

## PREFACE

ABHIDHAMMA, as the term implies, is the Higher Teaching of the Buddha. It expounds the quintessence of His profound doctrine.

The Dhamma, embodied in the Sutta Piṭaka, is the conventional teaching (*voḥāra desanā*) and the Abhidhamma is the ultimate teaching (*paramattha desanā*).

In the Abhidhamma both mind and matter, which constitute this complex machinery of man, are microscopically analysed. Chief events connected with the process of birth and death are explained in detail. Intricate points of the Dhamma are clarified. The Path of Emancipation is set forth in clear terms.

Modern Psychology, limited as it is, comes within the scope of Abhidhamma inasmuch as it deals with the mind, with thoughts, thought-processes, and mental states, but it does not admit of a psyche or a soul. Buddhism teaches a psychology without a psyche.

If one were to read the Abhidhamma as a modern textbook on psychology one would be disappointed. No attempt has here been made to solve all the problems that confront a modern psychologist.

Consciousness is defined. Thoughts are analysed and classified chiefly from an ethical standpoint. All mental states are enumerated. The composition of each type

of consciousness is set forth in detail. The description of thought-processes that arise through the five sense-doors and the mind-door is extremely interesting. Such a clear exposition of thought-processes cannot be found in any other psychological treatise.

*Bhavaṅga* and *Javana* thought-moments, which are explained only in the Abhidhamma, and which have no parallel in modern psychology, are of special interest to a research student in psychology.

That consciousness flows like a stream, a view propounded by some modern psychologists like William James, becomes extremely clear to one who understands the Abhidhamma. It must be added that an Abhidhamma student can fully comprehend the Anattā (No-soul) doctrine, the crux of Buddhism, which is important both from a philosophical and an ethical standpoint.

The advent of death, process of rebirth in various planes without anything to pass from one life to another, the evidentially verifiable doctrine of *Kamma* and rebirth are fully explained.

Giving a wealth of details about mind, Abhidhamma discusses the second factor of man—matter or *rūpa*. Fundamental units of matter, material forces, properties of matter, source of matter, relationship of mind and matter, are described.

In the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* there is a brief exposition of the Law of Dependent Origination, followed by a descriptive account of the Causal Relations which finds no parallel in any other philosophy.

A physicist should not delve into Abhidhamma to get a thorough knowledge of physics.

It should be made clear that Abhidhamma does not attempt to give a systematised knowledge of mind and matter. It investigates these two composite factors of so-called being to help the understanding of things as they truly are. A philosophy has been developed on these lines. Based on that philosophy an ethical system has been evolved, to realise the ultimate goal, *Nibbāna*.

As Mrs. Rhys Davids rightly says, Abhidhamma deals with "(1) What we find (a) within us (b) around us and of (2) what we aspire to find".

In Abhidhamma all irrelevant problems that interest students and scholars, but having no relation to one's Deliverance, are deliberately set aside.

The *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, the authorship of which is attributed to venerable Anuruddha Thera, an Indian monk of Kanjeevaram (Kāñcīpura), gives an epitome of the entire Abhidhamma Piṭaka. It is still the most fitting introduction to Abhidhamma. By mastering this book, a general knowledge of Abhidhamma may easily be acquired.

To be a master of Abhidhamma all the seven books, together with commentaries and sub-commentaries, have to be read and re-read patiently and critically.

Abhidhamma is not a subject of fleeting interest designed for the superficial reader.

To the wise truth-seekers, Abhidhamma is an indispensable guide and an intellectual treat. Here there is food for thought to original thinkers and to earnest students who wish to increase their wisdom and lead an ideal Buddhist life.

However, to the superficial, Abhidhamma must appear as dry as dust.

It may be questioned, "Is Abhidhamma absolutely essential to realise *Nibbāna*, the *summum bonum* of Buddhism, or even to comprehend things as they truly are?"

Undoubtedly Abhidhamma is extremely helpful to comprehend fully the word of the Buddha and realise *Nibbāna*, as it presents a key to open the door of reality. It deals with realities and a practical way of noble living, based on the experience of those who have understood and realised. Without a knowledge of the Abhidhamma one at times finds it difficult to understand the real significance of some profound teachings of the Buddha. To develop insight (*Vipassanā*) Abhidhamma is certainly very useful.

But one cannot positively assert that Abhidhamma is absolutely necessary to gain one's Deliverance.

Understanding or realisation is purely personal (*sandiṭṭhika*). The four Noble Truths that form the foundation of the Buddha's teaching are dependent on this one-fathom body. The Dhamma is not apart from oneself. Look within. Seek thyself. Lo, the truth will unfold itself.

Did not sorrow-afflicted Paṭācārā, who lost her dear and near ones, realise *Nibbāna* reflecting on the disappearance of water that washed her feet?

Did not Cūḷapanthaka, who could not memorise a verse even for four months, attain Arahātship, by comprehending the impermanent nature of a clean handkerchief which he was handling, gazing at the sun?

Did not Upatissa, later venerable Sāriputta Thera, realise *Nibbāna* on hearing half a stanza relating to cause and effect?

To some a fallen withered leaf had alone been sufficient to attain *pacceka Buddhahood*.

It was mindfulness on respiration (*ānāpāna sati*) that acted as the basis for the Bodhisatta to attain Buddhahood.

To profound thinkers, a slight indication is sufficient to discover great truths.

According to some scholars, Abhidhamma is not a teaching of the Buddha, but is a later elaboration of scholastic monks.

Tradition, however, attributes the nucleus of the Abhidhamma to the Buddha Himself.

Commentators state that the Buddha, as a mark of gratitude to His mother who was born in a celestial plane, preached the Abhidhamma to His mother Deva and others continuously for three months. The principle topics (*mātikā*) of the advanced teaching such as moral states (*kusala dhammā*), immoral states (*akusala dhammā*) and indeterminate states (*abyākata dhammā*) were taught by the Buddha to venerable Sāriputta Thera who subsequently elaborated them in the six books (*Kathāvattho* being excluded) that comprise the Abhidhamma Piṭaka.

Whoever the great author or authors of the Abhidhamma may have been it has to be admitted that he or they had intellectual genius comparable only to that of the Buddha. This is evident from the intricate and subtle *Paṭṭhāna Pakarāṇa* which minutely describes the various causal relations.

It is very difficult to suggest an appropriate English equivalent for Abhidhamma.

There are many technical terms, too, in Abhidhamma which cannot be rendered into English so as to convey their exact connotation. Some English equivalents such as consciousness, will, volition, intellect, perception are used in a specific sense in Western Philosophy. Readers should try to understand in what sense these technical terms are employed in Abhidhamma. To avoid any misunderstanding, due to preconceived views, Pāli words, though at times cumbersome to those not acquainted with the language, have judiciously been retained wherever the English renderings seem to be inadequate. To convey the correct meaning implied by the Pāli terms, the etymology has been given in many instances.

At times Pāli technical terms have been used in preference to English renderings so that the reader may be acquainted with them and not get confused with English terminology.

Sometimes readers will come across unusual words such as corruptions, defilements, volitional activities, functionals, resultants, and so forth, which are of great significance from an Abhidhamma standpoint. Their exact meaning should be clearly understood.

In the present volume only the first five chapters of the *Abhidhammattha-Sangaha* which deal with the first two of the ultimate entities (*paramatthas*)—namely, consciousness and mental states, are printed in Pāli together with a literal translation, accompanied by copious notes.

In 1947 the first chapter was published in a similar manner.

In preparing this translation *Buddhist Psychology* by Mrs. Rhys Davids and the *Compendium of Philosophy*

(*Abhidhammattha-Sangaha*) by Mr. Swe Zang Aung proved extremely helpful to me. Liberty has been taken to quote them wherever necessary with due acknowledgment.

Due to unavoidable reasons the printing of the book was protracted for a longer time than was expected. Proofs had to be corrected at times in the course of my travels abroad. As such mistakes are bound to occur.

Constructive criticism and useful suggestions for the improvement of the book will be most welcome.

Had it not been for the munificence of Mrs. F. R. Senanayaka, Mrs. N. Munasingha of Ceylon and an anonymous Australian pupil of mine, it would not have been possible to publish this volume. May this "Gift of Truth" redound to their eternal happiness.

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COLOMBO.