayikaa dukkhaa vedanaa (dukkha)*
3. mentally agreeable feeling — *cetasikaa sukhaa vedanaa (somanassa)*
4. mentally disagreeable feeling — *cetasikaa dukkhaa vedanaa (domanassa)*
5. indifferent or neutral feeling — *adukkha-m-asukhaa vedanaa (upekkhaa)*

Six Kinds:

Feelings born of eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact and mind-contact.

Perception (*sañña*)

Perception is awareness of an object's distinctive features. It becomes six-fold in relation to the five physical sense objects (color, sound, smell, taste, touch), and mental objects. It is *sañña* that enables us to recognize an object previously perceived.

As in the case of feeling, perception is an impersonal process which arises and perishes in a moment. If the momentariness and impersonal nature of perception are not appreciated by insight, here again, wrong conceptions will result that perception is the self, or the self possesses perception, or perception is in the self, or the self is in perception.

There are four perversions (*vipallaasa*) that distort perception — the perversions of regarding:

1. What is impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent (*nicca*)
2. What is unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) as pleasant or happiness-yielding (*sukha*)
3. What is without self (*anatta*) as self (*atta*)
4. What is impure (*asubha*) as pure (*subha*)

These distortions [which are] born of ignorance increase craving, grasping and suffering. Only by the practice of mindfulness can one see through these perversions and avoid them.

Perception and memory. Memory occurs not through a single factor but through a complex process in which perception plays the most important role. When the mind first cognizes an object, through the senses, perception "picks out" the object's distinctive mark. When the same object is met with on a subsequent occasion, perception again notices that its distinctive mark is identical with the previous one. It "grasps" the identity of the distinctive marks. This "grasping" is a complex series of thought processes, one of which connects the present object with the previous one and another attaches to the present object the previous one's name. Memory will be good if this "grasping" functions well and "grasping" will function well if the initial "picking out" of the object's distinctive marks was clear, not obscured by irrelevant thoughts. Clear perception comes through attention.

As the Buddha says: "In what is seen there must be just the seen, in what is heard there must be just the heard, in what is sensed there must be just the sensed, in what is thought there must be just the thought."

Sa'nkhaaraa

Sa'nkhaaraa is a collective term for the other fifty *cetasikas*. These fall into four groups:

1. Universal mental factors (*sabba citta saadhaaranaa*)
2. Particular mental factors (*paki.n.nakaa*)
3. Unwholesome mental factors (*akusalaa*)
4. Beautiful mental factors (*sobhanaa*)

The universal mental factors. There are seven mental factors which are called universals because they are common to every state of consciousness. Two are feeling and perception mentioned above. The order in which the other five are given has no sequential significance as they all co-exist in any state of consciousness. They are:

1. Contact (*phassa*), the coming together of the sense organ, object, and appropriate consciousness.
2. Concentration (*ekaggataa*), the mental focus on one object to the exclusion of all other objects.
3. Attention (*manasikaara*), the mind's spontaneous turning to the object which binds the associated mental factors to it.
4. Psychic life (*jiivitindriya*), the vital force supporting and maintaining the other mental factors.
5. Volition (*cetanaa*), the act of willing. From a psychological standpoint, volition determines the activities of the associated states; from an ethical standpoint it determines its inevitable consequences. Volition leads to action by body, speech and mind and thus becomes the principal factor behind kamma. Therefore the Buddha said: "*cetanaaha.m bhikkhave kamma.m vadaami*" — "Volition, O monks, is kamma, I declare." Thus wholesome or unwholesome acts, willfully done, are followed at some time by their appropriate consequences. But if one unintentionally steps on an insect and kills it, such an act has no moral or kammic significance as volition is absent. The Buddha's position here contrasts with that of his contemporary, Niga.n.tha Naataputta, the founder of Jainism. Naataputta taught that even involuntary actions constitute kamma, thus release from *sa.msaara* (the round of rebirths) can be achieved only by abstaining from all activities.

The particular mental factors. Six mental factors are called particulars for, unlike the universals, they need not exist in every *citta*. The six are:

1. Initial application (*vitakka*), which applies the other mental factors to the object when attention has brought it into range.
2. Continued application (*vicaara*), which makes the mental factors dwell on the object.
3. Resolution (*adhimokka*), which prevents the mental factors from wavering and makes a decision.
4. Effort (*viriya*), which energizes the mental factors and opposes idleness.
5. Joy (*piiti*), which creates an interest in the object, giving the mind buoyancy.
6. Wish-to-do (*chanda*), the desire to act, the wish to achieve an aim.

The universals and particulars are, in themselves, ethically indeterminate but become wholesome, unwholesome, or neither, depending on the state of consciousness in which they occur.

The unwholesome mental factors. There are fourteen unwholesome mental factors. The first four listed below are present in all unwholesome states of consciousness. The others are variable.

1. Delusion (*moha*) is synonymous with ignorance regarding the Four Noble Truths.

2. Shamelessness of evil (*ahirika*) is lack of conscience, not as a mysterious inner voice, but as abhorrence towards evil.
 3. Fearlessness of evil (*anottappa*) is moral recklessness resulting from ignorance about the moral law.
 4. Restlessness (*uddhacca*) is a state of excitement that characterizes all unwholesome acts, contrasting with the peace that accompanies wholesome acts.
 5. Attachment (*lobha*), synonymous with craving, is one of the three unwholesome roots, occurring in both gross and subtle forms.
 6. False view (*di.t.thi*) is seeing things in a distorted way. There are several kinds of false views:
 - i. the view of a truly existent self (*sakkaaya di.t.thi*);
 - ii. eternalism (*sassata di.t.thi*) or nihilism (*uccheda di.t.thi*);
 - iii. the view denying the efficacy or fruits of kamma (*natthi di.t.thi*), causality (*ahetuka di.t.thi*), and the moral law (*ahiriya di.t.thi*).
 7. Conceit (*maana*) is self-evaluation which arises from comparing oneself with another as better, equal or inferior.
 8. Hatred (*dosa*), another unwholesome root, is a negative response to the object ranging from a slight aversion to destructive rage.
 9. Envy (*issaa*) is the inability to endure the prosperity of others; this is associated with hate.
 10. Selfishness (*macchhariya*) is the wish to exclude others from one's own prosperity; this too is associated with hate.
 11. Worry (*kukkucca*) is remorse, brooding, and repenting over evil acts done in the past or good acts left undone.
 12. & 13. Sloth (*thiina*) and torpor (*middha*): this pair indicates laziness or boredom, a frequent hindrance to spiritual progress.
14. Doubt (*vicikiccha*) is the undecided frame of mind.

The beautiful mental factors. There are twenty-five beautiful factors. Nineteen are common to all beautiful thoughts, six are variable. The latter are the three "abstinence factors," two "illimitables," and the wisdom factor.

The common beautiful factors (sobhanaa saadhaaranaa) are as follows:

1. Confidence (*saddhaa*), also called faith, which for a Buddhist means trust in the Three Jewels — the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, and in the principles of the Buddha's teachings.
2. Mindfulness (*sati*): this is alertness, which makes us aware of what is happening to us, from moment to moment, through the five physical senses and the mind. Mindfulness is essential to insight meditation, when it must be conjoined with a clear comprehension of the suitability, purpose, and conformity with reality of any action. Then it is called right mindfulness (*sammaa sati*). Usually the average person acts without any form of mindfulness; his acts are prompted by force of habit. Right mindfulness has two functions: one is to increase the power of recollection and the other is to evaluate what is wholesome and what is unwholesome. Right mindfulness is a spiritual faculty that maintains a proper balance of the other faculties — faith, energy, concentration and wisdom.

3. & 4. Shame of evil (*hiri*) and fear of evil (*ottappa*) are the opposites of the second and third unwholesome mental factors, already discussed.
5. Non-attachment (*alobha*) restrains attachment and fosters generosity.
6. Good-will (*adosa*) is synonymous with loving kindness (*metta*). It keeps a person free from resentment and anger.
7. Equanimity (*tatramajjhataa, upekkhaa*) is balance of mind, a quality of neutrality free from attachment and repulsion.
8. -19. The other twelve common beautiful factors fall into six pairs, one member affecting the "body" of mental factors (*kaaya*), the other affecting consciousness as a whole (*citta*). The six are as follows, the terms themselves indicating their nature:
 - i. composure (*passaddhi*) of the mental factors and consciousness
 - ii. buoyancy (*lakhutaa*) of the mental factors and consciousness
 - iii. pliancy (*mudutaa*) of the mental factors and consciousness
 - iv. efficiency (*kammaññataa*) of the mental factors and consciousness
 - v. proficiency (*paguññataa*) of the mental factors and consciousness
 - vi. rectitude (*ujukataa*) of the mental factors and consciousness

The abstinence factors (virati) restrain a person from committing evil acts. These are three in number:

20. Right speech (*sammaa vacaa*) is abstinence from lying, slandering, abusive language, and idle talk.
21. Right action (*sammaa kammantaa*) is abstinence from killing, taking what is not given, and wrong conduct with regard to sense pleasures.
22. Right livelihood (*sammaa aajiiva*) is abstinence from any livelihood that brings harm to other living beings.

The illimitable factors (appamañña) are compassion and sympathetic joy; they are called illimitable because they are boundless and extend to all living beings.

23. Compassion (*karu.naa*) has the nature of being moved by the suffering of others. The sadness we might experience over the suffering or loss of a loved one is not true compassion. Such sadness is sentimental, a manifestation of grief. Real compassion arises when the mind, detached from self-referential concerns, is stirred by the suffering of others, feeling the suffering as its own.
24. Sympathetic joy (*muditaa*) has the nature of rejoicing in other's happiness. Usually people rejoice at the success of someone who is near and dear to them, but it is rare for them to rejoice when success and prosperity are enjoyed by someone unknown, not to speak of an adversary. *Muditaa* embraces all beings and cannot coexist with the unwholesome mental factor of jealousy.

Compassion and sympathetic joy, together with goodwill and equanimity, form the Four Sublime Abodes (*brahma vihaara*). Goodwill and equanimity were mentioned under the common beautiful factors.

25. *The wisdom factor (pañña)* enables one to see things as they truly are, that is, in the light of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness.

It is important to know the unwholesome and wholesome mental factors that operate in our minds. If we do not know them for what they are we will not be able to recognize them when they arise. But when our insight develops, we can understand that it is not a "self" that commits unwholesome and wholesome acts but just these mental factors.

In Dhamma practice our aim should be to get rid of the unwholesome factors and cultivate the wholesome ones. This has been outlined by the Buddha under Right Effort (*samma vaayaama*), the fifth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, in terms of four practices. The disciple rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts the mind, and strives to:

- a. prevent the arising of unarisen evil, unwholesome thoughts;
- b. abandon evil, unwholesome thoughts that have arisen;
- c. produce wholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen;
- d. maintain wholesome factors that have arisen and not let them disappear, but bring them to growth, maturity and full perfection of development.

Regarding the unwholesome thoughts, to prevent them from arising or to abandon them as soon as they have arisen, we have to be mindful of the state of the mind, i.e., whether the mind is with greed, hate and delusion or not. By the constant practice of mindfulness we can learn to catch the unwholesome mental factors as soon as they arise. This mere recognition is often enough to prevent them from gaining ground, from leading to action by deed, word or thought. If this is done on a regular basis, these unwholesome thoughts can become attenuated and eventually cease.

Sometimes, however, unwholesome thoughts keep recurring and mere observation of the state of the mind may not be enough to deal with them. In such situations there are five methods proposed by the Buddha, described in the 20th Middle Length Discourse (*Majjhima Nikaaya*), [MN 20](#). These are, briefly, as follows:

- a. to give one's attention to a different object of a wholesome nature;
- b. to reflect on the danger in those unwholesome thoughts;
- c. to try not to give any attention to them;
- d. to give attention to the removal of the source of those thoughts;
- e. to clench the teeth, press the tongue against the palate and restrain, subdue, and suppress the mind with the mind.

Meditation is an important aspect of Buddhist practice. There are forty subjects of *samaadhi* meditation to suit different individual temperaments and also many types of insight meditation. To select a suitable subject of meditation it is best to seek the help of a competent teacher. If such a teacher is not available, then one has to make a sincere and honest search of one's temperament and character and find guidance in a standard book on meditation. A few examples are given below:

1. The four sublime abodes — loving kindness for those with ill will; compassion for those with a streak of cruelty; sympathetic joy for those with envy, jealousy, aversion, and boredom; equanimity for those with lust and greed.

2. For the conceited: meditation on the absence of an abiding self in all bodily and mental phenomena of existence.
3. For those with sexual obsession: meditation on the unattractive nature of the body.
4. For those with wavering confidence: meditation on the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.

The ultimate aim should be to develop wisdom (*pañña*). This is achieved by insight meditation (*vipassanaa bhaavanaa*), which leads to fully comprehending by direct experience the three characteristics of existence — impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness.

Ruupa

The third reality or *paramattha dhamma* is *ruupa*, matter or material form. In its analysis of matter the *Abhidhamma* recognizes twenty-eight kinds of material phenomena. Four of these are called primary, twenty-four secondary. The secondary kinds are dependant on the primary.

The four primary elements (*cattaari mahaa bhuutaani*)

These are metaphorically referred to under their ancient names but signify distinct properties of matter:

1. The Earth element (*pa.thavi dhaatu*) = solidity
2. The Water element (*aapo dhaatu*) = adhesion
3. The Fire element (*tejo dhaatu*) = heat
4. The Wind element (*vaayo dhaatu*) = motion

There is no unit of matter that does not contain these four elements in varying proportions. The preponderance of one element over the other three gives the material object its main characteristic.

The solid element gives consistency to matter varying from hardness to softness. The more predominant the solid element, the firmer [is] the object. This is also the element of extension by virtue of which objects occupy space. It has the function of supporting the other material phenomena.

The adhesion element has a cohesive function. It holds the particles of matter together and prevents them from scattering. It predominates in liquids because, unlike solids, liquids unite when brought together. This adhesion element is intangible.

The heat element accounts for an object's temperature. An object is hot or cold depending on the amount of heat element. This element has the function of maturing or vitalizing. It accounts for preservation and decay.

The motion element imparts motion and causes expansion and contraction.

In the *Mahaa Raahulovaada Sutta* ([MN 62](#)) the Buddha explains these four elements in concrete terms to his son, the Venerable Raahula. He says:

"The earth element may be internal (i.e., referable to an individual) or it may be external. Regarding the internal, whatever is hard, solid, or derived therefrom, such as hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, and various organs, is the earth element. Whatever is an internal earth element and whatever is an external earth element, is just earth element.

"The water element may be internal or external. Regarding the internal, whatever is liquid and derived therefrom, such as bile, phlegm, pus, and blood is the water element. Whatever is an internal water element and whatever is an external water element is just water element.

"The fire element may be internal or external. Regarding the internal, whatever is heat, warmth, and derived therefrom, such as that by which one is vitalized, consumed, or burnt up, and that by which the ingested food is digested, this is the fire element. Whatever is an internal fire element and whatever is an external fire element is just fire element.

"The wind element may be internal or external. Regarding the internal, whatever is motion, wind, and derived therefrom, such as the winds going up and down, winds in the belly, winds that shoot across the limbs, inbreathing and outbreathing, is the wind element. Whatever is an internal wind element and whatever is an external wind element is just wind element."— [MN 62](#)

In this sutta the Buddha also describes the space element (*aakaasa dhaatu*) which, he says, may likewise be internal or external: "Regarding the internal, whatever is space, spacious and derived therefrom, such as the different orifices and cavities in the body, is the space element. Whatever is the internal space element and whatever is the external space element is just space element."

It will be noted that in each instance the Buddha pointed out a fundamental identity between the internal and the external elements. The significance of this will be discussed later.

The secondary elements (*upaadaaya ruupaani*)

The twenty-four secondary elements are divided into two groups. Like the four primary elements, fourteen are directly caused (*nipphanna*). These are essentially particles of matter. The other ten are indirectly caused (*anipphanna*). These are only the properties of the directly caused elements and are not particles of matter. Therefore, this classification covers both the physical and functional aspects of matter.

Directly caused secondary elements comprise the following:

1. Five sensory receptors (*pasaada ruupaani*): the sensory matter of the eye (*cakkhu pasaada*), ear (*sota pasaada*), nose (*ghaana pasaada*), tongue (*jivhaa pasaada*), and body (*kaaya pasaada*).
2. Four stimulation elements (*gocara ruupaani*): color (*va.n.na*), sound (*sadda*), odor (*gandha*), and taste (*rasa*). Tactile sensation is not mentioned in this group because, unlike the others, tactile sense is not a unique sensory element

but three of the four primary elements — solidity, heat and motion — which account for the object's pressure, texture, heat and resistance. The exception is the element of adhesion which is far too subtle to create any tactile impression. Whereas tactile stimuli evoke either pain or pleasure, the other four stimuli arouse only a neutral feeling.

3. Two sex elements (*bhaava ruupaani*): the male (*purisa bhaava*) or the female (*itthi bhaava*), which comes into being at the moment of conception determining the person's sex. This sex determination is related to kamma.
4. The heart or mind-base element (*hadaya vatthu*): in the Buddha's time the view was held that the heart forms the seat of consciousness. The Buddha never accepted or rejected this theory. He referred to the basis of consciousness indirectly as: *ya.m ruupa.m nissaaya* — "that material thing depending on which mind-element and mind-consciousness-element arise." Since mind and matter are inter-dependent, it is reasonable to conclude that by the phrase "that material thing" the Buddha intended any tissue in the body that can function as a basis for consciousness, except those serving as the basis for sensory consciousness. We can understand it as the living nerve cell.
5. The life element (*jiivitindriya*): just as the psychic life faculty, one of the universal mental factors, vitalizes the mind and its factors, the physical life faculty vitalizes the organic matter of the body. Born of kamma, it is reproduced from moment to moment. Both psychic life and physical life cease with death.
6. The nutriment element (*aahaara ruupa*): is the nutritive essence which sustains the body.

Indirectly caused secondary elements are:

1. The space element (*aakaasa dhaatu*): this is what keeps the material units apart and prevents their fusion. It is not an objective reality but a concept that results from the coming into being of the material units.
2. Two intimating elements (*viññatti*): these are bodily intimation (*kaaya viññatti*) and verbal intimation (*vaci viññatti*), responsible respectively for bodily communication and verbal communication. They are called "intimation" because they make possible communication between beings. These two elements occur seventeen times more rapidly than the other physical elements, being equal in duration to a thought unit. In physiological terms they probably correspond to nerve impulses.
3. Three alterable elements (*vikaara ruupaani*):
 - a. buoyancy (*lahutaa*)
 - b. pliancy (*mudutaa*)
 - c. efficiency (*kammaññataa*)

These elements are responsible for health, vigor and activity of the body. They are brought about by wholesome thought, moderation in eating habits and favorable climate.

4. Four phase elements (*lakkha.na ruupaani*):
 - a. initial arising (*upacaya*)
 - b. subsequent genesis (*santati*)
 - c. decay (*jarataa*)

d. ceasing (*aniccataa*)

These are stages in the life duration of an element in a continual process of change.

The Arising of Material Form (*samu.t.thaana*)

The material elements never occur in isolation but in groups or clusters called *kalaapas*. A *kalaapa* can contain from eight to thirteen material elements. There is no cluster of matter without at least eight elements, the four primary elements and four secondary elements — namely color, taste, smell, and nutriment. A unit containing only these is called a Pure Octad.

Material phenomena arise through four causes: kamma, consciousness, heat, and nutriment.

1. Kamma conditions the physical organism at conception. At the moment of conception three *kalaapas* are generated through kamma — the decads of sex, body, and the mind-base. The sex decad (*bhaava dasaka*) has the essential octad plus the sex element, either male or female, and the life element. The body decad (*kaaya dasaka*) is made up of the essential octad plus the element of bodily sensitivity and the life element. The mind-base decad (*vatthu dasaka*) is made up of the essential octad plus the mind-base element and the life element. After the embryo has been formed through these three decads, from about the eleventh week of gestation onwards, the decads of the other four sense organs begin to form. Kamma causes and sustains these material phenomena through the whole course of life.
2. Consciousness (*citta*). The mind can not only influence matter but also produce material phenomena. Psychosomatic illnesses like duodenal ulcers, high blood pressure, and asthma indicate such operations. Other examples are levitation, telekinesis, and fire-walking. In the normal course of events, consciousness is responsible for volitional bodily action and speech, the postures, respiration, production of sweat and tears, and the three alterable elements — buoyancy, pliancy, and efficiency.
3. Heat (*utu*). The heat element (*tejo*), one of the four primaries present in all clusters of matter, can itself cause different kinds of matter to arise, both simple octads and more complex formations.
4. Nutriment (*aahaara*). The nutriment element (*ojaa*), present in all clusters, when supported by external nutriment, has the capacity to produce different kinds of material phenomena which in turn have reproductive power. These begin to arise from the time the mother's nutriment circulates in the fetus. This nutritive element is one of the causes of long life.

Decay of Material Form (*jaraa*)

The proximate cause of aging or decay is the maturing of matter, which occurs through the continuing action of the heat element on the *kalaapas* generated at various times. There are two forms of decay. One, which is invisible, occurs continuously in each cluster from its arising to its ceasing. The other, which is visible, manifests itself as decrepitude, brokenness of the teeth, gray hair, wrinkled skin, etc. Material decay is

paralleled by a failing of the sense faculties and the dwindling of the life span as the Buddha points out in the *suttas*.

Death of Material Form

Like decay, death too has two forms. One is the continual dissolution of matter which is invisible; the other is the visible form of death (*mara.na*), characterized by the vanishing of the life element, the heat element and consciousness.

Physical death may be due to one of the following four causes:

1. Exhaustion of the reproductive karmic energy (*kammakkhaya*). The reproductive (*janaka*) kamma is responsible for the arising and continuation of the material phenomena essential to life. When the reproductive kamma is exhausted, the production of these vital phenomena ceases and death results.
2. Expiration of the life span (*aayukkhaya*). Life in different planes of existence has its own maximum duration. When this maximum is reached, death occurs even if the reproductive karmic force is not exhausted. Any reproductive kamma left unexpended will re-materialize a new life in the same plane.
3. Simultaneous exhaustion of the reproductive karmic energy and the expiration of the life span (*ubhayakkhaya*).
4. The interference of a stronger opposing kamma (*upacchedaka kamma*), which obstructs the flow of the reproductive kamma, causing death before the life term expires. This cause accounts for sudden "untimely" deaths, seen especially in children.

The first three causes are responsible for "timely" deaths (*kaala mara.na*), the fourth for "untimely" deaths (*aakaala mara.na*). The four may be illustrated by the extinguishing of an oil lamp, which may be due to any of four causes: exhaustion of the wick, exhaustion of the oil, simultaneous exhaustion of both wick and oil, or some extraneous cause like a gust of wind.

The Five Groups (*pañcakkhandha*)

The word *khandha* means group, mass, or aggregate. The Buddha often described a "person" as a composite of the five groups of existence. He qualified the description with the term *upaadaana*, meaning "grasping" or "clinging." So we have the term *pañcuupaadaanakkhandha*, translated as "the five groups of existence which form the objects of clinging." The five are:

1. Corporeality group (*ruupakkhandha*)
2. Feeling group (*vedanaakkhandha*)
3. Perception group (*saññaakkhandha*)
4. Mental formation group (*sa"nkhaarakkhandha*)
5. Consciousness group (*viñña.nakkhandha*)

The Buddha described each group as being connected with the *aasavas*. An *aasava* is a canker, taint, corruption, intoxicant, or bias. There are four *aasavas*, namely that of sense desire (*kaamaasava*), desire for existence (*bhavaasava*), wrong views (*di.t.thaasava*), and ignorance (*avijjaasava*).

It must be emphasized that these five groups do not exist in their totality simultaneously. They form a classificatory scheme filled only by single members that are evanescent and occur in various combinations at any particular time. The Buddha illustrated the emptiness and insubstantial nature of each group by comparing corporeality to a lump of froth, feeling to a bubble, perception to a mirage, mental formations to a coreless plantain stem and consciousness to a conjuring trick ([SN 22.95](#)).

Materiality and Meditation

Earlier we saw that the Buddha stressed the uniformity of the four great primary elements by stating that the internal and external both share the same nature. He then said: "By means of perfect intuitive wisdom it should be seen as it really is, thus: 'this is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'" This instruction shows that there is nothing special about this body we are accustomed to think of as "mine" and sometimes believe to be a special creation. It is, in essence, the same as the outer material world.

The Venerable Saariputta, one of the Buddha's two chief disciples, makes the same point in a different way.¹

Having described the four great primary elements as the Buddha did, he then declares that there comes a time when each of the external elements gets agitated and destroyed, so "what of this short lived body derived from craving?"

When the solid element in the body gets agitated, all kinds of growths form, from a wart to a cancerous tumor. When the fluid element is agitated, dropsy results — swelling [results] due to an accumulation of fluid. The heat element causes fever, frostbite, etc.; the wind element flatulence and colic. The geologist tries to find the reasons for physical disturbances and the medical researcher the causes for bodily disorders. But, wherever the four primary elements are found, agitation is, too, and the result is dis-ease — a state of disorder. Regarding the space element, the Venerable Saariputta said: "Just as, dependent on stakes, creepers, grass and clay, space is enclosed and the designation 'a dwelling' is used, in the same way, dependent on bones, sinews, flesh, and skin, space is enclosed and the designation 'material form' (body) is used."

The parts of the body also serve as a subject of meditation. Such meditation gives understanding of the body's nature without morbidity or fascination. The contemplation of the body mentions thirty-two parts — none of which, considered separately, is the least bit attractive, not even the hair, skin, nails, and teeth, which are generally tended for personal beautification. Though a man considers a woman to be beautiful on account of her "lovely hair," if he should find one of her hairs in his breakfast cereal, he will find it repulsive rather than attractive. Since none of these parts has beauty of its own, it is impossible that they can make an attractive whole. The meditation on the parts of the body aims to dispel the common perverted perception (*sañña vipallaasa*) of seeing the unattractive as attractive. It is practiced not to repress desires or to build up an emotional revulsion but solely to help us understand the body's nature.

Another meditation, the analysis of the body into the four primary elements, helps to dispel the delusion of the body's compactness. The *Mahaasatipa.t.thaana Sutta* gives a simile of a butcher who, having slaughtered a cow and cut it into various parts, sits at the junction of four high roads. The butcher, the commentary explains, thinks in terms of a "cow" even after the animal has been slaughtered, as long as he sees the carcass on the floor. But when he cuts up the carcass, divides it into parts, and sits at the cross-roads the "cow percept" disappears and the perception "meat" arises. He does not think he is selling "cow" but "meat." In the same way, if one reflects on the body by way of the elements, the "person-percept" will disappear, replaced by the perception of the elements.

Once an elderly householder named Nakulapitaa approached the Buddha and said: "Venerable Sir, I am an old man, far-gone in years, I have reached life's end, I am sick and always ailing." He wanted the Buddha to instruct and advise him. The Buddha said: "So it is, householder, so it is, householder! Your body is sick and cumbered! Householder, he who, carrying this body around, would consider that it is healthy even for a moment, what else is he but a fool? Therefore, householder, this is how you must train yourself: 'My body may be sick but my mind shall not be sick.' Thus, householder, should you train yourself."

Pondering on these incontrovertible truths about the body will help us:

1. To get rid of complexes, whether superior or inferior, relating to the body.
2. To adopt a sensible attitude towards it, neither pampering it nor molesting it.
3. To regard its fate — decay, disease, and death — with realism and detachment.
4. To gain insight into the no-self (*anatta*) aspect of all phenomena.

Planes of Existence

According to the *Abhidhamma* there are thirty-one planes of existence, only two of which are commonly visible to us: the animal and human planes. In order to understand the nature of the other planes of existence it is necessary to:

- a. dispel the notion that there is something special in human beings that is not found in other forms of sentient life;
- b. dispel the delusion that there exists even a minute degree of stability or compactness in the psycho-physical complex referred to as a "being";
- c. accept that a human being is a group of five aggregates each of which is evanescent and devoid of any substantiality;
- d. realize that in certain planes of existence one or more of the aggregates may not be manifest; and
- e. realize that these planes do not exist at different physical heights, from an abysmal purgatory to a heaven in the sky, but appear in response to our kamma. Most do not appear to us because of variations in spatial dimensions, relativity of the time factor, and different levels of consciousness.

The thirty-one planes of existence go to form *sa.msara*, the "perpetual wandering" through the round of birth and death we have been caught in with no conceivable beginning. These planes fall into three main spheres:

1. The sense desire sphere (*kaama loka*)
2. The fine material sphere (*ruupa loka*)
3. The immaterial or formless sphere (*aruupa loka*).

The sense desire sphere (*kaama loka*) comprises eleven planes as follows:

- A. Four planes of misery:
 - a. *niraya* — hell (1)
 - b. *asura yoni* — demons (2)
 - c. *peta yoni* — here the beings have deformed bodies and are usually consumed by hunger and thirst (3)
 - d. *tiracchaana yoni* — the world of animals (4)

Rebirth into these planes takes place on account of unwholesome kamma. Beings reborn there have no moral sense and generally cannot create good kamma. However, when the unwholesome kamma that brought them to these planes is exhausted, some stored-up good kamma can bring them rebirth in some other plane. Only stream-enterers and other ariyans can be sure they will never again be born in these planes of misery.

- B. The human plane — birth in this plane results from good kamma of middling quality. This is the realm of moral choice where destiny can be guided. (5)
- C. Six heavenly planes:
 - a. *caatummaaraajika* — deities of the four quarters (6)
 - b. *taavati"msa* — realm of the 33 devas (7)
 - c. *yaama* (8)
 - d. *tusita* — realm of delight (9)
 - e. *nimmaanarati* — deities who enjoy their creations (10)
 - f. *paranimmita-vasa-vatti* — deities controlling the creations of others (11).

Birth into these heavenly planes takes place through wholesome kamma. These devas enjoy aesthetic pleasures, long life, beauty, and certain powers. The heavenly planes are not reserved only for good Buddhists. Anyone who has led a wholesome life can be born in them. People who believe in an "eternal heaven" may carry their belief to the deva plane and take the long life span there to be an eternal existence. Only those who have known the Dhamma will realize that, as these planes are impermanent, some day these sentient beings will fall away from them and be reborn elsewhere. The devas can help people by inclining their minds to wholesome acts, and people can help the devas by inviting them to rejoice in their meritorious deeds.

The fine material sphere (*ruupa loka*) consists of sixteen planes. Beings take rebirth into these planes as a result of attaining the *jhaanas*. They have bodies made of fine matter. The sixteen planes correspond to the attainment of the four *jhaanas* as follows:

- A. Three as a result of attaining the first *jhaana*:
 - a. *brahma parisajjaa* — realm of Brahma's retinue (12)
 - b. *brahma purohitaa* — realm of Brahma's ministers (13)
 - c. *mahaa brahmaa* — realm of great Brahmaa (14).

- B. Three as a result of attaining the second *jhaana*:
 - a. *parittaabhaa* — realm of minor luster (15)
 - b. *appamaanaabhaa* — realm of infinite luster (16)
 - c. *aabhassaraa* — realm of radiant luster (17).
- C. Three as a result of attaining the third *jhaana*:
 - a. *paritta subhaa* — realm of minor aura (18)
 - b. *appamaanasubhaa* — realm of infinite aura (19)
 - c. *subha ki.nhaa* — realm of steady aura (20)
- D. Two as a result of attaining the fourth *jhaana*:
 - a. *vehapphalaa* — realm of great reward (21)
 - b. *asaññasattaa* — realm of mindless beings who have only bodies without consciousness. Rebirth into this plane results from a meditative practice aimed at the suppression of consciousness. Those who take up this practice assume release from suffering can be achieved by attaining unconsciousness. However, when the life span in this realm ends, the beings pass away and are born in other planes where consciousness returns. (22)
- E. Five as a result of attaining the fruit of non-returning (*anaagaamiphala*), the third level of sanctity:
 - a. *avihaa brahmaa* — the durable realm (23)
 - b. *atappaa brahmaa* — the serence realm (24)
 - c. *sudassaa brahmaa* — the beautiful realm (25)
 - d. *sudassii brahmaa* — the clear-sighted realm (26)
 - e. *akani.t.thaa brahmaa* — the highest realm (27).

These five realms, called *suddhaavaasaa* or Pure Abodes, are accessible only to those who have destroyed the lower five fetters — self-view, sceptical doubt, clinging to rites and ceremonies, sense desires, and ill-will. They will destroy their remaining fetters — craving for fine material existence, craving for immaterial existence, conceit, restlessness and ignorance — during their existence in the Pure Abodes. Those who take rebirth here are called "non-returners" because they do not return from that world, but attain final nibbaana there without coming back.

The immaterial or formless sphere (aruupa loka) includes four planes into which beings are born as a result of attaining the formless meditations:

- a. *aakaasaanañcaayatana* — sphere of infinity of space (28)
- b. *viññaa.nañcaayatana* — sphere of infinity of consciousness (29)
- c. *aakiñcaññaayatana* — sphere of nothingness (30)
- d. *neva — sañña — naasaññaayatana* — sphere of neither perception or non-perception (31).

Many may doubt the existence of these planes, but this is not surprising. Such doubt was known even in the Buddha's time. The *Sa"myutta Nikaa* (II, 254; SN 19.1) records that once, when the venerable Lakkhana and the venerable Mahaa Moggallaana were descending Vulture's Peak Hill, the latter smiled at a certain place. The venerable Lakkhana asked the reason for the smile but the venerable Mahaa Moggallaana told him it was not the right time to ask and suggested he repeat the

question in the Buddha's presence. Later when they came to the Buddha, the venerable Lakkhana asked again. The venerable Mahaa Moggallaaana said:

"At the time I smiled I saw a skeleton going through the air. Vultures, crows and hawks followed it and plucked at it between the ribs while it uttered cries of pain. It occurred to me: 'How strange and astonishing, that a being can have such a shape, that the individuality can have such a shape!'"

The Buddha then said: "I too had seen that being but I did not speak about it because others would not have believed me. That being used to be a cattle butcher in Rajagaha."

The question may be asked how we can develop supernormal hearing and supernormal vision so as to perceive sounds and sights beyond normal range. To understand how, we must consider three factors: spatial dimensions, the relativity of time, and the levels of consciousness. Every object in our plane of existence must possess at least four dimensions.

The first three are length, width, and depth. It is as if a point were to first trace a line giving length, then turn-off at a level angle giving area, then turn off at a vertical angle giving volume. Each deviation from course brings not only a change of direction but also a new dimension with new attributes. But these three dimensions are not exhaustive, for no object is totally static. Even an object apparently still will reveal, at an atomic level, a turbulent mass of activity.

Therefore, a fourth dimension is necessary — time. The dimension of time turns "being" into "becoming" — a passage through the phases of past, present, and future. Our sense of the passage of time does not depend on "clock time," but results from the activity of the senses and the mind. The incessant arising and passing of thoughts is sufficient to give a cue to time's movement. Even in the absence of sensory stimulation the flow of thoughts would create the sense of time and keep us geared to this plane of existence.

But if thoughts could be stilled, as they are in the higher *jhanaas*, the sense of time would cease to exist. A different kind of awareness would replace it — a level of awareness expanded far beyond the one we are tied-to under ordinary conditions.

This new awareness can be called the fifth dimension. As in the case of the other four dimensions, this new one would add a new dimension, a new direction, and new attributes. For such an expanded awareness sounds and sights would be perceived, unknown and inaccessible to us locked up in our limited sense of time.²

Causality

The *Abhidhamma* teaches us that:

- a. there are natural laws which govern the universe (*niyaama dhammaa*);
- b. our mental and physical states arise dependent on causes — dependent origination (*pa.ticca samuppaada*); and

- c. conditioning and influencing relationships exist between these effects and their causes (*paccaya*).

The Natural Laws

The Buddhist texts recognize five laws holding sway over the natural order.

- a. *Physical inorganic law (utuniyaama)*. This law governs inorganic processes, working through variations in heat to bring about changes in the body and the outer world. In the body it governs decay and illness, in the outer world wind and rain, the regular sequence of seasons, differences of climate, etc.
- b. *Physical organic law (biijanyaama)*. This law operates in both the animal and vegetable kingdoms to account for heredity, genetics, and the tendency of like to beget like.
- c. *Law of kamma (kammaniyaama)*. Kamma is volitional action, bodily, verbal, or mental. Such action produces a result appropriate to itself. The result is not a reward or punishment meted out by some overseer but an inherent consequence of the action itself. Good actions bring happiness, bad actions bring suffering.
- d. *Law of the mind (cittaniyaama)* governs the order of consciousness and mental processes and also makes possible such feats as telepathy, telekinesis, clairvoyance, clairaudience, and recollection of past lives.
- e. *Law of the dhamma (dhammaniyaama)* accounts for the phenomena that occur at the last birth of a *bodhisatta* and also the happenings during the life and at the death of the Buddhas.

Dependent Origination

The doctrine of dependent origination shows that the sentient being is nothing but a flow of mental and physical phenomena which arises and continues in dependence on conditions. The layout of these conditions brings to light the cause of suffering and shows how suffering can be ended.

The doctrine is based on the following principle:

When **THIS** is present, there is **THAT**.

With the arising of **THIS**, **THAT** arises.

When **THIS** is not present, there isn't **THAT**.

With the cessation of **THIS**, **THAT** ceases.

Dependent origination is set forth in a series of relations:

1. Dependent on ignorance there are activities (*avijjaapaccayaa sa"mkhaaraa*);
2. Dependent on activities there is consciousness (*sa"mkhaarapaccayaa viññaa.na"m*);
3. Dependent on consciousness there is mentality-materiality (*viññaa.napaccayaa naama-ruupa"m*);
4. Dependent on mentality-materiality there are the six bases (*naamaruupapaccayaa sa.laayatana"m*);

5. Dependent on the six bases there is contact (*sa.laayatanapaccayaa phasso*);
6. Dependent on contact there is feeling (*phassapaccayaa vedanaa*);
7. Dependent on feeling there is craving (*vedanaapaccayaa ta.nhaa*);
8. Dependent on craving there is clinging (*ta.nhaapaccayaa upaadaana"m*);
9. Dependent on clinging there is becoming (*upaadaanapaccayaa bhavo*);
10. Dependent on becoming there is birth (*bhavapaccayaa jaati*);
11. Dependent on birth there is old age and death (*jaatipaccayaa jaraa mara.na"m*).

The sequence of events covered by the doctrine falls into three existences — the immediately past, the present, and the future one. The first two factors in the sequence refer to the past life, the last two to the future life, and the rest to this present existence. However, these events intersect, so the factors assigned to the past and future existences also can be found in the present. The doctrine indicates how and why we came into this present existence and where we came from, confuting two erroneous interpretations of our nature and destiny:

- a. that there is a soul, either uncreated or of divine origin, lasting eternally into the future; and
- b. that we came into existence from nowhere and face nothing but annihilation at death.

Dependent on ignorance there are activities. From an inconceivable beginning we have performed activities of body, speech, and mind dominated by ignorance. Ignorance is lack of insight into the Four Noble Truths. Any volitional action performed through ignorance becomes kamma with a potential to react, to bring about rebirth, and other consequences in accordance with the kammic law. Only the arahant, who has ended ignorance, can perform volitional acts without forming kamma.

Dependent on activities there is consciousness. After death the five aggregates disintegrate but kamma remains with its potential intact. This residual kamma helps form the embryo in the new existence. It is responsible for the rebirth consciousness, the first *citta* of the new life. The ovum and the sperm constitute the body of the embryo, kamma contributes the mind and mental functions. A kamma formation of the previous existence manifests itself as the passive consciousness which, from the very first moment of conception, receives all the potentialities resulting from past volitional actions. No consciousness passes over from one existence to the next but the stream of consciousness goes on, a flux, constantly becoming.

Dependent on consciousness there is mentality-materiality. The union of the ovum, sperm and rebirth consciousness brings the mental-material compound into being. Mentality (*naama*) signifies the mental factors conscent with passive consciousness — feeling (*vedanaa*), perception (*sañña*), volition (*cetanaa*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikaara*). Materiality (*ruupa*) comprises the four primary elements of matter and their derivatives, described earlier. It must be noted that kamma plays a role in the arising of materiality too. At the moment of conception kamma generates three units of matter: the decads of sex, body, and the mind basis. In the course of life kamma causes and sustains the functioning of the senses and vitality. Rebirth consciousness is a conscent condition for the arising of materiality. Thereafter, consciousness conditions materiality via a number of relationships, to be given in the

section on conditioning relationships below. Thus mentality and materiality are mutually dependent.

Dependent on mentality-materiality there are the six bases. Once generated and nourished by the mother, the embryo starts to grow. As it grows it acquires four other physical sense bases — the eye, ear, nose, and tongue. The body base appeared at conception as did the sixth sense organ, the mind-base (a collective term for all forms of consciousness).

Dependent on the six sense bases there is contact. Each physical sense base can be stimulated only by its appropriate sense object, i.e., eye-base by forms, ear-base by sounds, nose-base by smells, tongue base by tastes, and the tactile-base by touch. The mind-base can be stimulated by any thought or idea whether past, present, future, or timeless, whether real or imaginary, sensuous or abstract. When the sense base is stimulated, conditions are present for the appropriate consciousness to arise. The combination of the three — base, object, and consciousness — is called "contact."

Dependent on contact there is feeling. When contact is made with an object through the senses, feeling must also arise. Contact is a conascent condition feeling. The feeling may be agreeable, disagreeable, or neither. It is through feeling that we reap the results of previous kamma. Since kamma resultants differ from one person to another we each experience different feelings.

Dependent on feeling there is craving. Craving is of three kinds — craving for sense pleasures (*kaamata.nhaa*), craving for existence (*bhavata.nhaa*), and craving for non-existence (*vibhavata.nhaa*). We crave pleasant sensations experienced through the senses. When one pleasant object passes, as it must, we seek another, thirsting for a new pleasant sensation to replace the old. So the search goes on as craving knows no satiation. Besides pleasures, we also crave existence. In our ignorance we believe there is an abiding self within. Thence we strive and struggle to preserve this self and to provide it with the best conditions. But, at times, we also crave non-existence, as when in a mood of dejection we wish for annihilation, thinking death to be the end. Even if this craving does not become so drastic, it still springs up as the desire to destroy the causes of our distress.

Dependent on craving there is clinging. Clinging is an intensified form of craving. It has the nature of grasping and takes on four forms:

- a. clinging to sense pleasures (*kaam'uaadaana*);
- b. clinging to wrong views, principally eternalism and nihilism (*di.t.th'uaadaana*);
- c. clinging to rites and rituals (*siilabbat'upaadaana*); and
- d. clinging to a doctrine of self (*attavaad'upaadaana*). This is the most tenacious form of clinging, abandoned only when the stage of stream-entry is attained.

Dependent on clinging there is becoming. Clinging conditions volitional activities, unwholesome and wholesome, which set the stage for a new existence where they can ripen.

Dependent on becoming there is birth. The unexhausted kammic activities of this life bring about birth into a new existence, finding appropriate conditions to manifest themselves.

Dependent on birth there is old age and death. Once a person is born, decay and death inevitably follow, bringing in their trail sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair.

In order to cure any disease its cause must be known and removed. All other treatments are symptomatic. The Buddha taught dependent origination to point out the cause of suffering and to show how it can be uprooted.

To end suffering the cycle of causal origination must be broken at the right link. We cannot end suffering by destroying the psycho-physical organism we inherited as a result of past kamma; this is not the answer to the problem. We cannot prevent the contact of the senses with their objects nor [prevent] the arising of feeling from contact. But our reactions to the feelings we experience, that is different, that is something we can control. We can control them through wisdom. If we understand the feelings, which arise, to be momentary and without a self, we will not react to them with craving. Thus the right link in the sequence that can be broken is the link between feeling and craving. Suffering ends with the destruction of craving.

The complete destruction of craving is a formidable task. But, though difficult, it can be approached by degrees. Craving can be gradually weakened and this will start us on the path towards the ideal. The less we crave, the fewer the disappointments; the less the suffering, the greater the peace. In the Four Noble Truths the Buddha teaches us all we need to know: the cause of suffering is craving; the way to achieve this is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path.

Modes of Conditioning

Buddhism teaches that all phenomena, mental and physical, arise through conditions. In the *Abhidhamma* the modes of conditionality are analyzed into twenty-four types of relationship, each representing a tie between a condition and the phenomena it conditions. A brief account of these is as follows:

1. *Root condition (hetu paccaya).* The three unwholesome roots — greed, hate, and delusion — are root conditions for their associated unwholesome mental states and the material form they originate. Likewise, for the wholesome and indeterminate states — greedlessness, hatelessness, and undeludedness.
2. *Object condition (aaramma.na paccaya).* Any state that is an object for consciousness and its factors is an object condition. Consciousness is of six kinds by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind; each can arise only with its appropriate object.
3. *Predominance condition (adhipati paccaya).* This assists in the manner of being foremost, thereby exercising a dominating rise over the other mental states. It may be a concomitant mental state or it may be an object which is given special importance by the mind.
4. & 5. *Proximity and Contiguity conditions (anantara paccaya, samanantara paccaya).* In our analysis of a thought process we saw that seventeen thought moments follow each other in rapid succession. Each thought moment, with its

factors, stands to the next thought moment and its factors in the relation of proximity condition and contiguity condition. These two modes of conditioning are different only in name but not in essence.

6. *Conascence condition (sahajaata paccaya)*. When a number of phenomena arise simultaneously, each will function as a conascent condition for the others. For example, feeling arises as a conascent condition for its concomitants — perception, mental formations and consciousness — and each of these for the other three. The four primary elements are conascent conditions for each other and secondary matter. So too are mind and matter at conception.
7. *Mutuality condition (aññamañña paccaya)*. Just as each leg of a tripod helps support the other two, mentality and materiality help each other at the moment of birth. At all times the concomitant mental states are mutuality conditions for each other, as are the co-existent primary material elements.
8. *Support condition (nissaya paccaya)*. This serves as a base or foundation for the arising of some other state. All conascent conditions are also support conditions but, further, any sense organ is a support condition for the appropriate consciousness and its mental factors.
9. *Decisive support condition (upanissaya paccaya)*. This gives stronger support than the previous type of condition, one that acts as a decisive inducement.
10. *Pre-nascence condition (pure jaata paccaya)*. This refers to a state that has already arisen and, while still present, serves as a condition for something else that arises later. A particular sense consciousness arises because the pre-arisen sense organ and object are already present. Thus the organ and object are prenascent conditions for consciousness.
11. *Post-nascence condition (pacchaajaata paccaya)*. This signifies a subsequently arisen state that sustains something already in existence. Hunger, for example, is a post-nascence condition for the preservation of the body as it results in food intake.
12. *Repetition condition (aasevana paccaya)*. Each *javana* thought moment — wholesome, unwholesome, or indeterminate — conditions and strengthens the subsequent ones. Thus each is a repetition condition for its successor. By analogy, the recitation of a verse becomes easier the more frequently it is repeated.
13. *Kamma condition (kamma paccaya)*. This refers to a volition that conditions other states. It is of two kinds. One is wholesome or unwholesome volition that conditions the resultant mental states and material form produced by kamma. The other is conascent volition that conditions its concomitant mental states and material form originated by that volition. Thus kamma condition may be prior to or simultaneous with the states it conditions.
14. *Kamma result condition (vipaaka paccaya)*. Any mental phenomenon, *citta* or *cetasika*, which results from kamma is a kamma result condition for its associated mental phenomena and the kinds of material form it originates.
15. *Nutriment condition (aahaara paccaya)*. Four kinds of phenomena are called nutriment in the sense that they are strong conditions for other phenomena:
 - a. material food sustains the physical body;
 - b. contact conditions feeling;
 - c. volition conditions rebirth consciousness; and
 - d. rebirth consciousness serves as a nutriment for mind and materiality.

16. *Faculty condition (indriya paccaya)*. There are twenty-two faculties: six sense bases, two sexes, the life faculty, five feelings, five spiritual faculties, and three supra-mundane faculties. Except for the two sexes, the other twenty can exercise control in their respective spheres on the co-existent mental states and the material phenomena they originate. For example, mindfulness — one of the five spiritual faculties — has a controlling influence on the other four co-adjuncts during meditation.
17. *Jhaana condition (jhaana paccaya)*. This refers to the seven *jhaana factors* — initial thinking, discursive thinking, rapture, happiness, sadness, equanimity, and concentration — that condition their associated mental phenomena and the material phenomena they originate.
18. *Path condition (magga paccaya)*. This comprises twelve factors. Four that lead to woeful states — the wrong path — are: wrong views, wrong aspiration, wrong effort and wrong concentration. Eight that lead to blissful states — the right path — are: right understanding, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. These eight make up the Noble Eightfold Path.
19. *Associated condition (sampayutta paccaya)*. The four mental groups — feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness — that aid each other because they arise and perish together and have an identical object and base, are association conditions for each other.
20. *Dissociation condition (vippayutta paccaya)*. This refers to one phenomenon that aids another by not mixing with it, by being separate from it. Thus mental and material phenomena are dissociation conditions for one another as they aid each other's genesis by remaining distinct.
21. *Presence condition (atthi paccaya)*. This refers to phenomena that condition other phenomena only in their presence either as conascent, prenascent, or postnascent conditions. To give an analogy, objects can be seen only if there is light.
22. *Absence condition (natthi paccaya)*. This refers to one phenomenon which can condition the arising of another only when it has ceased. Specifically it refers to the *cittas* and mental factors which have to cease for their successors to arise. By analogy, light must disappear for darkness to prevail.
23. *Disappearance condition (vigata paccaya)*. This is identical with 22.
24. *Non-disappearance condition (avigata paccaya)*. This is identical with 21.

The doctrine of dependent origination (*pa.ticca samuppaada*) teaches us that our mental and physical components are effects resulting from causes. The conditions (*paccayas*) show that a variety of specific relationships obtain between these effects and their causes. A few examples will be given to illustrate how this knowledge helps us to understand the Buddha's teaching and to put it into practice.

A. In relation to the teaching:

- a. *First Cause*. Buddhism does not postulate a first cause. The world is beginningless, a continuous arising and passing away of phenomena dependent on conditions. The assumption that the world must have had a beginning is due to our limited understanding. Buddhism teaches that the world consists of a countless number of world-systems arising, evolving, and disintegrating in accordance with natural laws. To this cosmic process there is

no first point or outside cause. As the Buddha says: "Inconceivable, O monks, is this *sa.msaara*. Not to be discovered is any first beginning of beings, who obstructed by ignorance and ensnared by craving, are hurrying and hastening through this round of rebirths." In fact, it is our ignorance, resulting in craving, which creates us over and over again.

- b. *Ignorance*. Though in the doctrine of dependent origination ignorance was given as the first link, it must not be taken as a first cause. The commentator, Venerable Buddhaghosa, states in the *Visuddhi Magga* (translated by Bhikkhu Ñānamoli):

'Nor from a single cause arise
One fruit or many, nor one fruit from many;
'Tis helpful, though, to utilize
One cause and one fruit as representative.'

The twenty-four conditions are so intricately related that nothing can stand by itself as a sufficient cause. Even ignorance arises and continues through conditions such as wrong companionship and wrong views. It is placed first, not because it is temporally first, but because it is the most fundamental condition for suffering.

- c. *Selflessness*. In a doctrine that teaches all phenomena to be conditionally arisen there is no place for any form of abiding personality. Until, by insight meditation, one penetrates this truth, the delusion of a self will persist, obscuring the Four Noble Truths.
- d. *Free Will*. Someone might say: "If all phenomena are conditionally arisen, then Buddhism is a form of fatalism, for we have no free will to control our destiny." Such a statement would not be correct. Will is volition (*cetanaa*), a mental state, determined ethically by its root condition (*hetu paccaya*). If the root is unwholesome, we can either restrain or indulge the volition; if the root is wholesome, we can encourage it or neglect it. In this exercise of will lies our freedom to guide our destiny.

B. Application in practice

- a. *Root condition*. Buddhist training is directed towards eliminating the defilements (*kilesaa*). The foremost defilements are the three unwholesome roots — greed, hate, and delusion. From these spring others: conceit (*maana*), speculative views (*di.t.thi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikiccha*), mental torpor (*thiina*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), shamelessness (*ahirika*), lack of moral fear or conscience (*anottappa*). These defilements function at three levels:
1. Transgression (*viitikkama*) leading to evil bodily and verbal acts. This is checked by the practice of morality, observing the five precepts.
 2. Obsession (*pariyu.t.thaana*) when the defilements come to the conscious level and threaten to lead to transgression if not restrained by the practice of mindfulness.
 3. Latency (*anusaya*) where they remain as tendencies ready to surface through the impact of sensory stimuli. Security from the defilements can be obtained only by destroying the three roots — greed, hate and

delusion — at the level of latency. This requires insight-wisdom (*vipassanaa-pañña*), the decisive liberating factor in Buddhism.

- b. *Predominance condition*. This is of two kinds, a mental state or an object.
 1. A mental state: Zeal (*chanda*), energy (*viriyā*), purity of consciousness (*citta*), or investigating of phenomena (*viima.msaa*) can as a conascent mental state dominate other mental states and the material phenomena they originate. Only one of these four can predominate at a time. We may illustrate how these four, in sequence, are applicable in practice. A meditator resolves to "achieve that which has not been achieved so far." At that time zeal becomes the predominant mental factor. Then energy dominates to bring forth right effort to suppress the mental hindrances. Free from the hindrances the purified mind is dominant. When the mind is pure and unified, the investigating factor takes over to gain insight into the three characteristics of existence — impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness.
 2. An object: A Buddhist venerates an image of the Buddha, recollecting the supreme qualities of the Enlightened One, and aspires to acquire similar virtues. At that time faith (*saddhaa*) in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha becomes the predominant mental state. This faith, reasoned and rooted in understanding, inspires the mind with confidence and determination to pursue the practice. This is the principle behind the veneration of the Buddha image, which the uninformed call "idol worship."
- c. *Decisive-support condition*. This acts by virtue of its cogency. It is of three kinds:
 1. By way of an object (*aaramma.na upanissaya paccaya*). The image of the Buddha, at the time of veneration, forms an object decisive support condition for the establishment of faith by way of conviction.
 2. Proximate decisive support (*anantara upanissaya paccaya*). When one thought gives way to the next, the conviction in one stands as a decisive support for the thought that follows.
 3. Natural decisive support (*pakati upanissaya paccaya*). Faith, virtue, generosity, and learning, by way of cogency, stand as natural decisive supports for the repeated arising of these wholesome factors. A good environment and companionship with the wise are natural decisive supports for wholesome mental states.

These three types of decisive support conditions have a bearing on our practice if we wish to fulfill the four preliminary conditions to stream entry (*sotaapattiyanga*). These are: (i) companionship with those of merit and good character (*sappurisa sa.mseva*); (ii) hearing the Dhamma (*saddhamma savanna*); (iii) wise reflection (*yoniso manasikaara*); and (iv) living in conformity with the Dhamma (*dhammaanudhammapatipatti*).

Nibbaana

Nibbaana is the fourth ultimate reality (*paramattha dhamma*). Whereas the other three realities — consciousness (*citta*), mental formations (*cetasikaa*), and material phenomena (*ruupa*) — are conditioned, nibbaana is not. It is neither created nor formed.

When the wanderer Jambukhaadaka asked his uncle, the Venerable Saariputta, what the word "nibbaana" means, the Venerable Saariputta replied that nibbaana is the extinction of greed, hate, and delusion. But nibbaana is not the mere extinction of these defilements. It is a state to be attained in this very existence by the extinction of greed, hate, and delusion.

Nibbaana is the *summum bonum* of Buddhist practice, to be achieved only by following the Noble Eightfold Path. For most of us the journey along the Path will be long and arduous, but there are sign-posts on the way that will indicate we are going in the right direction. We will recognize these sign-posts when the fetters that bind us are broken in succession. When the first three fetters — personality view, doubt, and clinging to mere rules and rituals — are broken one becomes a "stream enterer" (*sotaapanna*), one who has entered the stream to nibbaana. The fetters, once broken, will never bind such a person again. This is the truth he knows without uncertainty. The stream-enterer will not be reborn in the four lower planes of existence. He will take rebirth seven times at the most, either in the human or heavenly planes.

When the next two fetters — sensuous craving and ill-will are attenuated, one becomes a "once-returner" (*sakadaagami*), due to return only once to the sense sphere world and then attain nibbaana.

When all the lower five fetters are eradicated, the disciple becomes a "non-returner" (*anaagami*), who will never return to the sense sphere world but, after death, will be reborn in a pure divine abode and attain nibbaana there.

One who takes the next major step and eradicates the five higher fetters — desire for existence in fine material planes, desire for existence in the immaterial planes, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance — reaches the final goal. He is the *arahant*, free from all future becoming.

Each of these four supramundane stages involves two phases. One is the "path" (*magga*) that eradicates the fetters, the other is the "fruit" (*phala*), moments of supramundane consciousness that result from the path, made possible by the path's work of eradication. The fruit is the enjoyment made available by the work of the path.

The fruit can be entered and enjoyed many times after the appropriate path has been reached. The noble disciple determines to enter the fruit [and] then develops insight until he does so. The highest fruit is the fruit of arahantship. The arahant knows with certainty that his mind is devoid of defilements. He has penetrated the Four Noble Truths. He becomes neither despondent nor elated through contact with the eight worldly conditions — gain and loss, honor and dishonor, happiness and misery, praise and blame. He is free from sorrow, stainless, and safe. "Free from sorrow" because he no more weeps and laments; "stainless" because he has no more defilements; "safe" because there is no more birth for him.

Though the mind of the arahant is free from defilements, his body is still subject to decay, disease and injury, to pain and discomfort. He can overcome these by inducing supramundane consciousness, which is always at his disposal, but it would be impracticable for him to do so for any length of time. Therefore, during life, the

arahant can enjoy only an intermittent release from suffering. This is called *sa-upaadi-sesa-nibbaana*, nibbaana with the groups of existence still remaining, since he still exists as an individualized personality subject to the results of residual kamma. Thus, the Buddha met a foot injury when Devadatta hurled a rock at him, the Venerable Mahaa Moggallaana was battered to death by professional criminals, and the Venerable Angulimaala was hit by sticks and stones while on his alms round.

When the arahant dies he attains *an-upaadi-sesa-nibbaana*, nibbaana without the aggregates remaining. He will not be reborn anywhere. Earlier he severed the chain of dependent origination at the link where feeling is followed by craving. Now he severs it at the link where becoming leads to new birth.

There has been much speculation as to what happens to the arahant after death — whether he exists, or does not exist, or both, or neither. This confusion arises from thinking in terms of an abiding entity that passes from life to life. The Buddha taught that such an abiding entity does not exist. It is an illusion. Life is a process of becoming, perishing at every moment, generated by kamma. Since there is no ego-entity, there is nothing to be annihilated and nothing to enter a state of eternal existence.

When the arahant dies, the physio-mental process comes to an end for lack of the "fuel" needed to keep it going. This fuel is craving (*ta.nhaa*), which leads to grasping, which in turn leads to further becoming. If craving is totally extinguished, there can be no further becoming. When the body dies at the expiration of the life span, no new rebirth takes place. If there is no rebirth in any plane, then there is no decay, disease, and death; there is no sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, or despair. This is the end of suffering.

To conclude we shall recall those four existential aspects mentioned at the outset:

1. *What are we?* Each of us is a mind-body combination whose constituent parts arise and perish from moment to moment, depending on conditions. There is no abiding entity found in this process of becoming. The mind and the body are reciprocal. With death, the body disintegrates into the four primary elements but the flow of consciousness goes on finding a material base in another existence in accordance with kamma. We are owners of our kamma, heirs to our kamma, kamma is the womb from which we are born [and] kamma is our friend, our refuge. The present mind-body combination will last as long as the reproductive kamma supports it, but this could be cut off at any time by a strong opposing kamma. In spite of the transient happiness we enjoy, there is no means by which we can avoid decay, ill-health, association with the unpleasant, dissociation from the pleasant, and not getting what we desire.
2. *What do we find around us?* Around are sentient and non-sentient objects which provide stimuli for our senses and minds. The material nature of our bodies is the same as that of the objects around us, all made up of the four primary elements and their derivatives.
3. *How and why do we react to what is within and around us?* We react in response to the six kinds of stimuli that we make contact with through the

eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The nature of our reaction depends on our defilements which manifest as craving and grasping.

4. *What should we aspire to reach as a spiritual goal?* We should aspire to eliminate craving and thereby end this process of repeated becoming, always fraught with suffering. This is the attainment of *nibbaana*. The way is the Noble Eightfold Path.

The arahant Ra.t.thapaala told King Koravya why he went forth from the home life into homelessness. He said that life in any world:

- a. is unstable and is swept away;
- b. has no shelter and no protector;
- c. has nothing of its own, it has to leave everything and pass on; and
- d. is incomplete, insatiate, and the slave of craving.

Facts are stubborn, often unpalatable. No purpose is served by behaving like the proverbial ostrich or by sweetening the true taste of existence with a sprinkling of ambrosia. But there is no need to be despondent. Peace and happiness are possible, always available to us, if we make the effort to find them. To find them we have to get to know "things as they really are." "Things as they really are" is the subject dealt with in the *Abhidhamma*. By studying the *Abhidhamma* and turning these studies into personal experience by meditation, we can reach the liberating knowledge that gives peace.

Notes

1. *The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Foot Print* ([MN 28](#)). Translated in "The Wheel" No. 101.

2. See E.H. Shatock, *An Experiment in Mindfulness*, Chapter 8.

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Now that we have laid down a framework as a basis for better understanding, let's go into more specific detail by analyzing mind moments as they flow in the continuum of consciousness.

What, now, follows, comes from **Venerable Nārada Thera's** words on the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, (see *The Buddha and his Teaching*, Chapter II). The following quote is an introduction to the thought-process through close analysis:

"The subject, the consciousness, receives objects from within and without. When a person is in a state of profound sleep, his mind is said to be vacant, or, in other words, in a state of passive rest. We always experience such a passive state when our minds do not respond to external objects. This flow of *bhavanga* is interrupted when objects enter the mind.

Then the *bhavanga* consciousness vibrates for one thought-moment and passes away.

Thereupon the sense-door consciousness (*pañca-dvārāvajjana*) arises and ceases.

At this stage the natural flow is checked and is turned towards the object.

Immediately after, there arises and ceases the eye consciousness (*cakkhu viññāna*), but yet knows no more about it.

This sense operation is followed by a moment of reception of the object so seen (*sampaticchana*).

Next, comes the investigating faculty (*santīrana*) or a momentary examination of the object so received.

After this, comes that stage of representative cognition termed the determining consciousness (*votthapana*). Discrimination is exercised at this stage. Freewill plays its part here.

Immediately after, there arises the psychologically most important stage - Impulsion or *javana*. It is at this stage that an action is judged whether moral or immoral.

Kamma is performed at this stage; if viewed rightly (*yoniso manasikāra*), the *javana* becomes moral; if viewed wrongly (*ayoniso manasikāra*), it becomes immoral. In the case of an Arahant this *javana* is neither moral nor immoral, but merely functional (*kiriya*).

This *javana stage* usually lasts for seven thought moments, or, at times of death, five.

The whole process, which happens in an infinitesimal part of time, ends with the registering consciousness (*tadālambaṇa*), lasting for two thought-moments - thus completing one thought-process at the expiration of seventeen thought-moments." etc.

To explain in worldly terms, 'Mind' according to <www.palikanon.org> is not an independent and unchanging thing, as worldlings normally imagine. Quite to the contrary, it is a series of sequences in process.

[Editor's note: we have slightly altered the wording in these connecting paragraphs to link with the foregoing subsection, and what follows, hopefully, with no harm done.]

Moreover, on the level of ultimate realities, there are no entities such as trees, stones and men. The name is always an object 'with the mind' and is not an object 'independent of the mind.' But the thing and the name are mistakenly taken to be one and the same. This is a worldly perversion.

The problem is that when we, as mere worldlings, want to communicate about anything to others in the world, we must use worldly names. For the name calls up the thing to the minds of those who have also associated the name with the thing. That's how we employ nouns to distinguish one thing from another. A noun is the name given to the thing.

The thing is called a car; here the car is the name or noun. The thing and the name are two different things.

But we usually say, "This is a car," "to buy a car," as if the name and the thing are one and the same. We should really say, "this is called a car."

That's how wrong views about names and nouns come to be held.

We must remember that names are mind-made words. We must understand that names exist only as objects of the mind, and not as objects outside or independent of the mind.

A car is not a single thing but made up of different parts which are inter-dependent. "Car" is a conventional word.

Similarly, take the case of the name "John." Instead of knowing that the name "John" is only a name, it is falsely believed that John is an external object independent of the Mind. But it is thought that John and one's person are one and the same.

Take the case of mental labeling of one's person as "I." Instead of one's name, one usually uses the pronoun "I" to designate one's person in speech and writing. "I," like the name "John" is only a mental label which exists momentarily in the Mind. "I" exists only when mentally and verbally said. But we say "I" see, "I hear." etc., all the time.

"I" is regarded as the subject, when it is only a mental label. The good thing about mind-consciousness is that it synthesizes and connects up different states in the thought process. Take for example a lump, or a grain, of sugar. The first of the stages of the thought process sees the thing - visual consciousness. The second grasps the name of the thing as sugar. The third tastes the thing called sugar - gustatory consciousness - and finds it sweet. The fourth pronounces that sugar is sweet.

Without the connecting up, we could not understand the happenings and experiences of the world.

Considering the Relationship Between Mind and Matter

Now having thus considered the workings of the 'Mind,' in the above, let's turn to a consideration of 'Matter' below which also comes from <www.palicanon.org>.

The 4 Primary Essential Qualities or Properties of Matter, called *Mahā Bhūta* 's are:

- *pathavī* manifested as Hardness
- *āpo* manifested as Cohesion
- *tejo* manifested as Heat
- *vāyo* manifested as Resistance to Motion.

[We will further understand the unsubstantiality of matter when these four points are considered.]

These 4 properties are separate but exist together. They function jointly, yet severally.

You can visualise their opposite qualities only by comparison. You see the colours of black and white only by comparison. You know good health only when you come to know bad health.

Changeability is the very essence of matter. Matter is changing all the time, and matter and changeability are synonymous.

Pathavī. This is hardness, and by comparison, softness. For instance, soft food gradually hardens. When you cook meat and apply heat, it gradually softens. You know the quality of hardness with the inner eye. *Pathavī* is the very basis of the other 3 Primaries.

Apo is the quality of cohesion and inherence and growth. If there is no cohesion, matter would disintegrate. In a building, cement, expressed in conventional terms, binds, but with your inner eye or brain you know *āpo*, namely the quality of coherence. In oceans and mountains and everything, it is *āpo*. A lump of gold coheres. A road surface coheres. Your human body and parts of it cohere. Trees grow due to the quality of *āpo*. If you add water to flour, it becomes pliable due to *āpo*.

Tejo is heat or lack of heat. The human body has heat. The heat is changing all the time. The essence of matter is change, which must be seen by the inner eye. Take wax; when you apply heat, it softens. You can visualise the *tejo* and *āpo* with the inner eye. All these qualities are *paramattha*.

Vāyo is motion and resistance to motion. If you pump air into a tyre, it gets hard and there is resistance to motion. If you deflate the tyre, there is less resistance to motion. You know *vāyo* with the inner eye. Inside the human body, there is always pushing and pulling. In-breathing and out-breathing are manifestations of *vāyo*.

These 4 Primaries always act together and thus there is strength. If you take away one, all come to naught.

This manifestation is in everything. They are the same, wherever they are manifested.

Electricity and Magnetism are different conventionally, but, as *paramattha*, the manifestation is the same.

Buddha taught that the human body is composed of cells, called *kalāpas*. We know about the octad consisting of *pathavī, āpo, tejo and vāyo*, and the 4 secondary qualities of colour, smell, taste and nutriment.

[That's what we mean when we say everything is coming together and falling apart]

Add *jīvita* (psychic life) and we get the *nonad*. Add each of the *pasādas* or sensitive parts of the sense-organs, and we get the decads.

Thus octad + *jīvita* = nonad

The decad cells are:

- nonad + visual *pasāda*,
- nonad + hearing *pasāda*
- nonad + smell *pasāda*,
- nonad + taste *pasāda*,
- nonad + body *pasāda*,
- nonad + heart *pasāda* (*hadaya-vatthu*).

We have cells not only consisting of 10 qualities, but also of 11 qualities, 12 qualities and 13 qualities but they are not of immediate value to us.

All these cells have *ākāsa* or space in between. There is nothing that has not *ākāsa* in between.

Anicca, dukkha, anattā

These 3 concepts are basic to Buddhism. They are the 'marks' or characteristics of existence. In Pāli, it is said:

- *sabbe sankhāra anicca*,
- *sabbe sankhāra dukkha*,
- *sabbe dhamma anattā*.

Sankhāra here means anything conditioned; conditioned means created or made to arise. So everything created or made to arise [by conditions] is *anicca*.

We have seen how consciousness arises. When the conditions have been fulfilled, nothing will prevent consciousness from arising.

In the Pāli utterance that all *dhammas* are *anattā*, "*dhamma*" means everything in the world, and is more comprehensive than the word *sankhāra*. It states that everything in the world is *anattā*.

The word "states," [when used] to mean *dhamma*, is used in a very broad sense, for it refers not only to states of consciousness but also the mental constituents (*cetasika*),

and also the 4 Great Primaries or Essentials and their dependent material qualities and even Nirvana (*a-sankhata dhamma*).

Anicca

When we know that the 5-*khandhas* or 5-Aggregates arise and then immediately disappear, it is not difficult to visualise that such things are impermanent. They are born and then die.

Not only in modern science but also in Buddhism there are cells. In the human body there are millions of atoms and cells. They consist of the 4-Primaries and are called *kalāpas*; these *kalāpas* arise and disappear. The old is succeeded by the new, giving rise to the concept of *anicca*.

If you stop the fuel generating these 4 Primaries, they die. If one of them dies, all die together. If body ceases, then *nāma* (mentality) ceases, for *nāma* is dependent on rūpa (materiality) for its arising.

Dukkha

The 4 Noble Truths of Suffering were discovered by the Buddha. They form the very core of his Teaching and have been incorporated in the next Chapter.

Anicca, dukkha, anattā are interdependent concepts. If you understand one thoroughly, you understand all three.

Anattā

All philosophies devised by man are meant to explain the reason for this existence. There is a great desire to continue to exist after death and he [man] has succeeded in inventing many different philosophical and religious systems. He wants to be satisfied that there will be a next world to go to, and speaks of revelations and produces arguments to support his views. It is his craving (*tanhā*) for further existence that makes him believe strongly in the ideas that he has invented himself. In order that there may be something to continue on, he says that there is a soul or spirit (*sakkāya ditthi*) which is eternal.

However, Buddha came to realise when he was enlightened under the Bodhi Tree that the idea of a soul was unnecessary. He saw that the 5-Aggregates, which are changing all the time, arose and passed away according to fixed laws of Dependent Origination (*Paticca-Samuppāda*). There was no need for a soul.

It was soon after his Enlightenment that he intuitively acquired the System of Analysis which we now know as *Abhidhamma*. His analytical Method enabled beings gradually to be able to see things as they really are (*yatha-bhuta*) and to destroy the conditioned state, and thereby attain Nirvana.

Buddhism is the only religion that promises the highest goal during this existence.

The concept of a soul is unnecessary to an understanding of the structural nature of beings. Every thing is classified under one or another of the 5-Aggregates. No quality or feature that is in any way discernible falls outside this five-fold system of classification.

It is activity (*karma*) in the form of volition (*cetanā*) based on craving (*tanhā*) which bound these aggregates together. These aggregates arose, and passed away, in accordance with the fixed laws of Dependent Origination (*Paticca-Samuppāda*). The idea of a soul was quite unnecessary and the real "creator" was craving (*tanhā*) based on ignorance (*avijjā*). The whole process of existence - past, present and future - occurred strictly in accordance with laws, without the need for a soul or even a God.

Beings, regardless of the plane in which they are born, do not possess any permanent identity, personality, self, soul or spirit, but are temporary manifestations of several constituents or aggregates which themselves, though changing, nevertheless show continuity of process. Thus the expression "rebirth" is not to be understood that the same being in one existence is reborn into a future existence by virtue of there being a soul or spirit as a factor providing inherent continuity.

The new being has no direct relationship to its predecessor by way of a permanent unchanging soul or spirit, but is nevertheless the direct outcome or resultant of the activities of that predecessor.

There is a current of constant change and no stability of any kind.

The *Anattā* Doctrine must be understood in 3 different ways:

There is no Soul,

There is no Self,

There is no Control.

The human body does not exist in terms of *paramattha*; this is on a par with the statement that water exists in terms of conventional truth, but does not exist in terms of ultimate truth, in reality.

The human Personality ... is composed of 5-*khandhas* subjectively and 5-*upādāna khandhas* objectively. There is nothing more than that in the human make-up. The Buddha has shown that none of the Aggregates is a Self, and that therefore there is no Self.

Neither within these bodily and mental phenomena of existence, nor outside of them, can be found anything that in the ultimate sense could be regarded as a self-reliant real Ego-entity, personality or any other abiding substance. The Buddha taught the impersonality of all existence, and that there exists only this continual process of arising and passing bodily and mental phenomena, and that there is no separate self-entity within or without the process.

As for the third idea that there is no real Control over bodily processes, the human body carries out its bodily functions automatically. It's like a chemist watching the functions of a chemical reaction; once the conditions are there, the reaction is performed automatically. Similarly, the human body performs automatically.

Inexorably there's growth. Inexorably there's decay, old age and death. It's *anattā*.

To continue our orientation, it may help ease us in further refining our understanding of the fleeting process of passing phenomena by carefully reading a widely-disseminated and well-known document following a step-by-step development which has been outlined by Ajarn Sujjin, in Thailand, also available through the <www.abhidhamma.org> website.

The Buddhist Teaching on Physical Phenomena

Preface

That which is made of iron, wood or hemp is not a strong bond, say the wise; (but) that longing for jewels, ornaments, children and wives is far greater an attachment. *Dhammapada* (vs. 345).

Attachment to people and possessions is strong, almost irresistible. We are infatuated by what we see, hear, smell, taste, experience through the body-sense and through the mind. However, all the different things we experience do not last. We lose people who are dear to us and we lose our possessions. We can find out that attachment leads to sorrow, but at the moments of attachment we do not want to accept the truth of the impermanence of all things. We want pleasant objects for ourselves, and we consider the "self" the most important matter in the world.

Through the Buddhist teachings we learn that what we take for "self," for "our mind" and for "our body," consists of changing phenomena. That part of the Buddhist teachings which is the *Abhidhamma* enumerates and classifies all phenomena *of our life*: mental phenomena or *nama* and physical phenomena or *rupa*:

Seeing is *nama*, it experiences [a] visible object through the eye-door. A visible object or colour is *rupa*, it does not experience anything. The eyesense which functions as the eyedoors through which visible objects are experienced is also *rupa*. The *rupas* which are the sense objects of visible object(s), sound, smell, flavour and tangible object(s) and the *rupas* which are the sense organs of eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body-sense, are conditions for the *namas* which experience objects.

Nama and *rupa* are interrelated. *Nama* and *rupa* are ultimate realities. We should know the difference between ultimate truth and conventional truth:

Conventional truth is the world of concepts such as person, tree or animal. Before we learned about Buddhism, conventional truth, (the world of 'concepts') was the only

truth we knew. It is useful to examine the meaning of concept, in Pali: *pannatti*. The word 'concept' can stand for the name or term which conveys an idea and it can also stand for the idea itself conveyed by a term. Thus, the name "tree" is a concept, and also the idea we form up of "tree" is a concept.

[In ultimate reality] a tree is actually a conglomeration of things; the component parts are just different *rupas*. The *rupas* of which a tree consists do not last, they arise and fall away. Through the eyes only the *rupa* which is visible object or colour can be experienced, through touch hardness which is another type of *rupa* can be experienced. Visible object and hardness are ultimate realities, *paramattha dhammas*, each with their own characteristic. These characteristics do not change; they can be experienced without having to name them. Colour is always colour, and hardness is always hardness, even when we give them another name.

The whole day we touch things such as a fork, a plate or a chair. We believe that we know instantaneously what different things are, but after the sense-impressions such as seeing or experiencing through the body-sense, there are complicated processes of memory of former experiences and of classifications, and these moments succeed one another very rapidly. Concepts are conceived through thinking. We remember the form and shape of things; we know what different things are and what they are used for. We could not lead our daily life without conventional realities; we do not have to avoid the world of conventional truth.

However, in between the moments of thinking of 'concepts,' an understanding of 'ultimate realities,' of *nama* and *rupa*, [for example] can also be developed. The development of understanding does not prevent us from doing all the chores of daily life, from talking to other people, from helping them or from being generous to them. We could not perform deeds of generosity if we did not think of conventional realities, such as the things we are giving or the persons to whom we are giving.

But through the development of understanding we will learn to distinguish between conventional truth and absolute truth.

The *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, a *Compendium of the Abhidhamma* composed in India at a later time (This work has been ascribed to Anuruddha. It has been translated into English by the P.T.S. under the title of *Compendium of Philosophy*, and, by Ven. Narada, Colombo, under the title of *A Manual of Abhidhamma*.), states that 'concepts' are only shadows of realities.

When we watch T.V., we see projected-images of people, and we know that through the eyesense only a visible object is seen, no people. Also, when we look at the persons we meet, only colour is experienced through the eyesense. In the ultimate sense there are no people. Although they seem very real they are only shadows of what is really there.

The truth is different from what we always assumed. A person is a temporary combination of realities which are constantly in a process of formation and dissolution, and thus the flux of life goes on. We cling to a conglomeration of different objects we take these as a solid "whole." So long as we do not see the

disruption of the continuity of body and mind we continue to believe in a self which lasts.

Ultimate realities are impermanent, they arise and fall away. Concepts of people and things do not arise and fall away; they are objects of thinking, not real in the ultimate sense. *Nama* and *rupa*, not concepts, are the objects of understanding.

The purpose of the development of the eightfold Path is seeing ultimate realities as impermanent, suffering and non-self. If the difference between concepts and ultimate realities is not known the eightfold Path cannot be developed. The eightfold Path, that is, right understanding of *nama* and *rupa*, is developed through direct awareness of them. However, this is difficult and can only be learnt very gradually.

When there is direct awareness of one object at a time as it appears through one of the senses or through the mind-door, there is no thinking of a 'concept' of a "whole" at that moment.

The study of *rupas* can help us to have more understanding of the sense objects and of the doorways of the senses through which these objects are experienced.

If we do not have a foundation-knowledge of objects and doorways we cannot know how to be aware of one (arising) reality at a time as it appears at the present moment. The study of *nama* and *rupa* is a condition for the arising of direct awareness later on.

The study of *rupas* is not the study of physics or medical science. The aim of the understanding of *nama* and *rupa* is the eradication of the wrong view of self and freedom from enslavement to defilements. So long as one clings to an idea of [a] self who owns things, it can give rise to avarice and jealousy, which may even motivate bad deeds such as stealing or killing. Defilements cannot be eradicated immediately, but when we begin to understand that our life is only one moment of experiencing an object through one of the six doorways, there will be less clinging to the idea of an 'abiding ego,' or of a person or self.

All three parts of the Buddha's teachings, namely the *Vinaya* (*Book of Discipline* for the monks), the *Suttanta* (Discourses) and the *Abhidhamma* point to the same goal: the eradication of defilements. From quotations of *sutta* texts the reader can see that there is also *Abhidhamma* in the *suttas*, [and] thus, that the teachings are one, the teaching of the Buddha.

[We] have used Pali terms next to the English equivalents in order to help the reader to know the precise meaning of the realities which are explained in the *Abhidhamma*. The English terms have a specific meaning in the context of conventional use and they do not render the precise meaning of the reality represented by the Pali term [from] the texts which have been translated into English by the Pali Text Society (73 Lime Walk, Headington, Oxford OX 37, 7 AD.).

The first of the seven books of the *Abhidhamma*, the *Dhammasangani*, translated (some say incorrectly)* as *Buddhist Psychological Ethics* (Pali Text Society, 1974.), is a compilation of all *nama* and *rupa*, of all that is real. The source for [this present document] on physical phenomena is that part of the *Dhammasangani* which deals

with this subject, as well as the commentary to this book, the *Atthasalini*, translated as “*Expositor*” (Pali Text Society, 1958.), which was written by the venerable Buddhaghosa. The *Visuddhimagga*, *The Path of Purification*, an encyclopedia by the venerable Buddhaghosa [was] translated by Ven. Nyanamoli, 1964, Colombo, Sri Lanka. There is another translation by Pe Maung Tin under the title of *The Path of Purity*, P.T.S.)

May this text on *rupas* help the reader to develop right understanding of *nama* and *rupa*!

**[Editor’s Note: This <www.abhidhamma.org> exposition has been slightly-edited to standardize punctuation, grammar and syntax, and, sometimes, a connecting word or words have been added [in square brackets] to help the aspiring-reader follow the somewhat complex internal paragraph coherence, so as not to become confused by terms and ideas and so-called concepts which have sometimes been unclearly translated back-and-forth between Pali and Thai and English.*

For example, in English translations, we even find Western cultural connotations accompanying words like ‘ego’ or ‘psychology’ ‘concept’ or ‘absolute’ or ‘reality’ or ‘mind’ in the sense of Western philosophy, metaphysics, science, psychology and psycho-analysis, which are misleading to the English-speaking reader and which were most certainly never mentioned in the original Abhidhamma texts. Even some PTS translations written by Pali scholars (who were not monks or practicing Buddhists) have tended to follow this tendency.

Another thing we might mention here is that, (on the one hand), the following Abhidhammic explication may be forthrightly said to be ‘exceedingly dry and academic’ especially in comparison to some of the suttas which (on the other hand) often also describe meditative states of being, as ‘suffused’ by joy and bliss.

Nevertheless, we may safely assert that an understanding of the method of observing and analyzing the flow of the dhammas is (normally) an essential part of the process of bhavana leading to awakening.

Moreover, the following text is well-worth worth reading, if only for (i) the sake of its coherence and (ii) for the purpose of gaining a gradual acquaintance with the terminology needed in order to pursue further Abhidhammic Studies].

Introduction

The *Abhidhamma* teaches us that in the ultimate sense our life is *nama* and *rupa* which arise because of their appropriate conditions and then fall away. What we take for person or self is *citta* (pronounced as ‘*chitta*.’) or consciousness, *cetasika* (pronounced as ‘*chetasika*.’) or mental factors arising with the *citta*, and *rupa* or physical phenomena.

Citta and *cetasika* are *nama*, they experience objects, whereas *rupa* does not know anything. *Citta* experiences sense objects which are *rupas* through the five senses which are also *rupas*. The five senses by means of which *cittas* experience an object are called doors. When we think of something we saw or heard, *citta* does not experience an object through a sense-door but through another door which is the mind-door. Thus, there are six doorways. Through the mind-door, *citta* can experience ultimate realities, *nama* and *rupa*, as well as concepts.

Citta experiences only one [mind] object and then it falls away to be succeeded by the next *citta*. We may have thought that there is one consciousness which lasts and

which can see, hear and think, but this is not so. There can be only one *citta* [arising] at a time: at one moment there is a *citta* which sees, at another moment a *citta* which hears and at another moment again a *citta* which thinks. In our life there is an unbroken series of *cittas* arising in [continuous] succession.

Cittas can be good or wholesome, *kusala cittas*, they can be unwholesome, *akusala cittas*, or they can be neither *kusala* nor *akusala*. Seeing, for example, is neither *kusala* nor *akusala*, it only experiences visible object through the eye-door. After seeing has fallen away, visible object is experienced by *kusala cittas* or by *akusala cittas*.

Thus, when an object impinges on one of the six doors there are different types of *cittas* which arise in a series or process and all of them experience that object. They arise in a specific order within the process and there is no self who can prevent their arising. There are processes of *cittas* which experience an object through each of the five sense-doors and through the mind-door.

There is one *citta* at a time, but each *citta* is accompanied by several *cetasikas* or mental factors which share the same object with the *citta* but perform each their own function. Some *cetasikas* such as feeling and remembrance or “perception” (*sanna*) accompany each *citta*, others do not. Unwholesome mental factors, *akusala cetasikas*, only accompany *akusala cittas*, whereas “beautiful” mental factors (*sobhana*) *cetasikas* accompany *kusala cittas*.

As regards physical phenomena or *rupa*, there are twentyeight kinds of *rupa* in all. *Rupas* are not merely textbook terms; they are realities which can be directly experienced. *Rupas* do not know or experience anything; they can be known by *nama*. *Rupa* arises and falls away, but it does not fall away as quickly as *nama*. When a characteristic of *rupa* such as hardness impinges on the bodysense it can be experienced through the bodysense by several *cittas* arising in succession within a process. But even though *rupa* lasts longer than *citta*, it falls away again, it is impermanent.

Rupas do not arise singly; they arise in units or groups. What we take for our body is composed of many groups or units, consisting each of different kinds of *rupa*, and the *rupas* in such a group arise together and fall away together. The reader will come across four conditioning factors which produce *rupas* of the body: *kamma*, *citta*, temperature and food. The last three factors are easier to understand, but the first factor, *kamma*, is harder to understand since *kamma* is a factor of the past.

We can perform good and bad deeds through body, speech and mind and these can produce their appropriate results later on. Such deeds are called *kamma*, but when we are more precise *kamma* is actually the *cetasika* volition or intention (*cetana*) which motivates the deed.

Kamma is a mental activity and thus its force can be accumulated. Since *cittas* which arise and fall away succeed one another in an unbroken series, the force of *kamma* is carried on from one moment of *citta* to the next moment of *citta*, from one life to the next life. In this way *kamma* is capable of producing its result later on. A good deed,

kusala kamma, can produce a pleasant result, and an evil deed can produce an unpleasant result.

Kamma produces result at the first moment of life: it produces rebirth-consciousness in a happy plane of existence such as the human plane or a heavenly plane, or in an unhappy plane of existence such as a hell plane or the animal world. Throughout life kamma produces seeing, hearing and the other sense-impressions which are *vipakacittas*, *cittas* which are results. *Vipakacittas* are neither *kusala cittas* nor *akusala cittas*. Seeing a pleasant object is the result of *kusala kamma* and seeing an unpleasant object is the result of *akusala kamma*. Due to kamma, gain and loss, praise and blame alternate in our life.

Rebirth-consciousness is the mental result of kamma, but at that moment kamma also produces *rupas* and kamma keeps on producing *rupas* throughout life; when it stops producing *rupas* our life-span has to end. Kamma produces particular kinds of *rupas* such as the senses, as we shall see.

Citta also produces *rupas*. Our different moods become evident by our facial expressions and then it is clear that *citta* produces *rupas*. Temperature which is actually the element of heat also produces *rupas*. The unborn being in the womb, for example, needs the right temperature in order to grow. Throughout life the element of heat produces *rupas*. Nutrition is another factor which produces *rupas*. When food has been taken by a living being it is assimilated into the body and then nutrition can produce *rupas*. Some of the groups of *rupa* of our body are produced by kamma, some by *citta*, some by temperature and some by nutrition. The four factors which produce the *rupas* of our body support and consolidate each other and keep this short-lived body going. If we see the intricate way in which different factors condition the *rupas* of our body we shall be less-inclined to think that the body belongs to a self.

There are not only *rupas* of the body; there are also *rupas* which are the material phenomena outside the body. What we take for rocks, plants or houses are *rupas* and these originate from temperature. We may wonder whether there are no other factors apart from the element of heat which contribute to the growth of plants, such as soil, light and moisture.

It is true that these factors are the right conditions which have to be present so that a plant can grow. But what we call soil, light and moisture are, when we are more precise, different compositions of *rupas* and none of these could arise without the element of heat or temperature which is the producing factor. *Rupas* which are outside the body are only produced by temperature, not by kamma, *citta* or nutrition.

Rupas perform their functions, no matter [how] one dresses oneself, eats, digests one's food, moves about, gesticulates, talks to others, in short, during all one's activities. If we do not study *rupas* we may not notice their characteristics which appear all the time in daily life. We will continue to be deluded by the outward appearance of things instead of knowing realities as they are. We should remember that the *rupa* which is the "earth-element" or solidity can appear as hardness or softness. Hardness impinges time and again on the body-sense, no matter what we are doing. When hardness appears, it can be known as only a kind of *rupa*, be it hardness of the body or hardness of an external object. In the ultimate sense it is only a kind of

rupa. The detailed study of *nama* and *rupa* will help us to see that there isn't anything which is "mine" or self.

The goal of the study of the *Abhidhamma* is the development of wisdom which leads to the eradication of all defilements.

The Buddhist Teaching on Physical Phenomena

Chapter 1

The Four Great Elements

Rupas do not arise singly; they arise in units or groups. Each of these groups is composed of different kinds of *rupa*. There are four kinds of *rupa*, the four "Great Elements" (*Maha-bhuta rupas*), which have to arise together with each and every group of *rupas*, no matter whether these are of the body or materiality outside. The types of *rupa* other than the four Great Elements depend on these four *rupas* and cannot arise without them. They are the following *rupas*:

the Element of Earth or solidity
the Element of Water or cohesion
the Element of Fire or heat
the Element of Wind (air) or motion

Earth, Water, Fire and Wind do not in this context have the same meaning as in conventional language [and], neither do they represent conceptual ideas as we find them in different philosophical systems.

In the *Abhidhamma* they represent ultimate realities, specific *rupas* which each have their own characteristic. The Element of Earth (in Pali: *pathavi dhatu*), which has been translated into English as "solidity" or "extension," has the characteristic of hardness or softness. It can be directly experienced when we touch something hard or soft. We do not have to name the *rupa* designated by "Element of Earth" in order to experience it. It is an element which arises and falls away; it has no abiding substance, it is devoid of a "self." It may seem that hardness can last for some time, but in reality [up close] it [is falling] away immediately.

Rupas are replaced so long as there are conditions for them to be produced by one of the four factors of kamma, *citta*, temperature or nutrition (See Introduction. This will be explained further on.). [In other words,] the hardness which is experienced now is already different from the hardness which arose a moment ago.

We used to think that a cushion or a chair could be experienced through touch. When we are more precise, it is hardness or softness which can be experienced through touch. Because of association and remembrance of former experiences we can think of a cushion or chair and we know that they are named "cushion" or "chair." This example can remind us that there is a difference between ultimate realities and concepts we can think of but which are not real in the ultimate sense.

Viewing the body and the things around us as different compositions of *rupas* may be a new outlook to us. Gradually we shall realize that *rupas* are not abstract categories, but that they are ‘realities’ appearing in daily life. I shall quote the definitions of the different *rupas* given by the commentaries, the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Atthasalini*. These definitions mention the characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause or immediate occasion (The *Atthasalini* explains these terms in Book I, Part II, ‘Analysis of Terms,’ 63.) of the *rupas* which are explained. The *Visuddhimagga* (XI, 93) (See also *Dhammasangani*, § 648 and *Atthasalini* II, Ch III, 332.) gives, for example, the following definition of the *rupa* which is the earth element or solidity:

“...The earth element has the characteristic of hardness. Its function is to act as a foundation. It is manifested as receiving (As will be explained, it receives the other *rupas* [with which] it arises together since it is their foundation.)...”

As to the proximate cause, I shall deal with that later on. Each reality [*rupa*] has its own individual characteristic by which it can be distinguished from other [such] realities. Solidity has hardness (or softness) as characteristic; the fire element has heat as characteristic. Such characteristics can be experienced when they appear.

As to function, *rupas* have functions in relation to other *rupas* or in relation to *nama*. Solidity acts as a foundation, namely for the other *rupas* it arises together within a group, that is its function. Smell, for example, could not arise alone, it needs solidity as foundation. It is the same with visible object or colour which can be experienced through the eyesense. Visible object or colour needs solidity as foundation or support, it could not arise alone. Solidity which arises together with visible object cannot be seen, only [a] visible object can be seen. As regards manifestation, this is the way a reality habitually appears. Solidity is manifested as receiving; it receives the other *rupas* [which] it arises together with, since it acts as their foundation. With regard to the proximate cause, according to the *Visuddhimagga* (XIV, 35) each of the four Great Elements has the other three as its proximate cause. The four Great Elements arise together and condition one another.

At first the [*Abhidhammic*] definitions of ‘realities’ may seem complicated, but when we have studied them we shall see that they are helpful for the understanding [of the relationships of] different realities, and this includes [an] understanding of the way they act on other realities and the way they manifest themselves. The study of realities is a foundation for the development of direct understanding, of seeing things as they really are.

In the *Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant’s Footprint* (*Middle Length Sayings* I, no. 28) we read that Sariputta taught the monks about the four Great Elements. We read about the element of earth or solidity, which is translated here as “extension”:

“....And what, your reverences, is the element of extension? The element of extension may be internal, it may be external. And what, your reverences, is the internal element of extension? Whatever is hard, solid, is internal, referable to an individual and derived therefrom, that is to say: the hair of the head, the hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow of the bones, kidney, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach, excrement, or whatever other thing is hard, solid, is internal....

If the body can be seen as only elements the wrong view of self can be eradicated. Solidity can be internal or external, outside the body. Solidity is also present in what we call a mountain or a rock, in all material phenomena. Sariputta reminded the monks of the impermanence of the element of extension:

There comes a time, your reverences, when the element of extension that is external is agitated; at that time the external element of extension disappears. The impermanence of this ancient external element of extension can be shown, your reverences, its liability to destruction can be shown, its liability to decay can be shown, its liability to change can be shown. So what of this short-lived body derived from craving? There is not anything here for saying, “I”, or “mine” or “I am....”

The impermanence of the element of solidity may manifest itself in such calamities of nature as an earthquake, but actually at each moment *rupas* arise and then fall away, they do not last.

As regards the Element of Water (in Pali: *apo dhatu*) or cohesion, the *Visuddhimagga* (XI, 93) defines it as follows (See also *Dhammasangani* § 652 and *Atthasalini* II, Book II, Ch III, 332.):

“...The water element has the characteristic of trickling. Its function is to intensify. It is manifested as holding together.”

The element of water or cohesion cannot be experienced through the bodysense, only through the mind-door. When we touch what we call water, it is only solidity, temperature or motion which can be experienced through the bodysense, not cohesion. Cohesion has to arise together with whatever kind of materiality arises. It makes the other *rupas* it accompanies cohere so that they do not become scattered.

The *Atthasalini* (II, Book II, Ch III, 335) explains:

“... For the element of cohesion binds together iron, etc., in masses, makes them rigid. Because they are so bound, they are called rigid. Similarly in the case of stones, mountains, palm-seeds, elephant-tusks, ox-horns, etc. All such things the element of cohesion binds, and makes rigid; they are rigid because of its binding.”

We read in the above quoted *sutta* that Sariputta explained to the monks about the internal liquid element (element of water):

“... Whatever is liquid, fluid is internal, referable to an individual or derived therefrom, that is to say: bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, serum, saliva, mucus, synovial fluid, urine or whatever other thing is liquid, fluid, is internal....”

When we shed tears or swallow saliva we can be reminded that what we take for the fluid of “my body” are only elements devoid of self. Sariputta reminded the monks that the external liquid element can become agitated and can bring destruction to villages, towns, districts and regions, or that the water of the oceans may go down and disappear. It is liable to change and it is impermanent. Both the internal and the external liquid element are impermanent and not self.

As to the Element of Fire, heat or temperature (in Pali: *tejo dhatu*), the *Visuddhimagga* (XI, 93) gives the following definition of it (See also *Dhammasangani* § 648, and *Atthasalini* II, Book II, Ch III, 332.):

“...The fire element has the characteristic of heat. Its function is to mature (maintain). It is manifested as a continued supply of softness.” (The *Atthasalini* (332) states that it has “the gift of softening [co-existent realities] as manifestation”.)

The element of heat or temperature can be experienced through the bodysense and it appears as heat or cold. Cold is a lesser degree of heat. The element of heat accompanies all kinds of materiality which arise, *rupas* of the body and materiality outside. It maintains or matures them. The element of heat is one of the four factors which produce *rupas* of the body. Kamma produces rupa from the first moment of life and after that temperature also starts to produce *rupas* of the body. *Rupas* which are materiality outside such as those of a plant or a rock are produced solely by temperature.

We read in the above quoted *sutta* that Sariputta explained to the monks about the internal element of heat:

“... Whatever is heat, warmth, is internal, referable to an individual and derived therefrom, such as by whatever one is vitalized, by whatever one is consumed, by whatever one is burnt up, and by whatever one has munched, drunk, eaten and tasted that is properly transmuted (in digestion), or whatever other thing is heat, warmth, is internal....”

The *Visuddhimagga* (XI, 36) which gives an explanation of the words of this *sutta* states that the element of heat plays its part in the process of aging: “... whereby this body grows old, reaches the decline of the faculties, loss of strength, wrinkles, greyness, and so on.”

As to the expression “burnt up,” it explains that when one is excited the internal element of heat causes the body to burn. The element of heat also has a function in the digestion of food, it “cooks” what is eaten and drunk. We may notice changes in body-temperature because of different conditions, for instance through the digestion of our food, or when we are excited, angry or afraid. So long as we are still alive the internal element of heat arises and falls away all the time. When heat presents itself and there is awareness of it it can be known as only a *rupa* element, not “my body-heat.” When we are absorbed in excitement, anger or fear we forget that there are in reality only different kinds of *nama* and *rupa* which arise and fall away.

The element of heat can be internal or external. Sariputta explained that the liability to change of the external heat element and its impermanence can be seen when it becomes agitated and burns up villages, towns, districts and regions, and is then extinguished through lack of fuel. Both the internal and the external element of heat are impermanent and not self.

As to the Element of Wind (in Pali: *vayo dhatu*) or motion, the *Visuddhimagga* (XI, 93) defines it as follows (See also *Dhammasangani* § 648 and *Atthasalini* II, Book II, Ch III, 332.):

“... The air element (wind) has the characteristic of distending. Its function is to cause motion. It is manifested as conveying.

We may believe that we can see motion of objects but the *rupa* which is motion cannot be seen. What we mean by motion as we express it in conventional language is not the same as the element of wind or motion. We can conclude that something has moved because there are different moments of seeing and thinking, and there is association of these different experiences, but that is not the experience of the *rupa* which is motion. This *rupa* can be directly experienced through the bodysense.

When we touch a body or an object which has a certain-resilience the characteristic of motion or pressure may present itself. These are characteristics of the element of wind. It can also be described as vibration or oscillation. As we read in the definition, the function of the element of wind is to cause motion and it is manifested as conveying. It is, for example, a condition for the movement of the limbs of the body. However, we should not confuse pictorial ideas with the direct experience of this *rupa* through the bodysense.

The element of wind or motion arises with all kinds of materiality, both of the body and outside the body. There is also motion with dead matter, such as a pot. It performs its function so that the pot holds its shape and does not collapse.

Sariputta explained about the internal element of motion:

“... And what, your reverences, is the internal element of motion? Whatever is motion, wind, is internal, referable to an individual and derived therefrom, such as winds going upwards, winds going downwards, winds in the abdomen, winds in the belly, winds that shoot across the several limbs, in-breathing, out-breathing, or whatever other thing is motion, wind, is internal....

We may notice pressure inside the body. When its characteristic appears it can be known as only a *rupa* which is conditioned. As to the words of the *sutta*, “winds that shoot across the several limbs,” the *Visuddhimagga* (XI, 37) explains that these are: “winds (forces) that produce flexing, extending, etc., and are distributed over the limbs and the whole body by means of the network of veins (nerves).”

The element of wind plays its specific role in the strengthening of the body so that it does not collapse, and assumes different postures; it is a condition for the stretching and bending of the limbs. While we are bending or stretching our arms and legs the element of wind may appear as motion or pressure. We read in the *Visuddhimagga* (XI, 92):

The air element that courses through all the limbs and has the characteristic of moving and distending, being founded upon earth, held together by water, and maintained by fire, distends this body. And this body, being distended by the latter kind of air, does not collapse, but stands erect, and being propelled by the other (motile) air, it shows intimation, and it flexes and extends and it wriggles the hands and feet, doing so in the

postures comprising walking, standing, sitting and lying down. So this mechanism of elements carries on like a magic trick, deceiving foolish people with the male and female sex and so on. We are deceived and infatuated by the outward appearance of a man or a woman and we forget that this body is a “mechanism of elements” and that it flexes and wriggles hands and feet because of conditions.

The above quoted *sutta* mentions, in connection with the element of wind, in-breathing and out-breathing. The *Visuddhimagga* (XI, 37) explains:

“In-breath: wind in the nostrils entering in. Out-breath: wind in the nostrils issuing out.” We are breathing throughout life, but most of the time we are forgetful of realities, we cling to an idea of “my breath.” Breath is *rupa* conditioned by *citta* and it presents itself where it touches the nosetip or upperlip. If there can be awareness of it the characteristics of hardness, softness, heat or motion can be experienced one at a time. However, breath is very subtle and it is most difficult to be aware of its characteristic.

We read in the above quoted *sutta* that Sariputta explained that the external element of motion can become agitated and carry away villages. Its liability to change and its impermanence can be seen. Both the external and the internal element of motion are impermanent.

As we have seen, the four great Elements always arise together, and each of them has the other three as its proximate cause. The *Visuddhimagga* (XI, 109) states that the four great Elements condition one another: the earth element acts as the foundation of the elements of water, fire and air; the water element acts as cohesion for the other three Great Elements; the fire element maintains the other three Great Elements; the air element acts as distension of the other three Great Elements.

We should remember that the element of water or cohesion cannot be experienced through the bodysense, only through the mind-door, and that the elements of earth, fire and wind can be directly experienced through the bodysense. The element of earth appears as hardness or softness, the element of fire as heat or cold and the element of wind as motion or pressure. Time and again *rupas* such as hardness or heat impinge on the bodysense but we are forgetful of what things really are. We let ourselves be deceived by the outer appearance of things. The *Visuddhimagga* (XI, 100) states that the four Great Elements are “deceivers”:

And just as the great creatures known as female spirits (*yakkhini*) conceal their own fearfulness with a pleasing colour, shape and gesture to deceive beings, so too, these elements conceal each their own characteristics and function classed as hardness, etc., by means of a pleasing skin colour of women’s and men’s bodies, etc., and pleasing shapes of limbs and pleasing gestures of fingers, toes and eyebrows, and they deceive simple people by concealing their own functions and characteristics beginning with hardness and do not allow their individual essences to be seen....

The *Visuddhimagga* (XI, 98) states that the four Great Elements are like the great creatures of a magician who “turns water that is not crystal into crystal, and turns a clod that is not gold into gold....” We are attached to crystal and gold, we are deceived

by the outward appearance of things. There is no crystal or gold in the ultimate sense, only *rupas* which arise and then fall away.

We may be able to know the difference between moments that we are absorbed in concepts and ideas and moments that there is mindfulness of realities such as hardness or heat which appear one at a time. Mindfulness (*sati*) arises with *kusala citta* and it is mindful of one *nama* or *rupa* at a time. When we are, for example, stung by a mosquito, we may have aversion towards the pain and there may be forgetfulness of realities. But when there are conditions for *kusala citta* with mindfulness a *rupa* such as heat can be object of mindfulness. This is the way to gradually develop the understanding which knows *nama* and *rupa* as they are: only elements which are impermanent and devoid of self.

As we read in the *Greater Discourse of the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint*, different "parts of the body" are mentioned where the characteristics of the four Great Elements are apparent. The aim is to see the body as it really is. When Sariputta explained about the four Great Elements he repeated after each section:

"...By means of perfect intuitive wisdom it should be seen of this as it really is, thus: This is not mine, this am I not, this is not myself..."

The Buddhist Teaching on Physical Phenomena

Chapter 2

The Eight Inseparable Rupas

The four Great Elements of solidity, cohesion, temperature and motion are always present wherever there is materiality. Apart from these four elements there are other *rupas*, namely twentyfour "derived *rupas*" (in Pali: *upada rupas*). The *Atthasalini* (II, Book II, Ch III, 305) explains about them:

"... grasping the great essentials (great elements), not letting go, such (derived *rupas*) proceed in dependance upon them." Thus, the derived *rupas* could not arise without the four Great Elements.

But not all kinds of derived *rupas* arise with every group of *rupas*. However, four among the derived *rupas* always arise together with the four Great Elements in every group of *rupas* and are thus present wherever there is materiality, no matter whether *rupas* of the body or materiality outside the body. These four *rupas* are the following:

visible object (or colour)
odour
flavour
nutrition

The four Great elements and these four derived *rupas* which always arise together are called the "inseparable *rupas*" (in Pali: *avinibbhoga rupas*). Wherever there is solidity, there also have to be cohesion, temperature, motion, colour, odour, flavour

and nutritive essence. As regards visible object or colour, this is a *rupa* arising with every kind of materiality. It is that which is experienced through the eye-door. It is not a thing or a person. Visible object is the only *rupa* which can be seen.

Colours are different because of different conditions (See also *Dhammasangani* § 617.) but no matter which colour appears we should remember that what is experienced through the eye-door is the *rupa* which is visible, 'visible object.' The *Atthasalini* (II, Book II, Ch III, 318) gives the following definition of 'visible object' (See also *Visuddhimagga* XIV, 54.):

"... For all this matter has the characteristic of striking the eye, the function or property of being in relation of object to visual cognition, the manifestation of being the field of visual cognition, the proximate cause of the "four great essentials" (four Great Elements).

Visible object has as its proximate cause the four Great Elements because it cannot arise without them. However, when a characteristic of one of these four Great Elements, such as hardness or heat, is experienced, the accompanying visible object cannot be experienced at the same time. When there are conditions for seeing, 'visible object' is experienced.

When we close our eyes, there may be remembrance of the shape and form of a thing, but that is not the experience of visible object. The thinking of a "thing," no matter whether our eyes are closed or open, is different from the actual experience of what is visible.

We may find it difficult to know what 'visible object' is, since we are usually absorbed in paying attention to the shape and form of things. When we perceive the shape and form of something, for example of a chair, we think of a concept. A chair cannot impinge on the eyesense.

Seeing does not see a chair, it only sees what is visible. Seeing and thinking occur at different moments. There is not thinking all the time, there are also moments of just seeing, moments that we do not pay attention to shape and form.

There can be only one *citta* at a time experiencing one object, but different experiences arise closely one after the other.

When one cannot distinguish them yet from each other, one believes that they occur all at the same time. If we remember that 'visible object' is the *rupa* which can be experienced through the eyesense, right understanding of this reality can be developed.

As we have seen, odour is another *rupa* among the eight inseparable *rupas*. Wherever there is materiality, no matter whether of the body or outside the body, there has to be odour. The *Dhammasangani* (§ 625) mentions different odours, pleasant and unpleasant, but they all are just odour which can be experienced through the nose. The *Atthasalini* (II, Book II, Ch III, 320) defines odour as follows (See also *Visuddhimagga* XIV, 56.):

“... all odours have the characteristic of striking the sense of smell, the property of being the object of olfactory cognition, the manifestation of being the field of the same....”

It has as proximate cause the four Great Elements. Odour cannot arise alone, it needs the four Great Elements which arise together with it and it is also accompanied by the other *rupas* which are included in the eight inseparable *rupas*. When odour appears we tend to be carried away by like or dislike. We are attached to fragrant odours and we loathe nasty smells. However, odour is only a reality which is experienced through the nose and it does not last.

If one does not develop understanding of realities one will be enslaved by all objects experienced through the senses. On account of these objects *akusala cittas* tend to arise and even unwholesome deeds may be committed. When someone thinks that there is a self who can own what is seen, touched or smelt, he may even steal or kill. In reality all these objects are insignificant, they arise and then fall away immediately.

As regards flavour, the *Dhammasangani* (§ 629) mentions different kinds of flavour, such as sour, sweet, bitter or pungent; they may be nice or nauseous, but they are all just flavour which is experienced through the tongue. The *Atthasalini* (II, Book II, Ch III, 320) defines flavour as follows (See also *Visuddhimagga* XIV, 70.):

“... all tastes have the characteristic of striking the tongue, the property of being the object of gustatory cognition, the manifestation of being the field of the same...”

Its proximate cause is the four Great Elements. Flavour does not arise alone, it needs the four Great Elements which arise together with it, and it is also accompanied by the other *rupas* which are included in the eight inseparable *rupas*. We are attached to food and we find its flavour very important. As soon as we have tasted delicious flavour attachment tends to arise. We are forgetful of the reality of flavour which is only a kind of *rupa*. When we recognize what kind of flavour we taste, we think about a concept, but the thinking is conditioned by the experience of flavour through the tongue.

Nutrition is another kind of *rupa* which has to arise with every kind of materiality. It can be experienced only through the mind-door. The *Dhammasangani* (§ 646) mentions foods such as boiled rice, sour gruel, flour, etc., which can be eaten and digested into the “juice” by which living beings are kept alive. The *Atthasalini* (II, Book II, Ch III, 330) explains that there is foodstuff, the substance which is swallowed (*kabalinkaro aharo*, literally, morsel-made food), and the “nutritive essence” (*oja*). The foodstuff which is swallowed fills the stomach so that one does not grow hungry. The nutritive essence which is in food preserves beings, keeps them alive. The nutritive essence in gross foodstuff is weak, and in subtle foodstuff it is strong. After eating coarse grain one becomes hungry after a brief interval. But when one has taken ghee (butter) one does not want to eat for a long time (*Atthasalini*, 331). The *Atthasalini* (332) gives the following definition of nutriment (See also *Visuddhimagga* XIV, 70.):

“As to its characteristic, etc., solid food has the characteristic of nutritive essence, the function of fetching matter (to the eater), of sustaining matter as its manifestation, of substance to be swallowed as proximate cause.

Nutritive essence is not only present in rice and other foods; it is also present in what we call a rock or sand. It is present in any kind of materiality. Insects are able to digest what human beings cannot digest, such as, for example, wood.”

Nutrition is one of the four factors which produce *rupas* of the body. As we have seen, the other factors are kamma, *citta* and temperature (See Introduction.). In the unborn being in the mother’s womb, groups of *rupa* produced by nutrition arise as soon as the nutritive essence present in food taken by its mother pervades its body (*Visuddhimagga* XVII, 194). From then on nutrition keeps on producing *rupas* and sustaining the *rupas* of the body throughout life.

We can notice that nutrition produces *rupas* when good or bad food affects the body in different ways. Bad food may cause the skin to be ugly, whereas the taking of vitamins for example may cause skin and hair to look healthy.

Because of attachment we are inclined to be immoderate as to food. We forget to consider food as a medicine for our body. The Buddha exhorted the monks to eat just the quantity of food which is needed to sustain the body but not more and to reflect wisely when eating (*Visuddhimagga* I, 85). The monk should review with understanding the requisites he receives. We read in the *Visuddhimagga* (I, 124):

“... For use is blameless in one who at the time of receiving robes, etc., reviews them either as (mere) elements or as repulsive, and puts them aside for later use, and in one who reviews them thus at the time of using them.”

The monk should review robes, and the other requisites of dwelling, food and medicines, as mere elements or as repulsive. If he considers food as repulsive it helps him not to indulge in it. Food consists merely of conditioned elements. This can be a useful reminder, also for laypeople, to be mindful when eating. In the Commentary to the “*Satipatthana Sutta*” (The *Papanicasudani*). See *The Way of Mindfulness*, a translation of the *Satipatthana Sutta*, Middle Length Sayings I, 10, and its commentary by Ven. Soma, B.P.S. Kandy.), in the section on Mindfulness of the Body, on “Clear Comprehension in Partaking of Food and Drink,” we read that, when one swallows food, there is no one who puts the food down into the stomach with a ladle or spoon, but there is the element of wind performing its function. We then read about digestion:

“... There is no one who having put up an oven and lit a fire is cooking each lump standing there. By only the process of calorificity (heat) the lump of food matures. There is no one who expels each digested lump with a stick or pole. Just the process of oscillation (the element of wind or motion) expels the digested food.”

There is no self who eats and drinks, there are only elements performing their functions.

Whatever kind of materiality arises, there have to be the four Great Elements and the four derived *rupas* of visible object, odour, flavour and nutrition. Because of

ignorance we are attached to our possessions. We may understand that when life ends we cannot possess anything anymore. But even at this moment there is no “thing” we can possess, there are only different elements which do not stay. When we look at beautiful things such as gems we tend to cling to them.

However, through the eyes only colour or visible object appears and through touch tangible object such as hardness appears. In the absolute sense, it does not make any difference whether it is hardness of a gem or hardness of a pebble which is experienced through touch. We may not like to accept this truth since we find that gems and pebbles have different values. We have accumulated conditions to think about concepts and do not develop understanding of realities. We tend to forget that what we call gems and also the *cittas* which enjoy them do not last, they are gone immediately. Someone who leads the life of a layman enjoys his possessions, but he can also develop understanding of what things really are.

In the ultimate sense, life exists only in one moment, the present moment. At the moment of seeing the world of visible object is experienced, at the moment of hearing the world of sound, and at the moment of touching the world of tangible object. Life is actually one moment of experiencing an object.

The *Book of Analysis (Vibhanga, Second Book of the Abhidhamma, Pali Text Society, 1969.)* (Part 3, “Analysis of the Elements,” § 173) mentions precious stones together with pebbles and gravel in order to remind us of the truth. It explains about the internal element of extension (solidity) as being hair of the head, hair of the body and other “parts of the body.” Then it explains about the external element of extension as follows:

Therein what is the external element of extension? That which is external, hard, harsh, hardness, being hard, external, not grasped. For example: iron, copper, tin, lead, silver, pearl, gem, cat’s-eye, shell, stone, coral, silver coin, gold, ruby, variegated precious stone, grass, wood, gravel, potsherd, earth, rock, mountain; or whatever else there is....”

The elements give us pleasure or pain.

When we do not realize them as they are, we are enslaved by them.

We read in the *Kindred Sayings (II, Nidana-vagga, Ch XIV, “Kindred Sayings on Elements,” § 34, Pain)* that the Buddha said to the monks at Savatthi:

“If this earth-element, monks, this water-element, this heat-element, this air-element were entirely painful, beset with pain, immersed in pain, not immersed in happiness, beings would not be lusting after them. But inasmuch as each of these elements is pleasant, beset with pleasure, immersed in pleasure, not in pain, therefore, it is that beings get lusting after them.

If this earth-element, monks, this water-element, this heat-element, this air-element were entirely pleasant, beset with pleasure, immersed in pleasure, not immersed in pain, beings would not be repelled by them. But inasmuch as each of these elements is

painful, is beset with pain, immersed in pain, not immersed in pleasure, therefore it is that beings are repelled by them...”

We are bound to be attached to the elements when we buy beautiful clothes or enjoy delicious food. We are bound to be repelled by the elements when we get hurt or when we are sick. But no matter whether the objects we experience are pleasant or unpleasant, we should realize them as elements which arise because of their own conditions and which do not belong to us.

The Buddhist Teaching on Physical Phenomena

Chapter 3

The Sense-Organs (*Pasada Rupas*)

So long as there are conditions for birth we have to be born and to experience pleasant or unpleasant objects. It is kamma which produced rebirth-consciousness as well as seeing, hearing and the other sense-impressions which arise throughout our life. For the experience of objects through the senses there have to be sense-organs and these are *rupas* which are produced by kamma as well. The sense-organs (*pasada rupas*) are physical results of kamma whereas seeing, hearing and the other sense-impressions are *nama*, *vipakacittas* which are the mental results of kamma (See Introduction.).

For seeing there must be ‘visible object’ and also the *rupa* which is eyesense. Eyesense does not know anything since it is *rupa*, but it is a necessary condition for seeing. Eyesense is a *rupa* in the eye which is capable of receiving visible object so that *citta* can experience it. For hearing, the experience of sound, there has to be ear-sense, which is a *rupa* in the ear capable of receiving sound. There must be smelling-sense for the experience of odour, tastingsense for the experience of flavour and bodysense for the experience of tangible object. Thus, there are five kinds of sense-organs.

As regards the eye, the *Atthasalini* (II, Book II, Ch III, 306) distinguishes between the eye as “compound organ” and as “sentient organ,” namely the *rupa* which is eyesense, situated in the eye (In Pali: “*cakkhu pasada rupa*”). The eye as “compound organ” is described as follows:

“... a lump of flesh is situated in the cavity of the eye, bound by the bone of the cavity of the eye below, by the bone of the brow above, by the eye-peaks on both sides, by the brain inside, by the eyelashes outside....”

“Although the world perceives the eye as white, as (of a certain) bigness, extension, width, the world does not know the real sentient eye, but only the physical basis thereof. That lump of flesh situated in the cavity of the eye is bound to the brain by sinewy threads. Therein are white, black, red, extension, cohesion, heat and mobility. The eye is white from the abundance of phlegm, black from that of bile, red from that of blood, rigid from the element of extension, fluid from that of cohesion, hot from that of heat, and oscillating from that of mobility. Such is the compound organ of the eye....”

As to the “sentient eye” or eyesense, this is to be found, according to the *Atthasalini*, in the middle of the black circle, surrounded by white circles, and it permeates the ocular membranes “as sprinkled oil permeates seven cotton wicks.” We read:

“And it is served by the four elements doing the functions of sustaining, binding, maturing and vibrating (The earth element performs its function of sustaining, the water element of holding together, the fire element of maintaining or maturing, and the wind element of oscillation...), just as a princely boy is tended by four nurses doing the functions of holding, bathing, dressing and fanning him. And being upheld by the caloric order, by thought (*citta*) and nutriment, and guarded by life and attended by colour, odour, taste, etc., the organ, no bigger in size than the head of a louse, stands duly fulfilling the nature of the basis and the door of visual cognition, etc.”

The *Visuddhimagga* (XIV, 37) gives the following definition of eyesense (See also *Dhammasangani* § 597 and *Atthasalini* II, Book II, Ch III, 312.):

Herein, the eye’s characteristic is sensitivity of primary elements that is ready for the impact of visible data; or its characteristic is sensitivity of primary elements originated by kamma sourcing from desire to see. Its function is to pick up (an object) among visible data. It is manifested as the footing of eye-consciousness. Its proximate cause is primary elements (the four Great Elements) born of kamma sourcing from desire to see.

We have desire to see, we are attached to all sense-impressions and, thus, there are still conditions for kamma to produce rebirth, to produce seeing, hearing and the other sense-impressions, and also to produce the sense-organs which are the conditions for the experience of sense objects. Also in future lives there are bound to be sense-impressions.

Eyesense seems to last and we are inclined to take it for “self.” It seems that there can be a long moment of seeing and that the same eyesense keeps on performing its function. However, eyesense arises and then falls away. At the next moment of seeing there is another eyesense again. All these eyesenses are produced by kamma, throughout our life. We may find it hard to grasp this truth because we are so used to thinking of “my eyesense” and to consider it as something lasting.

The eyesense is extremely small, “no bigger in size than the head of a louse,” but it seems that the whole wide world comes to us through the eye. All that is visible is experienced through the eyesense, but when we believe that we see the world there is thinking of a concept, not the experience of visible object. However, our thinking is conditioned by seeing and by all the other sense-impressions.

The eye is compared to an ocean (*Dhammasangani* § 597. *Atthasalini* II, Book II, Ch III, 308.), because it cannot be filled, it is unsatiable. We are attached to the eyesense and we want to go on seeing, it never is enough.

We read in the *Kindred Sayings* (IV, Salayatana-vagga, Fourth Fifty, Ch 3, § 187, The Ocean):

... The eye of a man, monks, is the ocean. Its impulse is made of objects. Whoso endures that object-made impulse - of him, monks, it is said, "he has crossed over." That ocean of the eye, with its waves and whirlpools, its sharks and demons, the brahmin has crossed and gone beyond. He stands on dry ground.....

The same is said with regard to the other senses.

We read in the *Therigatha* (*Psalms of the Sisters*, Canto XIV, 71, Subha of Jivaka's Mango-grove) that the Theri Subha became an *anagami* (There are four stages of enlightenment. The *anagami* or "non-returner" has reached the third stage. The arahat has reached the last stage.); she had eradicated clinging to sense objects. A young man, infatuated with the beauty of her eyes, wanted to tempt her. She warned him not to be deluded by the outward appearance of things. In reality there are only elements devoid of self. The Theri said about her eye (vs. 395):

"What is this eye but a little ball lodged in the fork of a hollow tree, Bubble of film, anointed with tear-brine, exuding slime-drops. Compost wrought in the shape of an eye of manifold aspects?...."

The Theri extracted one of her eyes and handed it to him. The impact of her lesson did not fail to cure the young man of his lust. Later on, in the presence of the Buddha, her eye was restored to her. She continued to develop insight and attained arahatship.

Eyesense is only an element devoid of self. It is one of the conditions for seeing. The *Visuddhimagga* (XV, 39) states about the conditions for seeing: "Eye-consciousness arises due to eye, visible object, light and attention."

Earsense is another one of the sense-organs. It is situated in the interior of the ear, "at a spot shaped like a finger-ring and fringed by tender, tawny hairs...." (*Atthasalini* II, Book II, Part I, Ch III, 310.). Earsense is the *rupa* which has the capability to receive sound. It is basis and door of hearing-consciousness.

The *Visuddhimagga* (XIV, 38) gives the following definition (See also *Dhammasangani* § 601 and *Atthasalini* II, Book II, Part I, Ch III, 312.):

The ear's characteristic is sensitivity of primary elements that is ready for impact of sounds; or its characteristic is sensitivity of primary elements originated by kamma sourcing from desire to hear. Its function is to pick up (an object) among sounds. It is manifested as the footing of ear-consciousness. Its proximate cause is primary elements born of kamma sourcing from desire to hear.

Without earsense there cannot be hearing. The *Visuddhimagga* (XV, 39) states: "Ear-consciousness arises due to ear, sound, aperture and attention." "Aperture" is the cavity of the ear. If one of these conditions is lacking hearing cannot arise.

As to the other *pasada rupas*, smellingsense, tastingsense and bodysense, these are defined in the same way (See *Dhammasangani* § 605, 609, 613, *Visuddhimagga* XIV, 39, 40, 41, *Atthasalini*, Book II, Part I, Ch III, 312.). Smellingsense is a *rupa* situated in the nose. It is one of the conditions for smelling. The *Visuddhimagga* (XV, 39)

states: Nose-consciousness arises due to nose, odour, air (the element of wind or motion) and attention.” As to the element of wind or motion being a condition, we read in the *Atthasalini* (II, Book II, Part I, Ch III, 315):

“... the nose desires space, and has for object odour dependent on wind. Indeed, cattle at the first showers of rain keep smelling at the earth, and turning up their muzzles to the sky breathe in the wind. And when a fragrant lump is taken in the fingers and smelt, no smell is got when breath is not inhaled....”

As to tastingsense, this is situated in the tongue and it is one of the conditions for tasting. The *Visuddhimagga* states in the same section: “Tongue-consciousness arises due to tongue, flavour, water and attention.” Also the element of water or cohesion plays its part when there is tasting. We read in the *Atthasalini* (same section, 315) about the element of water being a condition for tasting:

“... Thus even when a bhikkhu’s duties have been done during the three watches of the night, and he early in the morning, taking bowl and robe, has to enter the village, he is not able to discern the taste of dry food unwetted by the saliva....”

As to bodysense, this is situated all over the body and inside it, except in the hairs or tips of the nails. It is one of the conditions for experiencing ‘tactile object.’ The *Visuddhimagga* states, in the same section: “Body-consciousness arises due to body, tangible object, earth and attention.” The *Atthasalini* (same section, 315) explains:

“... Internal and external extension (solidity) is the cause of the tactile sense seizing the object. Thus it is not possible to know the hardness or softness of a bed well spread out or of fruits placed in the hand, without sitting down on the one or pressing the other. Hence internal and external extension is the cause in the tactile cognition of the tactile organ.”

Thus, when there is tactile cognition, bodyconsciousness, there are actually elements which impinge on elements. The impact of tactile object on the bodysense is more vigorous than the impact of the objects on the other senses. According to the *Paramattha Manjusa*, a commentary to the *Visuddhimagga* (See *Visuddhimagga*, XIV, footnote 56.), because of the violence of the impact on the bodysense, body-consciousness (*kayavinnana*) is accompanied either by pleasant feeling or by painful feeling, not by indifferent feeling, whereas the other sense-cognitions (seeing, hearing, etc.) are accompanied by indifferent feeling.

Through the bodysense are experienced: the earth element, appearing as hardness or softness; the fire element, appearing as heat or cold; the wind element, appearing as motion or pressure. When these characteristics appear they can be directly experienced wherever there is bodysense, thus also inside the body.

As we have seen, visible object, sound, odour, flavour and tangible object (three of the four Great Elements) are experienced through the corresponding sense-doors and they can also be experienced through the mind-door. The sense-organs themselves through which the sense-objects are experienced are *rupas* which can only be known through the mind-door.

The five sense-organs are the bases (*vatthus*) or places of origin of the corresponding sense-cognitions. *Cittas* do not arise outside the body, they are dependent on physical bases where they originate (There are also planes of existence where there is only *nama*, not *rupa*. In such planes *cittas* do not need a physical base.). The eyesense is the base where seeing-consciousness originates. The earsense is the base where hearing-consciousness originates, and it is the same in the case of the other sense-organs. As regards the base for body-consciousness, this can be at any place of the body where there is sensitivity. The sense-organs are bases only for the corresponding sense-cognitions. All the other *cittas* have another base, the heart-base, with which we shall deal later on.

The five sense-organs function also as doorways for the five kinds of sense-cognitions, as we have seen. The doorway (*dvara*) is the means by which *citta* experiences an object. The eyesense is the doorway by which seeing-consciousness and also the other *cittas* arising in that process experience visible object. As we have seen, *cittas* which experience objects impinging on the senses and the mind-door time and again, arise in processes of *cittas* (See Introduction.). The *cittas* other than seeing-consciousness which arise in the eye-door process do not see, but they each perform their own function while they cognize visible object, such as considering visible object or investigating it. Each of the five sense-organs can be the doorway for all the *cittas* in the process which experience a sense-object through that doorway. The sense-organs can have the function of base as well as doorway only in the case of the five sense-cognitions.

The sense-organs arise and fall away all the time and they are only ‘doorway’ when an object is experienced through that sense-organ. Eyesense, for example, is only eye-door when visible object is experienced by the *cittas* arising in the eye-door process. When sound is experienced, earsense is doorway and eyesense does not function as doorway.

The *Atthasalini* in (II, Book II, Ch III, 316) states that “the senses are not mixed.” They each have their own characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause, and through each of them the appropriate object is experienced. The earsense can only receive sound, not visible object or flavour. Hearing can only experience sound through the ear-door. We are not used to considering each doorway separately since we are inclined to think of a person who coordinates all experiences. We are inclined to forget that a *citta* arises because of conditions, experiences one object just for a moment, and then falls away immediately. In order to help people to have right understanding of realities, the Buddha spoke time and again about each of the six doorways separately. He told people to “guard” the doorways in being mindful, because on account of what is experienced through these doorways many kinds of defilements tend to arise.

We read in the *Kindred Sayings* (IV, Salayatanavagga, Third Fifty, Ch 3, § 127, Bharadvaja) that King Udena asked the venerable Bharadvaja what the cause was that young monks could practise the righteous life in its fullness and perfection. Bharadvaja spoke about the advice the Buddha gave to them, such as seeing the foulness of the body, and guarding the six doors. We read that Bharadvaja said:

“... It has been said, Maharajah, by the Exalted One... : “Come, monks, do you abide watchful over the doors of the faculties. Seeing an object with the eye, be not misled by its outer view, nor by its lesser details. But since coveting and dejection, evil, unprofitable states, might overwhelm one who dwells with the faculty of the eye uncontrolled, do you apply yourselves to such control, set a guard over the faculty of the eye and attain control of it. Hearing a sound with the ear... with the nose smelling a scent... with the tongue tasting a savour... with the body contacting tangibles... with the mind cognizing mind-states... be you not misled by their outward appearance nor by their lesser details... attain control thereof.”

We then read that King Udena praised the Buddha’s words. He said about his own experiences:

“I myself, master Bharadvaja, whenever I enter my palace with body, speech and mind unguarded, with thought unsettled, with my faculties uncontrolled, - at such times lustful states overwhelm me. But whenever, master Bharadvaja, I do so with body, speech and mind guarded, with thought settled, with my faculties controlled, at such times lustful states do not overwhelm me....

We read that King Udena took his refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

How can we avoid being misled by the outward appearance or by the details of phenomena? By understanding realities as they are when they appear, one at a time. The following sutta in the *Kindred Sayings* (IV, *Salayatanavagga*, Second Fifty, Ch 3, § 82, The World) reminds us not to cling to a “whole” but to be mindful of only one object at a time as it appears through one of the six doors:

Then a certain monk came to see the Exalted One.... Seated at one side that monk said to the Exalted One:

“‘The world! The world!’ is the saying, lord. How far, lord, does this saying go?”

“It crumbles away, monks. Therefore it is called ‘the world’ (In Pali there is a word association of *loko*, world, with *lujjati*, to crumle away). What crumbles away? The eye... objects... eye-consciousness... eye-contact... that pleasant or unpleasant or neutral feeling that arises owing to eye-contact... tongue... body... mind... It crumbles away, monks. Therefore it is called ‘the world’”

The Buddhist Teaching on Physical Phenomena

Chapter 4

Sense Objects

We are infatuated with all the objects which are experienced through the sense-doors. However, they are only *rupas* which fall away immediately; we cannot possess them. Sometimes we experience pleasant objects and sometimes unpleasant objects. The experience of a pleasant object is the result of *kusala kamma* and the experience of an unpleasant object is the result of *akusala kamma*. The objects which can be experienced through the sense-doors are the following:

colour or visible object
sound
odour
flavour
tangible object

As we have seen, three of the four Great Elements can be tangible object, namely: solidity (appearing as hardness or softness), temperature (appearing as heat or cold) and motion (appearing as motion, oscillation or pressure). The element of cohesion is not ‘tangible object,’ it can be experienced only through the mind-door.

‘Visible object,’ odour and flavour are included in the “eight inseparable *rupas*” which always arise together. Although they arise together, only one kind of *rupa* at a time can be the object which is experienced. When there are conditions for the experience, for example, of flavour, the flavour which impinges on the tastingsense is experienced by tasting-consciousness. Flavour arises together with the four Great Elements of solidity, temperature, cohesion and motion, and with visible object, odour and nutrition, but these are not experienced at that moment.

Sound is the object of hearing-consciousness. Sound is not included in the eight inseparable *rupas*, but when it arises it has to be accompanied by these *rupas* which each perform their own function. Whenever there is sound, there also have to be solidity, cohesion, temperature, motion and the other inseparable *rupas*. When sound is heard, the accompanying *rupas* cannot be experienced (Because each *citta* can experience only one object at a time through the appropriate doorway.).

We read in the *Dhammasangani* (§ 621) about different kinds of sounds, such as sound of drums and other musical instruments, sound of singing, noise of people, sound of concussion of matter, sound of wind or water, human sound, such as sound of people talking. The *Atthasalini* (II, Book II, Part I, Ch III, 319) which gives a further explanation of these kinds of sounds [and] defines sound as follows (See also *Visuddhimagga* XIV, 55.):

“.. all sounds have the characteristic of striking the ear, the function and property of being the object of auditory cognition, the manifestation of being the field or object of auditory cognition....”

Like the other sense objects, sound has as its proximate cause the four Great Elements. No matter what sound we hear, it has a degree of loudness and it “strikes the ear.” Its characteristic can be experienced without one having to think about it. We may hear the sound of a bird and it seems that we know at once the origin of the sound. When we know the origin of the sound it is not hearing, but thinking of a concept. However, the thinking is conditioned by the hearing. It seems that we can hear different sounds at a time, for example when a chord is played on the piano. When we recognize the different notes of a chord it is not hearing but thinking. When there is awareness, one reality at a time can be known as it is. Sound can be produced by temperature or by *citta*. Sound of wind or sound of water is produced by temperature. Speech sound is produced by *citta*.

We are inclined to find a loud noise disturbing and we may make ourselves believe that there cannot be mindfulness of realities when we hear a loud noise. We read in the *Theragatha (Psalms of the Brothers, Part VII, 62, Vajjiputta)* about a monk of the Vajjian clan who was dwelling in a wood near Vesali. The commentary to this verse (*Paramatthadipani*) states:

“... Now a festival took place at Vesali, and there was dancing, singing and reciting, all the people happily enjoying the festival. And the sound thereof distracted the bhikkhu, so that he quitted his solitude, gave up his exercise, and showed forth his disgust in this verse:

Each by himself we in the forest dwell,
Like logs rejected by the woodman’s craft.
So flit the days one like another by,
Who more unlucky in their lot than we?

Now a woodland deva heard him, and had compassion on the bhikkhu, and thus upbraided him, “Even though you, bhikkhu, speak scornfully of forest life, the wise, desiring solitude, think much of it,” and to show him the advantage of it spoke this verse:

Each by himself we in the forest dwell,
Like logs rejected by the woodman’s craft.
And many a one does envy me my lot,
Even as the hell-bound envies him who fares to heaven.

Then the bhikkhu, stirred like a thoroughbred horse by the spur, went down into the avenue of insight, and striving soon won arahatship. Thereupon he thought, “The deva’s verse has been my goad!” and he recited it himself.

By this *Sutta* we are reminded that aversion to noise is not helpful. Our most important task is being mindful of whatever reality presents itself. When sound appears correct understanding of this reality can be developed. It can be known as a kind of *rupa* and it does not matter what kind of sound it is. We are infatuated with pleasant sense objects and disturbed by unpleasant ones. We often find reasons why we cannot be mindful of the present moment.

We would like to hear only pleasant things. When someone speaks unpleasant words to us we are inclined to think about it for a long time instead of being mindful of realities. We may forget that the moment of hearing is *vipakacitta*, result produced by kamma. Nobody can change *vipaka*. Hearing falls away immediately. When we think with aversion about the meaning of the words which were spoken we accumulate unwholesomeness.

We read in the *Greater Discourse of the Elephant’s Footprint (Middle Length Sayings I, 28)* that Sariputta spoke to the monks about the elements which are conditioned, impermanent and devoid of self. He also spoke about the hearing of unpleasant words:

“... Your reverences, if others abuse, revile, annoy, vex this monk, he comprehends: ‘This painful feeling that has arisen in me is born of sensory impingement on the ear,

it has a cause, not no cause. What is the cause? Sensory impingement is the cause.’ He sees that sensory impingement is impermanent, he sees that feeling... perception... the habitual tendencies (*sankharakkhandha*) are impermanent, he sees that consciousness is impermanent (This *sutta* refers to the five *khandhas*. Conditioned *namas* and *rupas* can be classified as five *khandhas* or aggregates: *rupakkhandha* (comprising all *rupas*), *vedanakkhandha* or the *khandha* of feelings, *sannakkhandha*, the *khandha* of perception or remembrance, *sankharakkhandha*, the *khandha* of “habitual tendencies” or “formations,” including all *cetasikas* other than feeling and perception, *vinnanakkhandha*, including all *cittas*.). His mind rejoices, is pleased, composed, and is set on the objects of the element. If, your reverences, others comport themselves in undesirable, disagreeable, unpleasant ways towards that monk, and he receives blows from their hands and from clods of earth and from sticks and weapons, he comprehends thus: ‘This body is such that blows from hands affect it and blows from clods of earth affect it and blows from sticks affect it and blows from weapons affect it. But this was said by the Lord in the Parable of the Saw: ‘If, monks, low-down thieves should carve you limb from limb with a two-handled saw, whoever sets his heart at enmity, he, for this reason, is not a doer of my teaching.’ Unsluggish energy shall come to be stirred up by me, unmuddled mindfulness set up, the body tranquilised, impassible, the mind composed and onepointed. Now, willingly, let blows from hands affect this body, let blows from clods of earth... from sticks... from weapons affect it, for this teaching of the Awakened Ones is being done.’”

Do we see our experiences as elements to such a degree already that, when we hear unpleasant words, we can immediately realize: “This painful feeling that has arisen in me is born of sensory impingement on the ear”? In order to see realities as they are it is necessary to develop understanding of *nama* and *rupa*. There are different ways of classifying *rupas*. One way is the classification as the four Great Elements (*mahabhuta rupas*) and the derived *rupas* (*upada rupas*) which are the other twentyfour *rupas* among the twentyeight *rupas*.

Another way is the classification as gross *rupas* (*olarika rupas*) and subtle *rupas* (*sukhuma rupas*). Twelve kinds of *rupa* are gross; they are the sense-objects which can be experienced through the sense-doors, namely: visible object, sound, odour, flavour and the three *rupas* which are tangible object, namely: solidity, temperature and motion, thus, three of the great Elements, and also the five sense-organs (*pasada rupas*) which can be the doors through which these objects are experienced. The other sixteen *rupas* among the twentyeight kinds are subtle *rupas* (As we see, of the eight inseparable *rupas* six are gross, namely: three of the four Great Elements, visible object, odour and flavour, and two are subtle, namely: cohesion and nutrition.).

The *Visuddhimagga* (XIV, 73) states that twelve *rupas* “are to be taken as gross because of impinging; the rest is subtle because they are the opposite of that.” The seven *rupas* which can be sense objects (They are visible object, sound, odour, flavour and three tangible objects which are three among the Great Elements.) are impinging time and again on the five *rupas* which are the sense organs. Subtle *rupas* do not impinge on the senses. According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the subtle *rupas* are far, because they are difficult to penetrate, whereas the gross *rupas* are near, because they are easy to penetrate.

There is impingement of objects on the senses time and again, but we are usually forgetful of realities. We have learnt about the four Great Elements and other *rupas* and we may begin to recognize different characteristics of realities when they present themselves. For example, when we are walking, *rupas* such as hardness, heat or pressure may appear one at a time. We can learn the difference between the direct experience of characteristics of *rupa* and the thinking of concepts such as feet and ground. The ground cannot impinge on the bodysense and be directly experienced. The Buddha urged the monks to develop right understanding during all their actions. We read in the Commentary to the “*Satipatthana Sutta*” (In the *Middle Length Sayings* I, no 10. See the translation of the commentary to this *sutta* in *The Way of Mindfulness* by Ven. Soma, B.P.S. Kandy, 1975.), in the section on the four kinds of Clear Comprehension, about clear comprehension in wearing robes:

“... Within there is nothing called a soul that robes itself. According to the method of exposition adopted already, only, by the diffusion of the process of oscillation (the element of wind or motion) born of mental activity does the act of robing take place. The robe has no power to think and the body too has not that power. The robe is not aware of the fact that it is draping the body, and the body too of itself does not think: “I am being draped round with the robe.” Mere processes clothe a process-heap, in the same way that a modeled figure is covered with a piece of cloth. Therefore, there is neither room for elation on getting a fine robe nor for depression on getting one that is not fine.”

This passage is a good reminder of the truth, also for laypeople. We are used to the impact of clothes on the body, [but] most of the time we do not even notice it. Or we are taken in by the pleasantness of soft material that touches the body, or by the colour of our cloths. We can be mindful of softness or colour as only elements. In reality there are only elements impinging on elements.

We read in the *Gradual Sayings* (II, *Book of the Fours*, Ch XVIII, § 7, Rahula) that the Buddha said to Rahula:

Rahula, both the internal earth-element and that in external objects are just this earth-element. Thus it should be regarded, as it really is, by perfect wisdom: “This is not of me. Not this am I. Not to me is this the self.” So seeing it, as it really is, by perfect wisdom, one has revulsion for the earth-element; by wisdom one cleanses the heart of passion.

The same is said of the elements of water, heat and wind. The Buddha then said: Now, Rahula, when a monk beholds neither the self nor what pertains to the self in these four elements, this one is called “a monk who has cut off craving, has loosed the bond, and by perfectly understanding (this) vain conceit, has made an end of ill.”

The Buddhist Teaching on Physical Phenomena

Chapter 5

Subtle *Rupas* produced by Kamma

The objects which can be experienced through the sense-doors and also the sense-organs themselves are gross *rupas*, the other *rupas* are subtle *rupas*. The sense-organs are produced solely by kamma, not by the other three factors of *citta*, temperature and nutrition which can produce *rupas*. There are also *subtle* *rupas* which are produced solely by kamma. They are: the femininity-faculty, the masculinity-faculty, the life-faculty and the heart-base. With regard to the femininity-faculty (*itthindriyam*) and the masculinity-faculty (*purisindriyam*), which are collectively called *bhavarupa* or sex, these are *rupas* produced by kamma from the first moment of our life and throughout life.

Thus, it is due to kamma whether one is born as a male or as a female. The *Atthasalini* (II, Book II, Ch III, 322) explains that birth as a male and birth as a female are different kinds of *vipaka*. Being born as a human being is *kusala vipaka*, but since good deeds have different degrees also their results have different degrees. Birth as a female is the result of *kusala* kamma which is of a lesser degree than the *kusala* kamma which conditions birth as a male. In the course of life one can notice the difference between the status of men and that of women. It is a fact that in society generally men are esteemed higher than women. Usually women cannot so easily obtain a position of honour in society. But as regards the development of wisdom, both men and women can develop it and attain arahatship. We read in the *Kindred Sayings* (IV, *Salayatana-vagga*, Part III, *Kindred Sayings* about Womankind, 3, § 34, Growth):

“Increasing in five growths, monks, the ariyan woman disciple increases in the ariyan growth, takes hold of the essential, takes hold of the better. What five?

She grows in confidence (*saddha*), grows in virtue (*sila*), in learning, in generosity, in wisdom. Making such growth, monks, she takes hold of the essential, she takes hold of the better...”

The *Atthasalini* (II, Book II, Ch III, 321) explains that women and men have different features, that they are different in outer appearance, in occupation and deportment. But the feminine features, etc. are not identical with the *rupa* which is the femininity faculty. The “*Atthasalini*” states:

“...They are produced in course of process because of that faculty. When there is seed the tree grows because of the seed, and is replete with branch and twig and stands filling the sky; so when there is the feminine controlling faculty called femininity, feminine features, etc., come to be....”

The same is said about the masculinity faculty. The *Atthasalini* (same section, 322) gives the following definitions of the femininity faculty and the masculinity faculty:

Of these two controlling faculties the feminine has the characteristic of (knowing) the state of woman, the function of showing “this is woman,” the manifestation which is the cause of femininity in feature, mark, occupation, deportment.

The masculinity controlling faculty has the characteristic of (knowing) the state of man, the function of showing “this is man,” the manifestation which is the cause of

masculinity in feature, etc. (See also *Dhammasangani* § 633, 634 and *Visuddhimagga* XIV, 58.).

These two faculties which, as the *Visuddhimagga* (XIV, 58) explains, are “coextensive with” or pervade the whole body, are not known by visual cognition but only by mind-cognition. But, as the *Atthasalini* (321) states, their characteristic features, etc., which are conditioned by their respective faculties, are known by visual cognition as well as by mind-cognition.

Seeing experiences only ‘visible object,’ it does not know “This is a woman” or “This is a man.” The *citta* which recognizes feminine or masculine features does so through the mind-door, but this recognizing is conditioned by seeing. When the commentary states that these characteristic features are known by visual cognition as well as by mind-cognition, it does not speak in detail about the different processes of *cittas* which experience objects through the eye-door and through the mind-door.

Generally, women like to emphasize their femininity in make up and clothes and men like to emphasize their masculinity. One clings to one’s feminine or masculine features, one’s way of walking and deportment. We should not forget that it is the femininity faculty or masculinity faculty, only a *rupa* produced by kamma, which conditions our outward appearance or deportment to be specifically feminine or masculine. We take our sex for self, but it is only a conditioned element devoid of self.

Life faculty, the *rupa* which is *jivitindriya*, is also a subtle *rupa* produced by kamma from the first moment of life and throughout life (There is *nama-jivitindriya* and *rupa-jivitindriya*. *Nama-jivitindriya* is a *cetasika* among the “universals,” *cetasikas* which accompany every *citta*.). Since this kind of *rupa* is produced solely by kamma, it arises only in living beings, not in plants (Plants consist of *rupas* produced by temperature or the element of heat.). It is a “controlling faculty” (*indriya*), it has a dominating influence over the other *rupas* it arises together with since it maintains their life. The *Visuddhimagga* (XIV, 59) states about [the] life faculty (See also *Dhammasangani* § 635. The *Atthasalini* (I Part IV, Ch I, 123, 124) refers to its definition of *nama-jivitindriya*.):

“The life faculty has the characteristic of maintaining conascent kinds of matter (The *rupas* arising together with it.). Its function is to make them occur. It is manifested in the establishing of their presence. Its proximate cause is primary elements that are to be sustained.

Life faculty maintains the other *rupas*: it arises together with in one group, and then it falls away together with them. The *Visuddhimagga* (in the same section) states:

“It does not prolong presence at the moment of dissolution because it is itself dissolving, like the flame of a lamp when the wick and the oil are getting used up.... We cling to our body as something alive. *Rupas* of a “living body” have a quality which is lacking in dead matter or plants; they are supported by the life faculty. We are inclined to take this quality for “self,” but it is only a *rupa* produced by kamma. The heart-base (*hadayavatthu*) is another *rupa* produced solely by kamma. In the planes of existence where there are *nama* and *rupa cittas* have a physical place of

origin, a base (*vatthu*). Seeing-consciousness has as its base the eyebase, the *rupa* which is eyesense, and even so have the other sense-cognitions their appropriate bases where they arise. Apart from the sense-bases there is another base: the heart-base. This is the place of origin for all *cittas* other than the sense-cognitions.

At the first moment of life the rebirth-consciousness (*patisandhi-citta*) which arises is produced by kamma. If this *citta* arises in a plane of existence where there are *nama* and *rupa* it must have a base: this is the heart-base, which is produced by kamma. Kamma produces this *rupa* from the first moment of life and throughout life.

The *rupa* which is the heart-base has not been classified in the *Dhammasangani*, but it is referred to in the *Book of Conditional Relations (Patthana)*, the Seventh Book of the *Abhidhamma*. In the section on *Dependance Condition* (Part II, Analytical Exposition of Conditions) it is said that dependant on the five sense-bases the five sense-cognitions arise, and dependant on “this matter” mind-element and mind-consciousness-element arise.

“This matter” is the *rupa* which is the heart-base and the mind-element and mind-consciousness-element comprise all *cittas* other than the five sense-cognitions (Mind-element are the five-sense-door adverting-consciousness and the two types of receiving-consciousness which are *kusala vipaka* and *akusala vipaka*. Mind-consciousness-elements are all *cittas* other than the sense-cognitions and mind-element, a group of ten *rupas* including the heart-base in Book II, Ch III, 316. As I shall explain later on, from the first moment of our life kamma produces three decads, groups of ten *rupas*: the bodysense-decad, the sex-decad and the heart-base-decad.).

The *Visuddhimagga* (XIV, 60) gives the following definition of the heart-base (The *Atthasalini* does not classify the heart-base separately, but it mentions the “basis-decad”):

The heart-basis has the characteristic of being the (material) support for the mind-element and for the mind-consciousness-element. Its function is to observe them. It is manifested as the carrying of them....

The *Visuddhimagga* in (VIII, 111,112) states that the heart-base is to be found on dependance on the blood, inside the heart. It is of no use to speculate where exactly the heart-base is. It is sufficient to know that there is a *rupa* which is base for all *cittas* other than the sense-cognitions. We may not experience the heart-base, but if there were no heart-base we could not think at this moment, we could not know which objects we are experiencing, we could not feel happy or unhappy. In the planes of existence where there are *nama* and *rupa* all *cittas* must have a physical base, they cannot arise outside the body. When we, for example, are angry, *cittas* rooted in aversion arise and these originate at the heart-base. If we had not studied the *Abhidhamma* we would have thought that all *cittas* originate in what we call in conventional language “brain.”

One may cling to a concept of brain and take it for self. The *Abhidhamma* can clear up misunderstandings about bodily phenomena and mental phenomena and the way they function. It explains how physical phenomena and mental phenomena are interrelated.

Mental phenomena are dependant on physical phenomena and physical phenomena can have mental phenomena as conditioning factors.

The conditioning factors for what we call body and mind are impermanent. Why then do we take body and mind for something permanent? We read in the *Kindred Sayings* (III, *Khandha-vagga, Kindred Sayings on Elements*,” First Fifty, Ch 2, § 18, Cause) that the Buddha said to the monks at Savatthi:

“Body, monks is impermanent. That which is the cause, that which is the condition for the arising of body — that is also impermanent. How, monks, can a body which is compounded of the impermanent come to be permanent?....”

The same is said about the mental phenomena (classified as four aggregates or *khandhas*). We then read:

“Thus seeing, the well-taught ariyan disciple (An ariyan is a person who has attained enlightenment.) is repelled by body, is repelled by feeling, by perception, by the “activities” (*cetasikas* other than feeling and perception are classified as one *khandha*, that of the activities or formations, *sankharakkhandha*.). He is repelled by consciousness. Being repelled by it he lusts not for it: not lusting he is set free. Thus he realizes: “Rebirth is destroyed, lived is the righteous life, done is my task, for life in these conditions there is no here-after.”

Thus ends this article.

[Editor’s Note: This is perhaps a good place to put in the warning that while the above-outlined analysis is excellent in its close development, the practioner should not become too focussed on the detailed book-learning aspect of the Abhidhamma textitself but should always remember that the purpose of compiling and recording the Abhidhamma Pitaka was to provide an undrstandable breakdown which would serve as a meditation guideline..]

Since the above analysis gets quite-tight in its focus and, could (at least for some), become a mental play-thing or an almost unfruitful end in itself - let us, at least, accept the principle that that there are dependant relations between all ‘occasions’ - and go on to broaden our perspective to consider, the wider picture by reading an article which comes from [@ WWW Virtual Library - Sri Lanka -](#) and may help relate us back to the universe as made up of mere energy moving (passing through) arising phenomena in an ever-evolving cosmos.

The Quantum Theory of Life and Buddhism

by

Dr. Senaka Ranasinghe

“According to Buddhism, the whole universe is a single, dynamic web of energy which can exist in three forms. These three forms of energy that exist in the universe also exist in the human body.

Energy in the universe can exist [as]: 1. Free Energy, 2. Forces, 3. Matter.

Free energy is pure, undifferentiated energy. Therefore, this form cannot be perceived directly or indirectly. Free, undifferentiated energy exists in the human body as consciousness. In Buddhism, consciousness is described as *Vinnana*.

Forces are a type of differentiated energy produced by moving matter, which in turn causes movement of matter. The forces that exist in the universe are: 1. Electricity, 2. Magnetism, 3. Gravity.

These forces do not exist in the material form. (but in particles or waves). Their existence is in the form of an energy field which can be detected indirectly.

By these forces, the movements that occur in all matter in the universe are interconnected.”

Dr. Senaka tells us that,* though these forces are studied separately, in reality they exist in union, giving rise to a unified field which can be called the conditioning force.

This is the force that moves the whole universe. The moving matter produces resultant forces which in turn cause similar movements in matter.

Such causally dependent forces exist in association with the living human body as the subconscious force of the individual. By this force, the individual is connected to all human beings and events in the universe.

This is the force which determines the future events of the individual. In Buddhism, the determining force is described as *Bhavanga*.

**[Editor's Note: In the above four short paragraphs, we have changed a word or two to keep the terminology in line with that of the rest of the whole book while, at the same time, being careful not to change the author's intended meaning.]*

Matter

“Matter is a manifestation of differentiated energy. This form of energy can be perceived directly.

In an individual, matter is represented by the physical body. The fundamental unit of matter that exists in the universe and in the human body has four inseparable but interchangeable qualities. They are Solidity, Liquidity, Motion and Heat.

Depending on the predominant element, the quality of matter may differ.

For example: Solidity is predominant in the earth, mountains, bones, liver muscles, kidney etc.

Liquidity is predominant in water, saliva, gastric secretions etc.

Motion is predominant in the wind, breathing, blood circulation etc.

Heat is predominant in fire, the sun, bile etc.

The material body contains the following six sensory organs, by which the individual perceives the universe:

1. Eye _ Visual perception
2. Nose _ Olfactory perception
3. Ear _ Sound perception
4. Tongue _ Perception of taste
5. Skin _ Perception of touch
6. Mind _ Perception of thoughts.

Mind is simply a process registered in an area in the brain (known as the Limbic system) by which the individual perceives thoughts that exist *outside*.

A musician trains his ears to a particular note. Similarly, the mind can be trained and developed by concentration.

Consciousness

Consciousness is awareness. It is pure undifferentiated energy. For the consciousness (awareness) to manifest, it has to come in contact with one of the six sensory stimuli.

For example, eye consciousness is awareness of vision. Thought consciousness is awareness of thought.

The cycle of events during a particular consciousness is analysed in great detail in Buddhism.

The process of eye consciousness can be analysed [in everyday conventional language in] the following way:

* When a visual object comes into contact with the eye, the image is conducted through the brain.

[Editor's Note: Even though the mind (or mind-awareness) is not actually the literal-physical 'brain' as many Westerners falsely misconstrue, because the brain and the heart base actually work together,]

* This projected image ... causes differentiation of free energy (consciousness) to eye consciousness. When an eye consciousness is born, this is the [*sense of conventional*] SELF that will perceive the image.

[Editor's Note: To avoid confusion, here, we may explain that the author is using the sense of conventionally-concieved, imaginary SELF without misapprehending it. i.e. 'SELF' in upper-case letters here means an illusion of SELF based on ignorance of impermanence and NON-SELF or anatta which the author then further discusses below.]

- * Then the eye consciousness receives the visual image.
- * The self inside the eye consciousness scans through the memory (which is processed in the brain) and identifies the object.
- * According to the identification, a feeling is experienced by the SELF in the eye consciousness. It may be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.
- * Depending on the feeling a volition is experienced by the SELF in the eye consciousness. During this stage the SELF will gather more energy and also it will divert body energy to act. Then at this stage VOLITION IS ACTION.
- * Then the SELF in the eye consciousness will register the event in the memory.
- * When the registration is done, the eye consciousness which is the SELF leaves the body. Then it exists in association with the body as a thought force. These accumulated thought forces of the individual will form its [potential] force.

This is the last event of the cycle. The moment the eye consciousness leaves the body, the concept of SELF dies off because it cannot exist without a body.

During this cycle of events, the material body also undergoes changes; i.e. Respiration, movements of blood in the circulation, movement of food in the stomach etc.

Then at the end of the cycle there is a different, new body which will replenish its free energy (consciousness) from the environment and is ready for the next cycle.

This cycle of events can be called a unit of eye consciousness or a QUANTUM of eye consciousness. (QUANTUM = a packet). The cycle of events is the same with all six types of sensory modalities. This is the fundamental unit of LIFE. After one sensory quantum wanes, another sensory quantum comes up like the waves in the seashore. Life is a pulsatile interrupted flow of these cycles (sensory quanta).

The time duration of one quantum may be about 1/20th of a second (=50 milliseconds). Then per every one second there is an interrupted flow of about 20 quanta of life, with each and every quantum there arises a NEW SELF, with new perception, new volition and a new body lasting only for about 1/20th of a second and dies off.

Selflessness

In the analysis of a quantum of life, it is very clear that there is no permanent, unchangeable SELF inside the body who can perceive, think and act. Instead there are different SELVES [which come] up with each consciousness and pass away with the

same consciousness, which lives only for about 1/20th of a second (=50 milliseconds).

When the next cycle of events are in progress, the self image of the previous cycle of events (quantum) is still present in the memory, because a nerve impulse lasts for about 50 milliseconds. So the Memory interprets and projects as if there is a permanent, unchangeable self, who feels and acts.

When an 'individual' starts living with the memory projection of the illusion of permanent, unchangeable self, it 'becomes' [an actor of this so-called permanent role of self] which is actually a memory projection. When an individual becomes an actor of the SELF, he himself cannot watch the drama as an outsider; i.e. he cannot perceive the impermanence of self.

But if an individual can come out from the illusion of a permanent self and watch the drama of life as an outsider, then he could see the flow of quantum (life packets) which lasts for about 1/20th of a second before dying off.

At that stage there is no person who observes the process; Only the observation exists.

Then there will be no person to perceive; Only the perception exists.

There is no person inside the body to act; Only the action exists.

There is no person inside the body to think; Only the THINKING exists.

Action and Effect

When a thought comes in contact with the mind, the consciousness will differentiate into thought consciousness. The SELF inside this thought consciousness will identify and feel the thought. Depending on the feeling, there will be volition, which will manifest immediately as the act (Volition is Action). Then the particular SELF inside this thought consciousness will register the event and leaves the body as a thought force and exists in the individual's subconsciousness. Since the individual is connected to the whole universe by its subconscious force, the registered event will manifest as REALITY in the individual's life.

Then, by repetitive thoughts, the individual CREATES its own [mental] environment. This environment in turn will CONDITION all its activities, emotions, thinking and activities.

Since the mental environment will only CONDITION the individual but will NOT CREATE the individual, there is no place for absolute predeterminism of future events. Though social conditioning is present, there exists a certain element of free will.

The Buddha mentioned that by being conscious in the present and by consciously altering the thought forces, the previously accumulated undesirable thought forces can be neutralised or abolished before being manifested. It is similar to the potential

energy of a seed. Only when the conditions are favourable, it will grow up as a plant. If the conditions are not favourable, the seed dies off.

In the same way, evil deeds will manifest similarly in the individual's life giving rise to unpleasant feelings as the result of the action. Virtuous deeds will manifest similarly giving rise to pleasant feelings as a result of the action. Also, the previously accumulated undesirable thought forces can be altered or neutralised by doing virtuous deeds [in the] present.

Life after death

At the time of death, a thought comes up from the individual's subconscious field and it will be perceived by the mind.

The last thought may [be]:

- * Related to a habit the individual would have practised during life.
- * Related to a strong volitional activity performed by the individual during life.
- * Indicate the next birthplace.

This last thought is perceived by the thought consciousness. At the stage of volition, it will divert body energy to act and also gather more energy. After this stage the LAST THOUGHT CONSCIOUSNESS leaves the body with the remaining subconscious force. This last thought consciousness can exist in the environment as a force. During this period it consumes some of the subconscious forces which it had gathered during life. This is also another form of life (life in fine material world *rupa loka*). Also depending on the development of the mind, of the individual and according to the last thought consciousness, the subconscious forces can exist in the form of free energy till the energy in the subconscious forces wane. This form of life is described as *arupa loka* in Buddhism.

The disadvantage in this form of life is that it cannot collect NEW thought forces because of the lack of a physical body. (Since thought forces are produced by moving MATTER).

After some time when most of the [potential] forces are consumed by this form of life, the last consciousness will be attracted to an embryo with a similar potential energy. (Similar to a radio-signal being attracted by a radio tuned to the particular FREQUENCY).

Then the last thought consciousness of the previous life will become the first thought consciousness of the present life, and the cycle of change proceeds. (*samsara*).

So it is clear that there is no transfer of matter from one life to another life but only a transfer of energy as [potential] thought force. Then again the process of change begins. In reality there is nothing to change but only the process of change exists.

Conclusion

Life is made up of an interrupted flow of life-packets (quantums of life). Each life packet contains a self which feels and acts and dies off within about 1/20th of a second. That is, about 20 different 'selves,' feelings, acts come up within about 1 second - with a definite gap between each self-moment.

Since the critical fusion frequency (the rate at which stimuli can be presented and still be perceived as separate stimuli) of the human memory is also about 20 per second, the memory projects and interprets as if there [were] a permanent self inside the body which acts and feels. Because of this ignorance of selflessness, emptiness and unsatisfactoriness, various volitional activities are done by the individuals. The root of volitional activity may be due to the [remaining] illusion of a permanent self, greed or hatred.

When volitional activities are performed, it will gather more thought forces, which will again give rise to another new material body. So the life cycle goes on forever (*samsara*).

Due to ignorance, there will be greed and hatred which will produce more thought forces and the cycle goes on.

If a person has completely eradicated the illusion of self, greed and hatred, such an individual will not accumulate more thought forces. The past collected thought forces will manifest in present life. Since there will be no further collection of thought forces to be manifested in a next life, there will not be a continuation of the process. Such an individual has stopped the process. The process of change has come to an end.

The illusion of self has become completely eradicated. There is no person to achieve Nirvana. There exists only the greatest achievement — The ultimate truth of nothingness — The truth of impermanence.

Thus ends this article

Have you ever thought about yourself as nothing but series of mere instantaneous arising and ceasing quantums of volitional life energy fields burning themselves up due to certain concomitantly arising conditions and factors in dependent patterns? This is something worth thinking about. If you learn to watch yourself in the process of burning, you may one day, eventually, figure it out.

Before concluding, we might also include, for the sake of its extensive overview,

The Introduction to

A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma

The Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Acariya Anuruddha

General editor: Bhikkhu Bodhi
Pali Abhidhamma Text originally edited and translated by **Mahathera Narada**

Introduction

by U Rewata Dhamma and Bhikkhu Bodhi

The nucleus of the present book is a medieval compendium of Buddhist philosophy entitled the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*. This work is ascribed to Acariya Anuruddha, a Buddhist savant about whom so little is known that even his country of origin and the exact century in which he lived remain in question. Nevertheless, despite the personal obscurity that surrounds the author, his little manual has become one of the most important and influential textbooks of *Theravada* Buddhism. In nine short chapters occupying about fifty pages in print, the author provides a masterly summary of that abstruse body of Buddhist doctrine called the *Abhidhamma*. Such is his skill in capturing the essentials of that system, and in arranging them in a format suitable for easy comprehension, that his work has become the standard primer for *Abhidhamma* studies throughout the *Theravada* Buddhist countries of South and Southeast Asia. In these countries, particularly in Burma where the study of *Abhidhamma* is pursued most assiduously, the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* is regarded as the indispensable key to unlock this great treasure-store of Buddhist wisdom.

The *Abhidhamma*

At the heart of the *Abhidhamma* philosophy is the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, one of the divisions of the Pali canon recognized by *Theravada* Buddhism as the authoritative recension of the Buddha's teachings. This canon was compiled at the three great Buddhist councils held in India in the early centuries following the Buddha's demise: the first, at Rajagaha, convened three months after the Buddha's *Parinibbana* by five hundred senior monks under the leadership of the Elder Mahakassapa; the second, at Vesali, a hundred years later; and the third, at Pataliputta, two hundred years later. The canon that emerged from these councils, preserved in the Middle Indian language now called Pali, is known as the *Tipitaka*, the three "baskets" or collections of the teachings. The first collection, the *Vinaya Pitaka*, is the book of discipline, containing the rules of conduct for the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis — the monks and nuns — and the regulations governing the Sangha, the monastic order. The *Sutta Pitaka*, the second collection, brings together the Buddha's discourses spoken by him on various occasions during his active ministry of forty-five years. And the third collection is the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, the "basket" of the Buddha's "higher" or "special" doctrine.

This third great division of the Pali canon bears a distinctly different character from the other two divisions. Whereas the *Suttas* and *Vinaya* serve an obvious practical purpose, namely, to proclaim a clear-cut message of deliverance and to lay down a method of personal training, the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* presents the appearance of an abstract and highly technical systemization of the doctrine. The collection consists of seven books: the *Dhammasangani*, the *Vibhanga*, the *Dhatukatha*, the *Puggalapaññatti*, the *Kathavatthu*, the *Yamaka*, and the *Patthana*. Unlike the *Suttas*, these are not records of discourses and discussions occurring in real-life settings; they are, rather, full-blown treatises in which the principles of the doctrine have been

methodically organized, minutely defined, and meticulously tabulated and classified. Though they were no doubt originally composed and transmitted orally and only written down later, with the rest of the canon in the first century B.C., they exhibit the qualities of structured thought and rigorous consistency more typical of written documents.

In the *Theravada* tradition the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is held in the highest esteem, revered as the crown jewel of the Buddhist scriptures. As examples of this high regard, in Sri Lanka King Kassapa V (tenth century A.C.) had the whole *Abhidhamma Pitaka* inscribed on gold plates and the first book set in gems, while another king, Vijayabahu (eleventh century) used to study the *Dhammasangani* each morning before taking up his royal duties and composed a translation of it into Sinhala. On a cursory reading, however, this veneration given to the *Abhidhamma* seems difficult to understand. The texts appear to be merely a scholastic exercise in manipulating sets of doctrinal terms, ponderous and tediously repetitive.

The reason the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is so deeply revered only becomes clear as a result of thorough study and profound reflection, undertaken in the conviction that these ancient books have something significant to communicate. When one approaches the *Abhidhamma* treatises in such a spirit and gains some insight into their wide implications and organic unity, one will find that they are attempting nothing less than to articulate a comprehensive vision of the totality of experienced reality, a vision marked by extensiveness of range, systematic completeness, and analytical precision.

From the standpoint of *Theravada* orthodoxy the system that they expound is not a figment of speculative thought, not a mosaic put together out of metaphysical hypotheses, but a disclosure of the true nature of existence as apprehended by a mind that has penetrated the totality of things both in depth and in the finest detail. Because it bears this character, the *Theravada* tradition regards the *Abhidhamma* as the most perfect expression possible of the Buddha's unimpeded omniscient knowledge (*sabbaññuta-ñāna*). It is his statement of the way things appear to the mind of a Fully Enlightened One, ordered in accordance with the two poles of his teaching: suffering and the cessation of suffering.

The system that the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* articulates is simultaneously a philosophy, a psychology, and an ethics, all integrated into the framework of a program for liberation. The *Abhidhamma* may be described as a philosophy because it proposes an ontology, a perspective on the nature of the real. This perspective has been designated the "dhamma theory" (*dhammavada*).

Briefly, the *dhamma theory* maintains that ultimate reality consists of a multiplicity of elementary constituents called *dhammas*. The *dhammas* are not noumena hidden behind phenomena, not "things-in-themselves" as opposed to "mere appearances," but the fundamental components of actuality. The *dhammas* fall into two broad classes: the unconditioned *dhamma*, which is solely Nibbana, and the conditioned *dhammas*, which are the momentary mental and material phenomena that constitute the process of experience. The familiar world of substantial objects and enduring persons is,

according to the *dhamma* theory, a conceptual construct fashioned by the mind out of the raw data provided by the *dhammas*. The entities of our everyday frame of reference possess merely a consensual reality derivative upon the foundational stratum of the *dhammas*. It is the *dhammas* alone that possess ultimate reality: determinate existence "from their own side" (*sarupato*) independent of the mind's conceptual processing of the data.

Such a conception of the nature of the real seems to be already implicit in the *Sutta Pitaka*, particularly in the Buddha's disquisitions on the aggregates, sense bases, elements, dependent arising, etc., but it remains there tacitly in the background as the underpinning to the more pragmatically formulated teachings of the *Suttas*. Even in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* itself the *dhamma theory* is not yet expressed as an explicit philosophical tenet; this comes only later, in the Commentaries. Nevertheless, though as yet implicit, the theory still comes into focus in its role as the regulating principle behind the *Abhidhamma's* more evident task, the project of systemization.

This project starts from the premise that to attain the wisdom that knows things "as they really are," a sharp wedge must be driven between those types of entities that possess ontological ultimacy, that is, the *dhammas*, and those types of entities that exist only as conceptual constructs but are mistakenly grasped as ultimately real.

Proceeding from this distinction, the *Abhidhamma* posits a fixed number of *dhammas* as the building blocks of actuality, most of which are drawn from the *Suttas*. It then sets out to define all the doctrinal terms used in the *Suttas* in ways that reveal their identity with the ontological ultimates recognized by the system. On the basis of these definitions, it exhaustively classifies the *dhammas* into a net of pre-determined categories and modes of relatedness which highlight their place within the system's structure. And since the system is held to be a true reflection of actuality, this means that the classification pinpoints the place of each *dhamma* within the overall structure of actuality.

The *Abhidhamma's* attempt to comprehend the nature of reality, contrary to that of classical science in the West, does not proceed from the standpoint of a neutral observer looking outwards towards the external world.

The primary concern of the *Abhidhamma* is to understand the nature of experience, and thus the reality on which it focuses is *conscious reality*, the world as given in experience, comprising both knowledge and the known in the widest sense. For this reason the philosophical enterprise of the *Abhidhamma* shades off into a phenomenological psychology.

To facilitate the understanding of experienced reality, the *Abhidhamma* embarks upon an elaborate analysis of the mind as it presents itself to introspective meditation. It classifies consciousness into a variety of types, specifies the factors and functions of each type, correlates them with their objects and physiological bases, and shows how the different types of consciousness link up with each other and with material phenomena to constitute the ongoing process of experience.

This analysis of mind is not motivated by theoretical curiosity but by the overriding practical aim of the Buddha's teaching, the attainment of deliverance from suffering.

Since the Buddha traces suffering to our tainted attitudes — a mental orientation rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion — the *Abhidhamma's* phenomenological psychology also takes on the character of a psychological ethics, understanding the term "ethics" not in the narrow sense of a code of morality but as a complete guide to noble living and mental purification.

Accordingly we find that the *Abhidhamma* distinguishes states of mind principally on the basis of ethical criteria: the wholesome and the unwholesome, the beautiful factors and the defilements. Its schematization of consciousness follows a hierarchical plan that corresponds to the successive stages of purity to which the Buddhist disciple attains by practice of the Buddha's path. This plan traces the refinement of the mind through the progression of meditative absorptions, the fine-material-sphere and immaterial-sphere *jhanas*, then through the stages of insight and the wisdom of the supramundane paths and fruits. Finally, it shows the whole scale of ethical development to culminate in the perfection of purity attained with the mind's irreversible emancipation from all defilements.

All three dimensions of the *Abhidhamma* — the philosophical, the psychological, and the ethical — derive their final justification from the cornerstone of the Buddha's teaching, the program of liberation announced by the Four Noble Truths. The ontological survey of *dhammas* stems from the Buddha's injunction that the noble truth of suffering, identified with the world of conditioned phenomena as a whole, must be fully understood (*pariññeyya*). The prominence of mental defilements and requisites of enlightenment in its schemes of categories, indicative of its psychological and ethical concerns, connects the *Abhidhamma* to the second and fourth noble truths, the origin of suffering and the way leading to its end. And the entire taxonomy of *dhammas* elaborated by the system reaches its consummation in the "unconditioned element" (*asankhata dhatu*), which is Nibbana, the third noble truth, that of the cessation of suffering.

The Twofold Method

The great Buddhist commentator, Acariya Buddhaghosa, explains the word "*Abhidhamma*" as meaning "that which exceeds and is distinguished from the Dhamma" (*dhammatireka-dhammavisesa*), the prefix *abhi* having the sense of preponderance and distinction, and *dhamma* here signifying the teaching of the *Sutta Pitaka*.¹

When the *Abhidhamma* is said to surpass the teaching of the *Suttas*, this is not intended to suggest that the *Suttanta* teaching is defective in any degree or that the *Abhidhamma* proclaims some new revelation of esoteric doctrine unknown to the *Suttas*. Both the *Suttas* and the *Abhidhamma* are grounded upon the Buddha's unique doctrine of the Four Noble Truths, and all the principles essential to the attainment of enlightenment are already expounded in the *Sutta Pitaka*. The difference between the two in no way concerns fundamentals but is, rather, partly a matter of scope and partly a matter of method.

As to scope, the *Abhidhamma* offers a thoroughness and completeness of treatment that cannot be found in the *Sutta Pitaka*. Acariya Buddhaghosa explains that in the *Suttas* such doctrinal categories as the five aggregates, the twelve sense bases, the

eighteen elements, and so forth, are classified only partly, while in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* they are classified fully according to different schemes of classification, some common to the *Suttas*, others unique to the *Abhidhamma*.² Thus the *Abhidhamma* has a scope and an intricacy of detail that sets it apart from the *Sutta Pitaka*.

The other major area of difference concerns method. The discourses contained in the *Sutta Pitaka* were expounded by the Buddha under diverse circumstances to listeners with very different capacities for comprehension. They are primarily pedagogical in intent, set forth in the way that will be most effective in guiding the listener in the practice of the teaching and in arriving at a penetration of its truth. To achieve this end the Buddha freely employs the didactic means required to make the doctrine intelligible to his listeners. He uses simile and metaphor; he exhorts, advises, and inspires; he sizes up the inclinations and aptitudes of his audience and adjusts the presentation of the teaching so that it will awaken a positive response. For this reason the *Suttanta* method of teaching is described as *pariyaya-dhammadesana*, the figurative or embellished discourse on the Dhamma.

In contrast to the *Suttas*, the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is intended to divulge as starkly and directly as possible the totalistic system that underlies the *Suttanta* expositions and upon which the individual discourses draw. The *Abhidhamma* takes no account of the personal inclinations and cognitive capacities of the listeners; it makes no concessions to particular pragmatic requirements. It reveals the architectonics of actuality in an abstract, formalistic manner utterly devoid of literary embellishments and pedagogical expedients. Thus the *Abhidhamma* method is described as the *nippariyaya-dhammadesana*, the literal or unembellished discourse on the Dhamma.

This difference in technique between the two methods also influences their respective terminologies. In the *Suttas* the Buddha regularly makes use of conventional language (*voḥaravacana*) and accepts conventional truth (*sammutisacca*), truth expressed in terms of entities that do not possess ontological ultimacy but can still be legitimately referred to them. Thus in the *Suttas* the Buddha speaks of "I" and "you," of "man" and "woman," of living beings, persons, and even self as though they were concrete realities.

The *Abhidhamma* method of exposition, however, rigorously restricts itself to terms that are valid from the standpoint of ultimate truth (*paramatthasacca*): *dhammas*, their characteristics, their functions, and their relations. Thus in the *Abhidhamma* all such conceptual entities provisionally accepted in the *Suttas* for purposes of meaningful communication are resolved into their ontological ultimates, into bare mental and material phenomena that are impermanent, conditioned, and dependently arisen, empty of any abiding self or substance.

But a qualification is necessary. When a distinction is drawn between the two methods, this should be understood to be based on what is most characteristic of each *Pitaka* and should not be interpreted as an absolute dichotomy. To some degree the two methods overlap and interpenetrate. Thus in the *Sutta Pitaka* we find discourses that employ the strictly philosophical terminology of aggregates, sense bases, elements, etc., and thus come within the bounds of the *Abhidhamma* method. Again, within the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* we find sections, even a whole book (the

Puggalapaññatti), that depart from the rigorous manner of expression and employ conventional terminology, thus coming within the range of the *Suttanta* method.

Distinctive Features of the *Abhidhamma*

Apart from its strict adherence to the philosophical method of exposition, the *Abhidhamma* makes a number of other noteworthy contributions integral to its task of systemization. One is the employment, in the main books of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, of a *matika* — a matrix or schedule of categories — as the blueprint for the entire edifice. This matrix, which comes at the very beginning of the *Dhammasangani* as a preface to the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* proper, consists of 122 modes of classification special to the *Abhidhamma* method. Of these, twenty-two are triads (*tika*), sets of three terms into which the fundamental *dhammas* are to be distributed; the remaining hundred are dyads (*duka*), sets of two terms used as a basis for classification.³

The matrix serves as a kind of grid for sorting out the complex manifold of experience in accordance with principles determined by the purposes of the Dhamma. For example, the triads include such sets as states that are wholesome, unwholesome, indeterminate; states associated with pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neutral feeling; states that are kamma results, productive of kamma results, neither; and so forth. The dyads include such sets as states that are roots, not roots; states concomitant with roots, not so concomitant; states that are conditioned, unconditioned; states that are mundane, supramundane; and so forth. By means of its selection of categories, the matrix embraces the totality of phenomena, illuminating it from a variety of angles philosophical, psychological, and ethical in nature.

A second distinguishing feature of the *Abhidhamma* is the dissection of the apparently continuous stream of consciousness into a succession of discrete evanescent cognitive events called *cittas*, each a complex unity involving consciousness itself, as the basic awareness of an object, and a constellation of mental factors (*cetasika*) exercising more specialized tasks in the act of cognition. Such a view of consciousness, at least in outline, can readily be derived from the *Sutta Pitaka's* analysis of experience into the five aggregates, among which the four mental aggregates are always inseparably conjoined, but the conception remains there merely suggestive. In the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* the suggestion is not simply picked-up, but is expanded into an extraordinarily detailed and coherent picture of the functioning of consciousness both in its microscopic immediacy and in its extended continuity from life to life.

A third contribution arises from the urge to establish order among the welter of technical terms making up the currency of Buddhist discourse. In defining each of the *dhammas*, the *Abhidhamma* texts collate long lists of synonyms drawn mostly from the *Suttas*. This method of definition shows how a single *dhamma* may enter under different names into different sets of categories. For example, among the defilements, the mental factor of greed (*lobha*) may be found as the taint of sensual desire, the taint of (attachment to) existence, the bodily knot of covetousness, clinging to sensual pleasures, the hindrance of sensual desire, etc.; among the requisites of enlightenment, the mental factor of wisdom (*pañña*) may be found as the faculty and power of wisdom, the enlightenment factor of investigation of states, the path factor of right view, etc. In establishing these correspondences, the *Abhidhamma* helps to exhibit the interconnections between doctrinal terms that might not be apparent from the *Suttas*

themselves. In the process it also provides a precision-made tool for interpreting the Buddha's discourses.

The *Abhidhamma* conception of consciousness further results in a new primary scheme for classifying the ultimate constituents of existence, a scheme which eventually, in the later *Abhidhamma* literature, takes precedence over the schemes inherited from the *Suttas* such as the aggregates, sense bases, and elements. In the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* the latter categories still loom large, but the view of mind as consisting of momentary concurrences of consciousness and its concomitants leads to a fourfold method of classification more congenial to the system. This is the division of actuality into the four ultimate realities (*paramattha*): consciousness, mental factors, material phenomena, and Nibbana (*citta, cetasika, rupa, nibbana*), the first three comprising conditioned reality and the last the unconditioned element.

The last novel feature of the *Abhidhamma* method to be noted here — contributed by the final book of the *Pitaka*, the *Patthana* — is a set of twenty-four conditional relations laid down for the purpose of showing how the ultimate realities are welded into orderly processes. This scheme of conditions supplies the necessary complement to the analytical approach that dominates the earlier books of the *Abhidhamma*. The method of analysis proceeds by dissecting apparent wholes into their component parts [and] thereby exposing their voidness of any indivisible core that might qualify as self or substance.

The synthetic method plots the conditional relations of the bare phenomena obtained by analysis to show that they are not isolated self-contained units but nodes in a vast multi-layered web of inter-related, inter-dependent events. Taken in conjunction, the analytical method of the earlier treatises of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* and the synthetic method of the *Patthana* establish the essential unity of the twin philosophical principles of Buddhism, non-self or egolessness (*anatta*) and dependent arising or conditionality (*paticca samuppada*). Thus the foundation of the *Abhidhamma* methodology remains in perfect harmony with the insights that lie at the heart of the entire Dhamma.

The Origins of the *Abhidhamma*

Although modern critical scholarship attempts to explain the formation of the *Abhidhamma* by a gradual evolutionary process,⁴ Theravada orthodoxy assigns its genesis to the Buddha himself. According to the *Great Commentary (maha-atthakatha)* quoted by Acariya Buddhaghosa, "What is known as *Abhidhamma* is neither the province nor the sphere of a disciple; it is the province, the sphere of the Buddhas."⁵ The commentarial tradition holds, moreover, that it was not merely the spirit of the *Abhidhamma*, but the letter as well, that was already realized and expounded by the Buddha during his lifetime.

The *Atthasalini* relates that in the fourth week after the Enlightenment, while the Blessed One was still dwelling in the vicinity of the Bodhi Tree, he sat in a jewel house (*ratanaghara*) in the northwest direction. This jewel house was not literally a house made of precious stones, but was the place where he contemplated the seven books of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. He contemplated their contents in turn, beginning with the *Dhammasangani*, but while investigating the first six books his body did not

emit rays. However, upon coming to the *Patthana*, when "he began to contemplate the twenty-four universal conditional relations of root, object, and so on, his omniscience certainly found its opportunity therein. For as the great fish Timiratipingala finds room only in the great ocean 84,000 yojanas in depth, so his omniscience truly finds room only in the *Great Book*. Rays of six colors — indigo, golden, red, white, tawny, and dazzling — issued from the Teacher's body, as he was contemplating the subtle and abstruse Dhamma by his omniscience which had found such opportunity."⁶

Theravada orthodoxy thus maintains that the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is authentic Word of the Buddha, in this respect differing from an early rival school, the Sarvastivadins. This school also had an *Abhidhamma Pitaka* consisting of seven books, considerably different in detail from the *Theravada* treatises. According to the Sarvastivadins, the books of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* were composed by Buddhist disciples, several being attributed to authors who appeared generations after the Buddha. The *Theravada* school, however, holds that the Blessed One himself expounded the books of the *Abhidhamma*, except for the detailed refutation of deviant views in the *Kathavatthu*, which was the work of the Elder Moggaliputta Tissa during the reign of Emperor Asoka.

The Pali Commentaries, apparently drawing upon an old oral tradition, maintain that the Buddha expounded the *Abhidhamma*, not in the human world to his human disciples, but to the assembly of devas or gods in the *Tavatimsa* heaven. According to this tradition, just prior to his seventh annual rains retreat the Blessed One ascended to the *Tavatimsa* heaven and there, seated on the *Pandukambala* stone at the foot of the *Paricchattaka tree*, for the three months of the rains he taught the *Abhidhamma* to the devas who had assembled from the ten thousand world-systems. He made the chief recipient of the teaching his mother, Mahamaya-devi, who had been reborn as a deva.

The reason the Buddha taught the *Abhidhamma* in the deva world rather than in the human realm, it is said, is because in order to give a complete picture of the *Abhidhamma* it has to be expounded from the beginning to the end to the same audience in a single session. Since the full exposition of the *Abhidhamma* requires three months, only devas and Brahmas could receive it in unbroken continuity, for they alone are capable of remaining in one posture for such a length of time.

However, each day, to sustain his body, the Buddha would descend to the human world to go on almsround in the northern region of Uttarakuru. After collecting almsfood he went to the shore of Anotatta Lake to partake of his meal. The Elder Sariputta, the General of the Dhamma, would meet the Buddha there and receive a synopsis of the teaching given that day in the deva world: "Then to him the Teacher gave the method, saying, 'Sariputta, so much doctrine has been shown.' Thus the giving of the method was to the chief disciple, who was endowed with analytical knowledge, as though the Buddha stood on the edge of the shore and pointed out the ocean with his open hand. To the Elder also the doctrine taught by the Blessed One in hundreds and thousands of methods became very clear."⁷

Having learned the Dhamma taught him by the Blessed One, Sariputta in turn taught it to his own circle of 500 pupils, and thus the textual recension of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* was established. To the Venerable Sariputta is ascribed the textual order of the *Abhidhamma* treatises as well as the numerical series in the *Patthana*. Perhaps we

should see in these admissions of the *Atthasalini* an implicit acknowledgement that while the philosophical vision of the *Abhidhamma* and its basic architecture originate from the Buddha, the actual working out of the details, and perhaps even the prototypes of the texts themselves, are to be ascribed to the illustrious Chief Disciple and his entourage of students. In other early Buddhist schools, too, the *Abhidhamma* is closely connected with the Venerable Sariputta, who in some traditions is regarded as the literal author of *Abhidhamma* treatises.⁸

The Seven Books

A brief outline of the contents of the seven canonical *Abhidhamma* books will provide some insight into the plethora of textual material to be condensed and summarized by the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*. The first book, the *Dhammasangani*, is the fountainhead of the entire system. The title may be translated *Enumeration of Phenomena*, and the work does in fact undertake to compile an exhaustive catalog of the ultimate constituents of existence.

Opening with the *matika*, the schedule of categories which serves as the framework for the whole *Abhidhamma*, the text proper is divided into four chapters. The first, *States of Consciousness*, takes up about half of the book and unfolds as an analysis of the first triad in the *matika*, that of the wholesome, the unwholesome, and the indeterminate.

To supply that analysis, the text enumerates 121 types of consciousness classified by way of their ethical quality.⁹ Each type of consciousness is in turn dissected into its concomitant mental factors, which are individually defined in full. The second chapter, *On Matter*, continues the inquiry into the ethically indeterminate by enumerating and classifying the different types of material phenomena. The third chapter, called *The Summary*, offers concise explanations of all the terms in the *Abhidhamma* matrix and the *Suttanta* matrix as well. Finally, a concluding *Synopsis* provides a more condensed explanation of the *Abhidhamma* matrix but omits the *Suttanta* matrix.

The *Vibhanga*, the *Book of Analysis*, consists of eighteen chapters, each a self-contained dissertation, dealing in turn with the following: aggregates, sense bases, elements, truths, faculties, dependent arising, foundations of mindfulness, supreme efforts, means to accomplishment, factors of enlightenment, the eightfold path, *jhanas*, illimitables, training rules, analytical knowledges, kinds of knowledge, minor points (a numerical inventory of defilements), and "the heart of the doctrine" (*dhammahadaya*), a psycho-cosmic topography of the Buddhist universe. Most of the chapters in the *Vibhanga*, though not all, involve three sub-sections: an analysis according to the methodology of the *Suttas*; an analysis according to the methodology of the *Abhidhamma* proper; and an interrogation section, which applies the categories of the matrix to the subject under investigation.

The *Dhatukatha*, the *Discourse on Elements*, is written entirely in catechism form. It discusses all phenomena with reference to the three schemata of aggregates, sense bases, and elements, seeking to determine whether, and to what extent, they are included or not included in them, and whether they are associated with them or dissociated from them.

The *Puggalapaññatti*, *Concepts of Individuals*, is the one book of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* that is more akin to the method of the *Suttas* than to the *Abhidhamma* proper. The work begins with a general enumeration of types of concepts, and this suggests that it was originally intended as a supplement to the other books in order to take account of the conceptual realities excluded by the strict application of the *Abhidhamma* method. The bulk of the work provides formal definitions of different types of individuals. It has ten chapters: the first deals with single types of individuals; the second with pairs; the third with groups of three, etc.

The *Kathavatthu*, *Points of Controversy*, is a polemical treatise ascribed to the Elder Moggaliputta Tissa. He is said to have compiled it during the time of Emperor Asoka, 218 years after the Buddha's Parinibbana, in order to refute the heterodox opinions of the Buddhist schools outside the *Theravadin* fold. The Commentaries defend its inclusion in the Canon by holding that the Buddha himself, foreseeing the errors that would arise, laid down the outline of rebuttal, which Moggaliputta Tissa merely filled in according to the Master's intention.

The *Yamaka*, the *Book of Pairs*, has the purpose of resolving ambiguities and defining the precise usage of technical terms. It is so called owing to its method of treatment, which throughout employs the dual grouping of a question and its converse formulation. For instance, the first pair of questions in the first chapter runs thus: "Are all wholesome phenomena wholesome roots? And are all wholesome roots wholesome phenomena?" The book contains ten chapters: roots, aggregates, sense bases, elements, truths, formations, latent dispositions, consciousness, phenomena, and faculties.

The *Patthana*, the *Book of Conditional Relations*, is probably the most important work of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* and thus is traditionally designated the *Great Treatise (mahapakarana)*. Gigantic in extent as well as in substance, the book comprises five volumes totalling 2500 pages in the Burmese-script Sixth Council edition. The purpose of the *Patthana* is to apply its scheme of twenty-four conditional relations to all the phenomena incorporated in the *Abhidhamma* matrix.

The main body of the work has four great divisions: origination according to the positive method, according to the negative method, according to the positive-negative method, and according to the negative-positive method. Each of these in turn has six sub-divisions: origination of triads, of dyads, of dyads and triads combined, of triads and dyads combined, of triads and triads combined, and of dyads and dyads combined. Within this pattern of twenty-four sections, the twenty-four modes of conditionality are applied in due order to all the phenomena of existence in all their conceivable permutations. Despite its dry and tabular format, even from a "profane" humanistic viewpoint the *Patthana* can easily qualify as one of the truly monumental products of the human mind, astounding in its breadth of vision, its rigorous consistency, and its painstaking attention to detail. To Theravada orthodoxy, it is the most eloquent testimony to the Buddha's unimpeded knowledge of omniscience.

The Commentaries

The books of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* have inspired a voluminous mass of exegetical literature composed in order to fill out, by way of explanation and exemplification,

the scaffoldings erected by the canonical texts. The most important works of this class are the authorized commentaries of Acariya Buddhaghosa. These are three in number: the *Atthasalini*, *The Expositor*, the commentary to the *Dhammasangani*; the *Sammohavinodani*, *The Dispeller of Delusion*, the commentary to the *Vibhanga*; and the *Pañcappakarana Atthakatha*, the combined commentary to the other five treatises.

To this same stratum of literature also belongs the *Visuddhimagga*, *The Path of Purification*, also composed by Buddhaghosa. Although this last work is primarily an encyclopedic guide to meditation, its chapters on "the soil of understanding" (XIV-XVII) lay out the theory to be mastered prior to developing insight and thus constitute in effect a compact dissertation on *Abhidhamma*. Each of the commentaries in turn has its subcommentary (*mulatika*), by an elder of Sri Lanka named Acariya Ananda, and these in turn each have a sub-subcommentary (*anutika*), by Ananda's pupil Dhammapala (who is to be distinguished from the great Acariya Dhammapala, author of the *tikas* to Buddhaghosa's works).

When the authorship of the Commentaries is ascribed to Acariya Buddhaghosa, it should not be supposed that they are in any way original compositions, or even original attempts to interpret traditional material. They are, rather, carefully edited versions of the vast body of accumulated exegetical material that Buddhaghosa found at the Mahavihara in Anuradhapura. This material must have preceded the great commentator by centuries, representing the collective efforts of generations of erudite Buddhist teachers to elucidate the meaning of the canonical *Abhidhamma*.

While it is tempting to try to discern evidence of historical development in the Commentaries over and beyond the ideas embedded in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, it is risky to push this line too far, for a great deal of the canonical *Abhidhamma* seems to require the Commentaries to contribute the unifying context in which the individual elements hang together as parts of a systematic whole and without which they lose important dimensions of meaning. It is thus not unreasonable to assume that a substantial portion of the commentarial apparatus originated in close proximity to the canonical *Abhidhamma* and was transmitted concurrently with the latter, though lacking the stamp of finality it was open to modification and amplification in a way that the canonical texts were not.

Bearing this in mind, we might briefly note a few of the *Abhidhammic* conceptions that are characteristic of the Commentaries but either unknown or recessive in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* itself. One is the detailed account of the cognitive process (*cittavithi*). While this conception seems to be tacitly recognized in the canonical books, it now comes to be drawn out for use as an explanatory tool in its own right. The functions of the *cittas*, the different types of consciousness, are specified, and in time the *cittas* themselves come to be designated by way of their functions. The term *khana*, "moment," replaces the canonical *samaya*, "occasion," as the basic unit for delimiting the occurrence of events, and the duration of a material phenomenon is determined to be seventeen moments of mental phenomena. The division of a moment into three sub-moments — arising, presence, and dissolution — also seems to be new to the Commentaries.¹⁰ The organization of material phenomena into groups (*kalapa*), though implied by the distinction between the primary elements of matter and derived matter, is first spelled out in the Commentaries, as is the specification of the heart-

base (*hadayavatthu*) as the material basis for mind element and mind-consciousness element.

The Commentaries introduce many (though not all) of the categories for classifying kamma, and work out the detailed correlations between kamma and its results. They also close off the total number of mental factors (*cetasika*). The phrase in the *Dhammasangani*, "or whatever other (unmentioned) conditionally arisen immaterial phenomena there are on that occasion," apparently envisages an open-ended universe of mental factors, which the Commentaries delimit by specifying the "or-whatever states" (*yevapanaka dhamma*).

Again, the Commentaries consummate the *dhamma theory* by supplying the formal definition of *dhammas* as "things which bear their own intrinsic nature" (*attano sabhavam dharenti ti dhamma*). The task of defining specific *dhammas* is finally rounded-off by the extensive employment of the fourfold defining device of characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause, a device derived from a pair of old exegetical texts, the *Petakopadesa* and the *Nettipakarana*.

The Abhidhammattha Sangaha

As the *Abhidhamma* system, already massive in its canonical version, grew in volume and complexity, it must have become increasingly unwieldy for purposes of study and comprehension. Thus at a certain stage in the evolution of *Theravada* Buddhist thought the need must have become felt for concise summaries of the *Abhidhamma* as a whole in order to provide the novice student of the subject with a clear picture of its main outlines — faithfully and thoroughly, yet without an unmanageable mass of detail.

To meet this need there began to appear, perhaps as early as the fifth century and continuing well through the twelfth, short manuals or compendia of the *Abhidhamma*. In Burma these are called *let-than* or "little-finger manuals," of which there are nine:

1. *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, by Acariya Anuruddha;
2. *Namarupa-pariccheda*, by the same;
3. *Paramattha-vinicchaya*, by the same (?);
4. *Abhidhammavatara*, by Acariya Buddhadatta (a senior contemporary of Buddhaghosa);
5. *Ruparupa-vibhaga*, by the same;
6. *Sacca-sankhepa*, by Bhadanta Dhammapala (probably Sri Lankan; different from the great subcommentator);
7. *Moha-vicchedani*, by Bhadanta Kassapa (South Indian or Sri Lankan);
8. *Khema-pakarana*, by Bhadanta Khema (Sri Lankan);
9. *Namacara-dipaka*, by Bhadanta Saddhamma Jotipala (Burman).

Among these, the work that has dominated *Abhidhamma* studies from about the twelfth century to the present day is the first mentioned, the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, *The Compendium of Things Contained in the Abhidhamma*." Its popularity may be accounted for by its remarkable balance between concision and comprehensiveness. Within its short scope all the essentials of the *Abhidhamma* are briefly and carefully summarized. Although the book's manner of treatment is

extremely terse even to the point of obscurity when read alone, when studied under a qualified teacher or with the aid of an explanatory guide, it leads the student confidently through the winding maze of the system to a clear perception of its entire structure.

For this reason throughout the *Theravada* Buddhist world the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* is always used as the first textbook in *Abhidhamma* studies. In Buddhist monasteries, especially in Burma, novices and young bhikkhus are required to learn the *Sangaha* by heart before they are permitted to study the books of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* and its Commentaries.

Detailed information about the author of the manual, Acariya Anuruddha, is virtually non-existent. He is regarded as the author of two other manuals, cited above, and it is believed in Buddhist countries that he wrote altogether nine compendia, of which only these three have survived. The *Paramattha-vinicchaya* is written in an elegant style of Pali and attains a high standard of literary excellence. According to the colophon, its author was born in Kaveri in the state of Kañcipura (Conjeevaram) in South India. Acariya Buddhadatta and Acariya Buddhaghosa are also said to have resided in the same area, and the subcommentator Acariya Dhammapala was probably a native of the region. There is evidence that for several centuries Kañcipura had been an important center of *Theravada* Buddhism from which learned bhikkhus went to Sri Lanka for further study.

It is not known exactly when Acariya Anuruddha lived and wrote his manuals. An old monastic tradition regards him as having been a fellow student of Acariya Buddhadatta under the same teacher, which would place him in the fifth century. According to this tradition, the two elders wrote their respective books, the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* and the *Abhidhammavataara*, as gifts of gratitude to their teacher, who remarked: "Buddhadatta has filled a room with all kinds of treasure and locked the door, while Anuruddha has also filled a room with treasure but left the door open."¹¹ Modern scholars, however, do not endorse this tradition, maintaining on the basis of the style and content of Anuruddha's work that he could not have lived earlier than the eighth century, more probably between the tenth and early twelfth centuries.¹²

In the colophon to the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* Acariya Anuruddha states that he wrote the manual at the Mulasoma Monastery, which all exegetical traditions place in Sri Lanka. There are several ways to reconcile this fact with the concluding stanzas of the *Paramattha-vinicchaya*, which state that he was born in Kañcipura. One hypothesis is that he was of South Indian descent but came to Sri Lanka, where he wrote the *Sangaha*. Another, advanced by G.P. Malalasekera, holds that he was a native of Sri Lanka who spent time at Kañcipura (which, however, passes over his statement that he was *born* in Kañcipura). Still a third hypothesis, proposed by Ven. A.P. Buddhadatta Mahathera, asserts that there were two different monks named Anuruddha, one in Sri Lanka who was the author of the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, another in Kañcipura who wrote the *Paramattha-vinicchaya*.¹³

Commentaries on the *Sangaha*

Owing to its extreme concision, the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* cannot be easily understood without explanation. Therefore to elucidate its terse and pithy synopsis of the *Abhidhamma* philosophy, a great number of *tikas* or commentaries have been written upon it. In fact, this work has probably stimulated more commentaries than any other Pali text, written not only in the Pali language but also in Burmese, Sinhala, Thai, etc. Since the fifteenth century Burma has been the international center of *Abhidhamma* studies, and therefore we find many commentaries written on it by Burmese scholars both in Pali and in Burmese. Commentaries on the *Sangaha* in Pali alone number nineteen, of which the following are the most important:

1. *Abhidhammatthasangaha-Tika*, also known as the *Porana-Tika*, the *Old Commentary*. This is a very small *tika* written in Sri Lanka in the twelfth century by an elder named Acariya Navavimalabuddhi.
2. *Abhidhammatthavibhavini-Tika*, or in brief, the *Vibhavini*, written by Acariya Sumangalasami, pupil of the eminent Sri Lankan elder Sariputta Mahasami, also in the twelfth century. This *tika* quickly superseded the *Old Commentary* and is generally considered the most profound and reliable exegetical work on the *Sangaha*. In Burma this work is known as *tika-gyaw*, the *Famous Commentary*. The author is greatly respected for his erudition and mastery of the *Abhidhamma*. He relies heavily on older authorities such as the *Abhidhamma-Anutika* and the *Visuddhimagga-Mahatika* (also known as the *Paramatthamanjusa*). Although Ledi Sayadaw (see below) criticized the *Vibhavini* extensively in his own commentary on the *Sangaha*, its popularity has not diminished but indeed has even increased, and several Burmese scholars have risen to defend it against Ledi Sayadaw's criticisms.
3. *Sankhepa-vannana*, written in the sixteenth century by Bhadanta Saddhamma Jotipala, also known as Chapada Mahathera, a Burmese monk who visited Sri Lanka during the reign of Parakramabahu VI of Kotte (fifteenth century).¹⁴
4. *Paramatthadipani-Tika*, *The Elucidation of the Ultimate Meaning*, by Ledi Sayadaw. Ledi Sayadaw of Burma (1846-1923) was one of the greatest scholar-monks and meditation masters of the *Theravada* tradition in recent times. He was the author of over seventy manuals on different aspects of *Theravada* Buddhism, including philosophy, ethics, meditation practice, and Pali grammar. His *tika* created a sensation in the field of *Abhidhamma* studies because he pointed out 325 places in the esteemed *Vibhavini-tika* where he alleged that errors and misinterpretations had occurred, though his criticisms also set off a reaction in defense of the older work.
5. *Ankura-Tika*, by Vimala Sayadaw. This *tika* was written fifteen years after the publication of the *Paramatthadipani* and supports the commonly accepted opinions of the *Vibhavini* against Ledi Sayadaw's criticisms.
6. *Navanita-Tika*, by the Indian scholar Dhammananda Kosambi, published originally in *devanagari* script in 1933. The title of this work means literally *The Butter Commentary*, and it is so called probably because it explains the *Sangaha* in a smooth and simple manner, avoiding philosophical controversy.

Outline of the Sangaha

The *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* contains nine chapters. It opens by enumerating the four ultimate realities — consciousness, mental factors, matter, and Nibbana. The detailed analysis of these is the project set for its first six chapters. Chapter I is the *Compendium of Consciousness*, which defines and classifies the 89 and 121 *cittas* or types of consciousness. In scope this first chapter covers the same territory as the *States of Consciousness* chapter of the *Dhammasangani*, but it differs in approach. The canonical work begins with an analysis of the first triad in the *matika*, and therefore initially classifies consciousness on the basis of the three ethical qualities of wholesome, unwholesome, and indeterminate; then within those categories it subdivides consciousness on the basis of plane into the categories of sense sphere, fine-material sphere, immaterial sphere, and supramundane. The *Sangaha*, on the other hand, not being bound to the *matika*, first divides consciousness on the basis of plane, and then subdivides it on the basis of ethical quality.

The second chapter, the *Compendium of Mental Factors*, first enumerates the fifty-two *cetasikas* or concomitants of consciousness, divided into four classes: universals, occasionals, unwholesome factors, and beautiful factors. Thereafter the factors are investigated by two complimentary methods: first, the method of association (*sampayogana*), which takes the mental factors as the unit of inquiry and elicits the types of consciousness with which they are individually associated; and second, the method of inclusion or combination (*sangahanaya*), which takes the types of consciousness as the unit of inquiry and elicits the mental factors that enter into the constitution of each. This chapter again draws principally upon the first chapter of the *Dhammasangani*.

The third chapter, entitled *Compendium of the Miscellaneous*, classifies the types of consciousness along with their factors with respect to six categories: root (*hetu*), feeling (*vedana*), function (*kiicca*), door (*dvara*), object (*arammana*), and base (*vatthu*).

The first three chapters are concerned principally with the structure of consciousness, both internally and in relation to external variables. In contrast, the next two chapters deal with the dynamics of consciousness, that is, with its modes of occurrence.

According to the *Abhidhamma*, consciousness occurs in two distinct but intertwining modes — as active process and as passive flow. Chapter IV explores the nature of the "cognitive process," Chapter V the passive "process-freed" flow, which it prefaces with a survey of the traditional Buddhist cosmology. The exposition here is largely based upon the *Abhidhamma* Commentaries. Chapter VI, *Compendium of Matter*, turns from the mental realm to the material world. Based primarily on the second chapter of the *Dhammasangani*, it enumerates the types of material phenomena, classifies them in various ways, and explains their modes of origination. It also introduces the commentarial notion of material groups, which it treats in detail, and describes the occurrence of material processes in the different realms of existence. This chapter concludes with a short section on the fourth ultimate reality, Nibbana, the only unconditioned element in the system.

With the sixth chapter, Acariya Anuruddha has completed his analytical exposition of the four ultimate realities, but there remain several important subjects which must be explained to give a complete picture of the *Abhidhamma*. These are taken up in the last three chapters. Chapter VII, the *Compendium of Categories*, arranges the ultimate realities into a variety of categorical schemes that fall under four broad headings: a compendium of defilements; a compendium of mixed categories, which include items of different ethical qualities; a compendium of the requisites of enlightenment; and a compendium of the whole, an all-inclusive survey of the *Abhidhamma* ontology. This chapter leans heavily upon the *Vibhanga*, and to some extent upon the *Dhammasangani*.

Chapter VIII, the *Compendium of Conditionality*, is introduced to include the *Abhidhamma* teaching on the inter-relatedness of physical and mental phenomena, thereby complementing the analytical treatment of the ultimate realities with a synthetical treatment laying bare their functional correlations. The exposition summarily presents two alternative approaches to conditionality found in the Pali canon. One is the method of dependent arising, prominent in the *Suttas* and analyzed from both *Suttanta* and *Abhidhamma* angles in the *Vibhanga* (VI). This method examines conditionality in terms of the cause-and-result pattern that maintains bondage to *samsara*, the cycle of birth and death. The other is the method of the *Patthana*, with its twenty-four conditional relations. This chapter concludes with a brief account of concepts (*paññatti*) thereby drawing in the *Puggalapaññatti*, at least by implication.

The ninth and final chapter of the *Sangaha* is concerned, not with theory, but with practice. This is the *Compendium of Meditation Subjects*. This chapter functions as a kind of summary of the *Visuddhimagga*. It concisely surveys all the methods of meditation exhaustively explained in the latter work, and it sets forth condensed accounts of the stages of progress in both systems of meditation, concentration and insight. Like the masterwork it summarizes, it concludes with an account of the four types of enlightened individuals and the attainments of fruition and cessation. This arrangement of the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* perhaps serves to underscore the ultimate soteriological intent of the *Abhidhamma*. All the theoretical analysis of mind and matter finally converges upon the practice of meditation, and the practice culminates in the attainment of the supreme goal of Buddhism, the liberation of the mind by non-clinging.

Notes

1. Asl. 2; *Expos.*, p. 3.

2. Asl. 2-3; *Expos.*, pp. 3-4.

3. The *Dhammasangani* also includes a *Suttanta* matrix consisting of forty-two dyads taken from the *Suttas*. However, this is ancillary to the *Abhidhamma* proper, and serves more as an appendix for providing succinct definitions of key *Suttanta* terms. Moreover, the definitions themselves are not framed in terms of *Abhidhamma*

categories and the *Suttanta* matrix is not employed in any subsequent books of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*.

4. See, for example, the following: A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 2nd rev. ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), pp. 218-24; Fumimaro Watanabe, *Philosophy and its Development in the Nikayas and Abhidhamma* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), pp. 18-67; and the article "Abhidharma Literature" by Kogen Mizuno in *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Fasc. 1 (Govt. of Ceylon, 1961).

5. Asl. 410; *Expos.*, p. 519

6. Asl. 13; *Expos.*, pp. 16-17

7. Asl. 16; *Expos.*, p. 20

8. The first book of the Sarvastivadin *Abhidharma*, the *Sangitiparyaya*, is ascribed to Sariputta by Chinese sources (but not by Sanskrit and Tibetan sources), while the second book, the *Dharmaskandha*, is ascribed to him by Sanskrit and Tibetan sources (but not by Chinese sources). The Chinese canon also contains a work entitled the *Shariputra Abhidharma-Shastra*, the school of which is not known.

9. These are reduced to the familiar eighty-nine *cittas* by grouping together the five *cittas* into which each path and fruition consciousness is divided by association with each of the five *jhanas*.

10. The *Yamaka*, in its chapter *Citta-yamaka*, uses the term *khana* to refer to the subdivision of a moment and also introduces the *uppada-khana* and *bhanga-khana*, the sub-moments of arising and dissolution. However, the threefold scheme of sub-moments seems to appear first in the Commentaries.

11. Ven. A. Devananda Adhikarana Nayaka Thero, in Preface to *Paramattha-vinicchaya and Paramattha-vibhavini-vyakhya* (Colombo: Vidya Sagara Press, 1926), p. iii.

12. G.P. Malalasekera, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon* (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena, repr. 1958), pp. 168-70. Malalasekera points out that James Gray, in his edition of *Buddhaghosuppatti*, gives a chronological list of saintly and learned men of Southern India, taken from the Talaing records, and there we find Anuruddha mentioned after authors who are supposed to have lived later than the seventh or eighth century. Since Bhadanta Sariputta Mahasami compiled a Sinhala paraphrase of the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* during the reign of Parakrama-Bahu the Great (1164-97), this places Anuruddha earlier than the middle of the twelfth century.

13. See the article "Anuruddha (5)" in *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Fasc. 4 (Govt. of Ceylon, 1965). Ven Buddhadatta's view is also accepted by Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, pp. 533-34.

14. This author is commonly confused with another Burmese monk called Chapada who came to Sri Lanka during the twelfth century and studied under Bhadanta Sariputta. The case for two Chapadas is cogently argued by Ven. A.P. Buddhadatta,

Corrections of Geiger's Mahavamsa, Etc. (Ambalangoda: Ananda Book Co., 1957), pp. 198-209.

The above introduction is a BPS document, also available at

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/abhiman.html>

Accesstoinight also gives a concise breakdown of the sections of the *Abhidhamma*:

The *Abhidhamma Pitaka*

The seven books of the, the third division of the *Tipitaka*, offer an extraordinarily detailed analysis of the basic principles governing the behavior of mental and physical processes. Whereas the *Sutta* and *Vinaya Pitakas* are characterized by their practical teachings regarding the Buddhist path to Awakening, the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* presents an almost scientific analysis of the underpinnings of that very path. In *Abhidhamma* philosophy the familiar psycho-physical universe (our world of "trees" and "rocks," "I" and "you") is reduced to a complex -- but comprehensible -- web of impersonal phenomena arising and passing at an inconceivably rapid pace from moment to moment, according to clearly-defined natural laws.

The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* has a well-deserved reputation for being dense and difficult reading, yet many find its descriptions of the inner workings of the mind to be a valuable aid to meditation practice. The modern Burmese approach to the teaching and practice of *Satipatthana* meditation, in particular, draws heavily on an *Abhidhammic* interpretation of meditative experience.

According to one tradition, the essence of *Abhidhamma* philosophy was formulated by the Buddha during the fourth week after his Enlightenment, although scholars debate its authenticity as a work by the Buddha himself. Regardless of its authorship, however, the *Abhidhamma* stands as a monumental feat of intellectual genius.

The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is divided into seven books, although it is the first (*Dhammasangani*) and last (*Patthana*) that together form the essence of the *Abhidhamma* teachings. The seven books are:

- ***Dhammasangani*** (*Enumeration of Phenomena*). This book enumerates all the *paramattha dhamma* (ultimate realities) to be found in the world. According to one such enumeration these amount to:
 - 52 *cetasikas* (mental factors), which, arising together in various combination, give rise to any one of...
 - ...89 different possible *cittas* (states of consciousness)
 - 4 primary physical elements, and 23 physical phenomena derived from them

○ Nibbana

- ***Vibhanga*** (*The Book of Treatises*). This book continues the analysis of the *Dhammasangani*, here in the form of a catechism.
- ***Dhatukatha*** (*Discussion with Reference to the Elements*). A reiteration of the foregoing, in the form of questions and answers.
- ***Puggalapaññatti*** (*Description of Individuals*). Somewhat out of place in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, this book contains descriptions of a number of personality-types.
- ***Kathavatthu*** (*Points of Controversy*). Another odd inclusion in the *Abhidhamma*, this book contains questions and answers that were compiled by Moggaliputta Tissa in the 3rd century BCE, in order to help clarify points of controversy that existed between the various "Hinayana" schools of Buddhism at the time.
- ***Yamaka*** (*The Book of Pairs*). This book is a logical analysis of many concepts presented in the earlier books. In the words of Mrs. Rhys Davids, an eminent 20th century Pali scholar, the ten chapters of the *Yamaka* amount to little more than "ten valleys of dry bones."
- ***Patthana*** (*The Book of Relations*). This book, by far the longest single volume in the *Tipitaka* (over 6,000 pages long in the Siamese edition), describes the 24 *paccayas*, or laws of conditionality, through which the *dhammas* interact. These laws, when applied in every possible permutation with the *dhammas* described in the *Dhammasangani*, give rise to all knowable experience.

Note: At present there are no texts from the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* available here at Access to Insight, nor do I currently plan to include them in the future.

For further reading:

- *Guide through the Abhidhamma Pitaka*, by Nyanatiloka Mahathera (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1983).

- *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhamma Sangaha of Acariya Anuruddha*, Bhikkhu Bodhi, ed. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1993). This book should be required reading for every Abhidhamma student, as it gives a remarkably lucid and insightful overview of Abhidhamma philosophy. Even if you read no further than the Introduction, your efforts will be well rewarded.
- *The Psychology and Philosophy of Buddhism: An Introduction to the Abhidhamma*, by Dr. W.F. Jayasuriya (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1988).
- Translations from the Pali Text Society:
 - *Buddhist Psychological Ethics (Dhammasangani)*, tr. 1900 by C.A.F. Rhys Davids)
 - *The Book of Analysis (Vibhanga)*, tr. 1969 by Ven. U Thittila)
 - *Discourse on Elements (Dhatukatha)*, tr. 1962 Ven. U Narada)
 - *A Designation of Human Types (Puggalapaññati)*, tr. 1922 by B.C. Law)
 - *Points of Controversy (Kathavatthu)*, tr. 1915 by S.Z. Aung and C.A.F. Rhys Davids)
 - *Conditional Relations (Tika-patthana)*, tr. 1960? Ven. U Narada)

Source: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org>

In conclusion, allow us now to express the hope that the reader has become more-acquainted and better-oriented regarding the relations between *dhammas* relative to phenomena in the matrix of ultimate relationships. This is, indeed, a vast subject, in which increasing insight will better-help the practitioner to see into the ultimate nature of *Paramattha Dhammas*.

Whether you like it or not, the *Abhidhamma* is one of those scholarly works which you can keep coming back to for the rest of your life, for further clarification and for further insight.

It is more than just a dry catalogue of categories and their subdivisions. Its original purpose was to serve as a meditation manual for monks in understanding the nature of phenomena; and its second objective was to codify the elements of the *dhamma theory* that was only implied in the *Suttas* but not yet fully-worked-through in detail.

However the *Abhidhamma* may have arisen originally, many, today, are willing to accept it as a useful tool, which was meticulously put-together and arranged in a way which would illustrate that the Buddhist approach was a systematically-coherent and wholly-unified and consistently-watertight justification of the Buddha's method of analysis of the breakdown of the characteristics and relations between human experience and impersonal phenomena.

The insight to be gained from the *Abhidhamma* is that when all phenomena are so well thought-out and carefully analyzed, the universe, rather than getting tighter-and-

tighter, becomes gradually wider-and-wider as the mind gradually expands and understands arising and ceasing phenomena in a more cosmological way.

End of Paper

*[Final Editorial Note: If we have not lost most of our readers halfway through the text but have retained at least a few, who are still interested and want to know more, i.e., through the Internet, we recommend (i) the downloadable version of Narada Maha Thera's book *A Manual of the Abhidhamma* or (ii) as above suggested, the complete and abridged text of Bhikkhu Bodhi's *A Comprehensive Manual of the Abhidhamma* which one will find listed in the Buddhist Publication Society's booklist at <www.bps.lk>.]*