

Causes in a chain

Whether a person has *yoniso* or not depends on whether that person reads good literature, or takes lessons from the wise and the learned. If one studies good books and takes training from the wise (being in association with the wise), one's knowledge and wisdom grow. If this one, receiving growing knowledge, makes a determination such as "I must have a good mind in my heart," that one is likely to have *yoniso* in every situation encountered. The one who does not read good books and does not take lessons from the wise is likely to have little knowledge, and does not know how to orient his mind properly. Therefore, I would like to see a great many people

- to take to heart a proper *yoniso* in any situation they may get in, and get ahead in association with others with mature minds, holding fast to the *brahmacāra dhamma*³⁸ in every situation of life one encounters;
- to stand the impacts of rises and falls of fortunes in life, with firmness in resolution and in good grace, well composed with a clear mind, and without change of usual attitude and thoughts;
- to make efforts and put hard work to whatever fulfillment of perfections in *dāna*, *sīla*, etc. that one is committed to in this life so that lives in the next existence and beyond may be bright and high-standing, until the attainment of *Nibbāna*.

With these three basic aims in mind, "Kokyint Abhidhamma"³⁹ has been compiled for a great many people so as to make themselves practitioners of high moral conduct.

Looking into the mirror
To see daily
The image of self to repair;
Like the mirror, read this book,
See how fair one would look,
Daily contemplate how one fares,
And take care . . .

³⁸ (P) The four articles of *metta*, *karuṇā*, *mudītā* and *upekkhā*.
³⁹ "Kokyint Abhidhamma" is title of the original book.

What are humans, devas and Brahmas?

Mind and its associates are called *nāma*. The combined effect of becoming in succession of that *nāma* (mind) and *rūpa* (matter, corporeality) is called man, deva, Brahma, or, personalities - I, he, man and woman (male and female). In fact if *rūpa* and *nāma* are removed, there would be no man, no deva, no Brahma and so, no *sattavā*.

How do rūpa and nāma come about?

Rūpa and *nāma* do not arise and pass away in ceaseless succession without a cause. Only on account of the impact of the external objects on our sense faculties, and the resultant effects of *kammās* from our previous existences, the phenomena of *rūpa* and *nāma* continue to this day. Therefore, for the *rūpa* and *nāma* to be, there have to be external sense objects as well as *kamma* or volitional deeds done in past lives.

What is important?

Out of those two causes, the external sense objects can only give us signals to cause various kinds of feelings and thoughts, and so they are not very important. Upon impact of such external sense objects, whether they are good or bad, it is only incumbent on us to have a properly oriented, well-prepared mind, and that is very important.

Basically, it means that if our mind, the consciousness continuum, is always good, the *rūpa-nāma* that will come into being in the next lives will always be good and noble. In spite of change of lives, it will only be good *rūpa* and good *nāma* (good human, good deva and good Brahma). If the mind inside us is wicked and evil (although one may live well now due to a good-natured mind in a previous life), it will be a wicked mind in ugly looks (hell, ghosts, animals) in the next life.

Yoniso is cause for noble mind

Only if one has *yoniso*, one can have a good mind, a good heart. The habit of proper and thorough attention and wise decision is called *'yoniso manasikāra'*. Nowadays, it is 'yoniso' in vogue, instead of *yoniso manasikāra*. Thus, if one gives proper attention (*yoniso*), one does not have *akusala citta* (wicked mind), but only *kusala citta* (wholesome mind). If there is no *yoniso*, even in matters that could induce good thoughts, one may not be quite happy. Therefore, for a great many bhikkhus and laity, the most important thing is to be in the habit of 'yoniso'.

INTRODUCTION

*paṇā sabhā susayantu, vatthahantu sammangalā
dusentu, duggatin gāmin, purintu, sabbapāramin.*

May all beings living in their respective abodes, sleep at ease and in peace, dreaming pleasant dreams. May they wake up and rise as the day breaks, full of grace and happiness. May the wrongful intents and wills that lead to the four lower destinations be destroyed by the weapons of noble thoughts and deeds. May all beings, assuredly, try to take up and fulfill the ten perfect moral conducts that the Bhodhisattas carry to fulfill, so as to achieve success, one stage after another.

When considering the news of people today, mankind appears to lack the noble attributes of love³³, kindness and sympathetic joy, making the world seem dry and drab. The fire causing this dryness almost completely overwhelms even the noble characters of pure mind and saintliness.

What is meant by the fire?

The fire or the heat arises out of greed, anger, conceit, envy, avarice³⁴, and etc., causing people to commit inconsiderate actions towards each other. That heat does not only cause the dryness in this life, it does so also in the next life and throughout the *samsāra*³⁵. So, to be able to extinguish that fire as far as one can in this life, one should try to flush out the cool waters of love for all, kindness to the less fortunate and sympathetic joy for the more fortunate.

What is samsāra?

We have used the phrase 'throughout the *samsāra*', and so the '*samsāra* should be given some thought. It is not the worldly loka³⁶ that beings live in, but the ceaseless, successive becoming of mind (consciousness), its associates and matter³⁷. [*saṃ* = in succession, *saṃ* = becoming, appearing].

³³ This love is meant by *metta*, the universal love for all beings, devoid of passion, or fear.
³⁴ In Pali they are *lobha*, *dosa*, *māna*, *issa*, *maacchariya*, etc.
³⁵ The seemingly endless cycles of birth, old age, death and rebirth, or (in Abhidhamma) the cycle of becoming and unbecoming, appearing and disappearing of mind and matter (as observed in *vipassanā*)
³⁶ By *loka* is meant both animate and inanimate worlds, including all the 31 *bhūmīs* of existence
³⁷ *citta*, *cetasika* and *rūpa*

of the text. Some Pali words are essentially basic to convey their precise conceptual meaning in Thedraivedin tradition.

The translator extends his *metta* to the readers of this translation and prays that they be happy to find this work of the Sayadaw useful in their moment-to-moment encounter with the realities of life.

Let us give peace a chance to rule the world.

U Nyi,
Shwepyithar,
Yangon Division,
Myanmar.
Dated the 30th of January, 2010

He was merely a faithful carrier of the message of the Master. The characteristics of the *Abhidhamma* can be recognized from a comment by Ashin Sittihla, the renowned Abhidhajmahāguru and Aggamahāpantita, thus: "Abhidhamma consists of the knowledge of working of the mind, of moral conduct of the enlightened, and of the insight knowledge of natural causes and effects (in the world of mind and matter). The study is beyond the scope of Psychology, Ethics and Philosophy."³⁷ In fact it is beyond the reach of any study of the Arts and Sciences, the study of which are based and built up on *samutī saccā* and *paññatti paññā* (conventional, worldly wisdom), whereas the basis of *Abhidhamma* is *paramattha saccā* (the objective truth) that must necessarily make use of the conventional language and commonly accepted vocabulary lest we cause chaos in human relationships and disregard the material and conventional world we live in. *Paramattha dhamma* is the law and the language of insight meditation in seeking the Absolute Freedom and Enlightenment.

The grand, and yet seemingly effortless work, entitled "Kokyint Abhidhamma" in original Myanmar, of Mahagandaryon Sayadaw Ashin Janakabhivamsa, was meant primarily for his classes of around 650 pupils at his great Monastery in Amarapura, the Southern town of Mandalay. "Abhidhamma" is untranslatable in a single word. 'Buddhist Ideals' is my choice that inspires me to entitle this translated version as "Practical Aspects of Buddhist Ideals". The original was a popular work of religious literature in Myanmar for over half a century (it still is today), having been reprinted many times, thus giving evidence that Abhidhamma, seemingly difficult to comprehend for the untutored, can be learned and put to practice by ordinary people with some intelligence and willingness to follow up lofty moral principles. My purpose in taking up this challenging task of translating it is an attempt to contribute in some small measure to the propagation and assimilation of Abhidhamma studies among interested English-reading public, and to help further develop a serious interest and inspiration in wisdom by insight meditation (*vipassanā bhāvanā* *maya paññā*).

The reader may first find it perplexing to have to read an abundance of Pali words, but they may be skipped where definitions are given on the spot. Many words that are too often recurrent and untranslatable word for word will be used on their own as the reader gets familiar with the flow

³⁷ An extract from the editorial of Myat Mingalar bulletin, October, 2007

*Minatthar*³ in the realm of Tavatimsā⁴. The Sermon was a gesture of paying back gratitude owed to His mother, now Medaw Minatthar. It took the three full months of Lent (from full-moon day in July to that in October) on earth, from start to finish.

The exact length of the Abhidhamma Teaching is never known on earth. But the Buddha taught the full extent of the tenets, though brief, to Ashin⁵ Śāriputtārā on His daily rounds for alms-food and ablutions on earth. A *nimitta* Buddha (a live replica, a virtual image, created for the purpose) remained behind addressing the celestial congregation in Tavatimsā while the Buddha was on His alms rounds on earth and teaching the abridged version of Abhidhamma to Ashin Śāriputtārā. The Ashin expanded the brief teaching to a certain length ("not too long, not too short, just enough for easier understanding"), in his re-briefings to the Saṅghā. The *Abhidhamma* we learn today is what the Ashin taught with full blessing from the Buddha. It was his greatest contribution to the Buddhist Mission; his perfection in Bodhiñāna was one only next to that of the Buddha Himself – no one else could have done such a great task as this.

The *Abhidhamma* basket contains 7 volumes with the titles of *Dhammasaṅgani*, *Vibhaṅga*, *Dhātukathā*, *Puggalapaññat*, *Kathāvatthu*, *Yamaka* and *Paṭṭhāna*. Its contents are so comprehensive of all mundane and super mundane worlds and so insightful that it is difficult for ordinary people to understand. For the benefit of these people, therefore, Anuroddha Mathera⁶ of South India (Kancipura) prepared what is known as *Abhidhamma Sangaha*, which was still so brief that it was, in its generality, little more than a detailed listing of the contents of the *Abhidhamma*; the essence of the dhamma seemed hidden. So, there appeared many other works in Pali, Myanmar and several other languages that divulged and opened up the *Abhidhamma Sangaha* for easier comprehension.

Some say that *Abhidhamma* is not the Buddha's Teaching but that of Shin Śāriputtārā. It was not so in Theravada Buddhism. The Ashin did not teach it out of his own wisdom; he was assimilating the text, the methods and the analyses as taught by the Buddha.

³ This is a conventional form of address in Myanmar to Prince Siddhattha's mother as a male deva (a god of the heaven). *Brahmas* are higher celestial beings.
⁴ Abode of a class of heavenly beings (gods) in the sensuous sphere
⁵ A Myanmar form of address to Great Venerable Bikkhus
⁶ Contemporary of Shin Mahābuddhagosa and Shin Buddhadatta, 4th or 5th century AD

PREFACE TO THIS TRANSLATION

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[ON NIBBĀNA]

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Glossary

At the age of 42, in His 7th year² of Buddhahood, Lord Buddha delivered the *Abhidhamma desanā* to an audience of a great many *devas* (gods) and *Brahmas* (nobler, higher heavenly gods) headed by *Medaw*

¹ *Paramattha saccā, vacana* or *desanā*, is defined as 'Truth (or term, exposition) that is true in the highest (or ultimate) sense, as contrasted with the 'conventional truth' (*voḍḍāva* or *samutī saccā*), which is the 'commonly accepted truth'. (Ashin Nyannatoloka, the Buddhist Dictionary 6th edition, 2003)
² Kyithe Laythat Sayadaw, "Jinathapakasani" (Myanmar), Pitakattaw Pyanpwaye Press, Mandalay, 1970

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MIXED FACTORS

- Vedanā (Sensation)
- Saññā (Perception)
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INTRODUCTION

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