

Introduction to the Abhidhamma

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1 Introduction to the Abhidhamma

The Buddha taught conventional truth, *sammutti sacca*, and ultimate truth, *paramattha sacca*. The Commentary to the “Middle Length Sayings”, sutta 5, “No Blemishes”, states:

“There is a twofold teaching of the Buddha, the Blessed One: the teaching in the conventional way and the teaching by way of ultimate realities. There is a human, a being, a woman, a man, a man of the warrior caste, a brahman, a god, and Mara. Such is the teaching in the conventional way. Impermanence, *dukkha*, *anattā*, the aggregates, elements, sensefields (*āyatana*), *satipaṭṭhāna*. Such is the teaching by way of ultimate realities. Here the Blessed One taught to those in the conventional way who by means of it, after having heard the teaching, penetrated the meaning and abandoned ignorance, and were skilled to attain distinction. But who by means of ultimate realities, after having heard the teaching, penetrated the meaning and abandoned ignorance, and were skilled to attain distinction, to those he taught by way of ultimate realities.”

In the Suttanta we find the teaching in conventional way, but also the teaching by way of ultimate realities. When the Buddha spoke in the suttas about situations and people, he pointed to the truth of impermanence, *dukkha* and *anattā*. He knew the dispositions of different beings and which kind of teaching was most suitable for them. The teaching of the Abhidhamma is mainly by way of ultimate realities, *paramattha dhammas*. In order to have understanding of the Abhidhamma it is essential to know the difference between ultimate realities, *paramattha dhammas*, and concepts, *paññatti*, such as a person or a tree.

2 Ultimate Truth and Conventional Truth

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 *nāma* and physical phenomena or *rūpa*. Seeing is *nāma*, it experiences visible object through the eye-door. Visible object or colour is *rūpa*, it does not experience anything. The eyesense, that functions as the eye-door through which visible object is experienced, is also *rūpa*. The *rūpas* that are sense objects, namely, visible object, sound, smell, flavour and tangible object, and also the *rūpas* that are the sense organs of eyes, ears, nose, tongue and bodysense, are conditions for the *nāmas* to experience objects. *Nāma* and *rūpa* are interrelated. *Nāma* and *rūpa* are ultimate realities. We should know the difference between ultimate truth, *paramattha sacca*, and conventional truth, *sammutti sacca*. Ultimate truth is not abstract. Ultimate realities, in Pāli: *paramattha dhammas*, have each their own characteristic which cannot be changed. We may change the name, but the characteristic remains the same. Seeing is an ultimate reality, it experiences visible object which appears through the eyes; it is real for everyone, it has its own unalterable characteristic. Anger has its own characteristic, it is real for everyone, no matter how we name it. Ultimate realities can be directly experienced when they appear through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense or mind. They arise because of their appropriate conditions. Conventional truth is the world of concepts such as person, tree or animal. Before we learnt about Buddhism, conventional truth, the world of concepts, was the only truth we knew. It is useful to examine the meaning of concept, in Pāli: *paññatti*. The word concept can stand for the name or term that 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. We can think of concepts, but they are not realities that can be directly experienced, without having to name them.

3 Dhamma in Detail

In all three parts of the Tipiṭaka we are taught about “dhamma”, about everything which is real. Seeing is a dhamma, it is real. Colour is a dhamma, it is real. Feeling is a dhamma, it is real. Our defilements are dhammas, they are realities. When the Buddha attained enlightenment he clearly knew all dhammas as they really are. He taught us the “Dhamma”, the teaching on realities, in order that we also may know dhammas as they are. Without the Buddha’s teaching we would be ignorant of reality. We are inclined to take for permanent what is impermanent, for pleasant what is sorrowful and unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and for “self” what is non-self. The aim of all three parts of the Tipiṭaka is to teach people the development of the way leading to the end of defilements. In the Suttanta, the “Discourses”, the Dhamma is explained to different people at different places on various occasions. The Buddha taught about all realities appearing through the “six doors” of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind. He taught about cause and effect and about the practice leading to the end of all sorrow. As regards the Abhidhamma, this is an exposition of all realities in detail. The prefix “abhi” is used in the sense of “preponderance” or “distinction”. “Abhidhamma” means “higher Dhamma” or “Dhamma in detail”. The form of this part of the Tipiṭaka is different, but the aim is the same: the eradication of wrong view and eventually of all defilements. Thus, when we study the many enumerations of realities, we should not forget the real purpose of our study. The intellectual understanding of realities (*pariyatti*) should encourage us to the practice (*paṭipatti*) which is necessary for the realization of the truth (*paṭivedha*). While we are studying the different mental phenomena (*nāmas*) and physical phenomena (*rūpas*) and while we are pondering over them, we can be reminded to be aware of the *nāma* and *rūpa* which appear at that moment. In this way we will discover more and more that the Abhidhamma explains everything which is real, that is, the “worlds” appearing through the six doors of the senses and the mind.

4 Abhidhamma in the Sutta

In the Anguttara Nikāya, Book of the Ones (Ch VIII, 4) we read about right understanding as being the most precious in life - that which doesn't bring sorrow:

“Of slight account, monks, is the loss of such things as relatives. Miserable indeed among losses is the loss of wisdom. Of slight account, monks, is the increase of such things as relatives. Chief of all the increases is that of wisdom... Of slight account, monks, is the loss of such things as wealth. Miserable indeed among losses is the loss of wisdom. Of slight account, monks, is the increase of such things as wealth. Chief of all the increases is that of wisdom... “Of slight account, monks, is the loss of such things as reputation. Miserable indeed among losses is the loss of wisdom. Of slight account, monks, is the increase of such things as reputation. Chief of all the increases is that of wisdom. Wherefore I say, monks, you should train yourselves thus: We will increase in wisdom. You must train yourselves to win that.”

This sutta is an exhortation to develop right understanding of realities. Understanding of realities is the most precious in life, as the above-quoted sutta states. Sutta reading is not easy and we have to carefully consider each word of the sutta. We have to know what kind of understanding is meant in this sutta. The Buddha pointed to the development of understanding of all realities in daily life, no matter he taught Sutta or Abhidhamma. The Abhidhamma helps us to understand the deep meaning of the suttas. We may be inclined to overlook the implications of the meaning of understanding, when we read that understanding is the most precious of all. We have to know what kind of understanding, understanding of which objects. Also in the suttas the Buddha teaches to develop right understanding of ultimate realities, but in the suttas the Buddha mostly speaks about people's situations in daily life, about their clinging to pleasant objects, and the sorrow caused by clinging. He spoke in conventional terms in order to help people to understand what is true in the ultimate sense. Whatever reality arises does so because of the proper conditions. The conditioned realities of our life are citta, consciousness, cetasika, mental factors arising with the citta and rūpa, physical phenomena. These are three conditioned paramattha dhammas. There is no person, no self who sees, clings, feels sadness; there are only nāma, mental phenomena, and physical phenomena, rūpa. In the above-quoted sutta we are reminded that right understanding is more precious than people we hold dear or possessions. It is the understanding that whatever occurs in life, be it pleasant or unpleasant, are only conditioned dhammas. When we suffer the loss of dear people we should remember that also sadness is a conditioned dhamma, a cetasika, mental factor, arising with akusala citta. It only lasts for one moment, it falls away and then there is a next moment of consciousness. At the moment of seeing there is no sadness at the same time; seeing experiences a different object: visible object. Each citta only experiences one object at a time. Through the Abhidhamma we are reminded all the time that there is no person who clings, no person who suffers, that only citta and the accompanying cetasikas experience different objects, be these unpleasant or pleasant. There is no person who develops understanding; understanding, paññā, is a cetasika that can only arise when there are the appropriate conditions for it. The Abhidhamma is not a theory one finds in a textbook; the teaching of the Abhidhamma is about all the realities that appear at this moment. The Abhidhamma teaches about seeing, about thinking of what was seen, about

all the defilements arising on account of what is experienced through the senses and the mind-door.

5 Citta

The truth is different from what we always assumed. What we take for a person are only *nāmas*, mental phenomena, and *rūpas*, physical phenomena, that arise and fall away. *Nāma* and *rūpa* are real in the ultimate sense, they are different from concepts such as person or animal. *Citta*, consciousness, and *cetasika*, mental factor arising with the *citta*, are both *nāma*. They experience different objects.

It is not a self or a person who experiences something, it is *citta* that cognizes an object. *Citta* experiences only one object and then it falls away to be succeeded by the next *citta*. We may have thought that there is one consciousness that lasts, that can see, hear and think, but this is not so. Only one *citta* arises at a time: at one moment a *citta* that sees arises, at another moment a *citta* that hears arises. Each *citta* lasts only for an extremely short time and then it falls away. The five senses and the mind are the doorways through which *citta* can cognize the different objects which present themselves. Each *citta* experiences an object, in Pāli: *ārammaṇa*. Knowing or experiencing an object does not necessarily mean thinking about it. The *citta* which sees has what is visible as object; it is different from the *cittas* which arise afterwards, such as the *cittas* which know what it is that was perceived and which think about it. The *citta* which hears (hearing-consciousness) has sound as its object. Even when we are sound asleep and not dreaming, *citta* experiences an object. There isn't any *citta* without an object. There are many different types of *citta* which can be classified in different ways. Some *cittas* are *kusala* (wholesome), some are *akusala* (unwholesome). *Kusala* *cittas* and *akusala* *cittas* are *cittas* which are cause; they can motivate wholesome or unwholesome deeds through body, speech or mind which are able to bring about their appropriate results. Some *cittas* are the result of wholesome or unwholesome deeds, they are *vipākacittas*. Some *cittas* are neither cause nor result; they are *kiriya* *cittas* (sometimes translated as “inoperative”). *Cittas* can be classified by way of *jāti* (*jāti* literally means “birth” or “nature”). There are four *jātis*:

- *kusala*
- *akusala*
- *vipāka*
- *kiriya*

Both *kusala vipāka* (the result of a wholesome deed) and *akusala vipāka* (the result of an unwholesome deed) are one *jāti*, the *jāti* of *vipāka*. It is important to know which *jāti* a *citta* is. We cannot develop wholesomeness in our life if we take *akusala* for *kusala* or if we take *akusala* for *vipāka*. For instance, when someone speaks unpleasant words to us, the moment of experiencing the sound (hearing-consciousness) is *akusala vipāka*, the result of an unwholesome deed we performed ourselves. The aversion which may arise very shortly afterwards is not *vipāka*, but it arises with *akusala citta*. Aversion or anger, *dosa*, can motivate unwholesome action or speech. We can learn to distinguish these moments from each other by realizing their different characteristics. When we have understood that *cittas* both of ourselves and others arise because of conditions we shall be less inclined to dwell for a long time on someone else's behaviour. In the ultimate sense there is no person to be blamed and no person who receives unpleasant results. In reality there are only *citta*, *cetasika* and *rūpa* that arise because of their own conditions.

6 Citta and Cetasikas

Citta does not arise singly, it is always accompanied by cetasikas, mental factors. Only one citta arises at a time and each citta is accompanied by several cetasikas. Citta is the leader in cognizing an object and the accompanying cetasikas have each their own function while they assist citta in cognizing an object. Citta may be of one of the four jātis of kusala, akusala, vipāka or kiriya. Cetasikas are of the same jāti as the citta they accompany. Some cetasikas, such as feeling and remembrance or “perception” (saññā), accompany each citta, others do not. Feeling, in Pāli: vedanā, is a cetasika which arises with every citta. Citta only knows or experiences its object; it does not feel. Feeling, vedanā, however, has the function of feeling. Feeling is sometimes pleasant, sometimes unpleasant. When we do not have a pleasant or an unpleasant feeling, there is still feeling: at that moment the feeling is neutral or indifferent. Perception or remembrance, in Pāli: saññā, marks the object so that it can be recognized later on. Whenever we remember something it is saññā, not self, which remembers. It is saññā which, for example, remembers that this colour is red, that this is a house, or that this is the sound of a bird. Contact, in Pāli: phassa, is another cetasika which arises with every citta; it “contacts” the object so that citta can experience it. There are also types of cetasika which do not arise with every citta. Unwholesome mental factors, akusala cetasikas, accompany only akusala cittas, whereas sobhana cetasikas, “beautiful” mental factors, accompany kusala cittas. Among the cetasikas which can accompany akusala cittas or kusala cittas, some are roots, hetus. A root or hetu is the foundation of the akusala citta or kusala citta, just as the roots are the foundation of a tree. They give a firm support to the citta and cetasikas they arise together with. There are three cetasikas which are unwholesome roots, akusala hetus: attachment (lobha), aversion (dosa) and ignorance (moha). Akusala cittas may be rooted in moha and lobha, or in moha and dosa, or they may have moha as their only root. Moha arises with each akusala citta. Moha is blindness, it does not know the danger of akusala; it is the root of all evil. There are three sobhana hetus, beautiful roots: non-attachment (alobha), non-aversion (adosa), and wisdom (paññā). All kusala cittas are rooted in non-attachment and non-aversion, and they may or may not be rooted in wisdom, paññā. There are many shades and degrees of the akusala hetus and the sobhana hetus. Akusala citta is impure and it leads to sorrow. At the moment of akusala citta there is no confidence in wholesomeness; one does not see that akusala citta is impure and harmful. For example, when we see a pleasant sight, akusala cittas with attachment tend to arise. At such a moment there is “unwise attention” to the object which is experienced; we are enslaved to that object and do not see the danger of akusala. Thus we go on accumulating more and more akusala. We may find it difficult to see that even when we do not harm or hurt others, the citta can still be akusala. For example, when we like nature, there is a degree of attachment and attachment is not kusala, it is different from unselfishness. We may see the danger of akusala which is coarse, but it is difficult to see the danger of akusala which is more subtle. However through the study of the Dhamma we can acquire more understanding of akusala dhammas and then we may begin to see the danger of all degrees of akusala. Whenever the citta is not intent on wholesomeness, we act, speak or think with akusala citta. We may not have unkind thoughts or thoughts of coarse desire, but the cittas which think can still be akusala cittas; they are akusala cittas whenever we do not think wholesome thoughts. We think time and again of people, of things which have happened or will happen, and we should find out for ourselves when thinking is kusala and when akusala. When the citta is kusala, there is confidence in wholesomeness. Confidence,

or faith, *saddhā*, is a *sobhana cetasika*. Each *kusala citta* is assisted by many *sobhana cetasikas*. When we see the value of *kusala*, there are conditions for the arising of *kusala citta*. *Kusala citta* is pure and it is capable of producing a pleasant result. Defilements and wholesome qualities are *cetasikas*, they are non-self. They are not listed just to be read and memorized, they are realities of daily life and they can be known as they are by being mindful of them.

7 Kamma and result

As we have seen, three cetasikas are unwholesome roots, akusala hetus: attachment (lobha), aversion (dosa) and ignorance (moha). Three cetasikas are beautiful roots, sobhana hetus: non-attachment,(alobha), non-aversion, (adosa) and wisdom (paññā). Unwholesome roots, akusala hetus, can motivate ill deeds through body, speech or mind. Ill deeds are called in Pāli: akusala kamma. Kamma is the cetasika (mental factor arising with the citta) which is intention or volition, in Pali: cetanā. However, the word “kamma” is also used in a more general sense for the deeds which are intended by cetanā. The term kamma-patha (literally “course of action”) is used as well in this sense. There are akusala kamma-pathas and kusala kamma-pathas, ill deeds and good deeds, accomplished through body, speech and mind. As regards akusala kamma-patha, there are ten akusala kamma-pathas and these are conditioned by lobha, dosa and moha. They are: killing, stealing, sexual misbehaviour, lying, slandering, rude speech, frivolous talk, covetousness, ill-will and wrong view (ditṭhi). Beautiful roots, sobhana hetus, motivate good deeds such as generosity, abstention from ill deeds, mental development which includes samatha and vipassanā. Whatever conduct we follow in daily life is conditioned by the wholesome or unwholesome roots accumulated from life to life. There is no self who can determine to do wrong or to do what is right, it is conditioned by the roots and many other factors. Each moment, whatever we do, is conditioned. When we are generous, helping others or paying respect, we may believe that there are only kusala cittas. However, what we take for wholesome may be motivated by akusala, such as conceit or being intent on some advantage for ourselves. Kusala cittas and akusala cittas alternate in our life. This shows how deeply rooted defilements are. Kamma is a mental activity which can be accumulated. Since cittas that 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 to produce 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 our life kamma produces seeing, hearing and the other sense-impressions that are vipākacittas, cittas that are results. Vipākacittas 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. If there is right understanding of the citta that is cause and the citta that is result we shall know the meaning of anattā. We shall come to understand that there is no self who can cause the arising of pleasant or unpleasant experiences through the senses. Due to kamma gain and loss, praise and blame alternate in our life.

8 Rootless Cittas

Each citta experiences an object. There is not only one type of citta, but there is a great diversity of cittas that experience objects. If we want to know ourselves we should not merely know the moments of akusala cittas or kusala cittas but other moments as well. Kusala cittas and akusala cittas are cittas that are cause, they can motivate good or evil deeds, and these deeds can produce their appropriate results later on. Kusala cittas and akusala cittas are accompanied by cetasikas that are roots, hetus. As we have seen, three of these hetus are akusala; they are: lobha (attachment), dosa (aversion) and moha (ignorance). Three hetus are sobhana (beautiful); they are: alobha (greedlessness or generosity), adosa (non-hate or loving kindness) and amoha (paññā or wisdom). The citta or cetasika which is accompanied by a hetu is sahetuka (“sa” means “with”). For example, dosa-mūla-citta, citta rooted in dosa, is sahetuka; moha and dosa are the hetus which arise with dosa-mūla-citta. There are also cittas that are rootless, ahhetuka. There are many ahhetuka cittas arising in a day. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and the experience of tangible object through the bodysense are ahhetuka vipākacittas. Nobody can cause the arising of seeing, hearing or the other sense-cognitions; they are the results of kamma, a deed performed in the past. An evil deed produces akusala vipākacitta and a good deed produces kusala vipākacitta. Seeing that is akusala vipākacitta experiences an unpleasant object and seeing that is kusala vipākacitta experiences a pleasant object. Of each of the five sense-cognitions (seeing, etc.) there are two kinds experiencing an object through one of the five sense-doors: one is ahhetuka akusala vipāka and one is ahhetuka kusala vipāka. Thus, there are five pairs of ahhetuka vipākacittas which arise depending on the five sense-doors. These five pairs are called in Pali: dvi-pañca-viññāṇa (two times five viññāṇa). When a pleasant or an unpleasant object impinges on the eyesense, seeing-consciousness only experiences what appears through the eyes, there is no like or dislike yet of the object. Seeing-consciousness is an ahhetuka vipākacitta. Cittas which like or dislike the object arise later on; these are sahetuka cittas (arising with hetus). Seeing is not the same as thinking of what is seen. When one uses the word “seeing” one usually means: paying attention to the shape and form of something and knowing what it is, such as a person or a thing. However, there must also be a kind of citta which merely sees visible object, and this citta does not know anything else. What is seen we can call “visible object” or “colour”; what is meant is: what appears through the eyes. Whenever we see, hear, smell, taste or experience tangible object through the bodysense, there are ahhetuka vipākacittas before akusala cittas or kusala cittas arise. The citta which dislikes the object may arise afterwards. This citta is “sahetuka”, with hetus (roots); it is akusala citta rooted in dosa, aversion, and it is accompanied by unpleasant feeling. Or the citta which likes the object may arise; this citta is also “sahetuka”, rooted in lobha, attachment, and it may be accompanied by pleasant feeling or by indifferent feeling. We are inclined to think that the “five pairs” (dvi-pañca-viññāṇa), such as seeing or hearing, can occur at the same time as like or dislike of the object, but this is not so. Different cittas arise at different moments and the feelings which accompany the cittas are different too; these realities arise each because of their own conditions and they are non-self.

9 The Experience of Objects through different doorways

Seeing is an *ahetuka vipākacitta* that experiences visible object through the eye-door. Hearing is an *ahetuka vipākacitta* that experiences sound through the ear-door. Each of the sense-cognitions experiences an object through the appropriate doorway. There is not only one *citta* that experiences visible object, or one *citta* that experiences sound, but each of the sense-cognitions arises in a series or process of *cittas* succeeding one another and sharing the same object. They all cognize the same object, but they each perform their own function. Seeing is preceded by the eye-door adverting-consciousness, which adverts to visible object. It does not see but it merely turns towards the visible object that has just impinged on the eyesense¹This *citta* is an *ahetuka kiriyacitta* (inoperative *citta*), it is not *akusala citta*, not *kusala citta* and not *vipākacitta*. Seeing, which is an *ahetuka vipākacitta*, is succeeded by two more *ahetuka vipākacittas* which do not see but still cognize visible object that has not fallen away yet. They perform a function different from seeing while they cognize visible object. Visible object is *rūpa* and it lasts longer than *citta*. These *cittas* are receiving-consciousness (*sampañicchana-citta*), that receives visible object and investigating-consciousness (*santīraṇa-citta*), that investigates the object. The investigating-consciousness is succeeded by the determining-consciousness (*vothapana-citta*), which is an *ahetuka kiriyacitta*. This *citta* is followed by seven *javana-cittas* that are, in the case of non-*arahats kusala cittas* or *akusala cittas*. There is a fixed order in the *cittas* arising within a process and nobody can change this order. There is no self who can determine whether the determining-consciousness will be succeeded by *akusala cittas* or *kusala cittas*. *Cittas* arise and fall away succeeding one another extremely rapidly and nobody can make *kusala citta* arise at will. *Kusala* performed in the past is a condition for the arising of *kusala* at present. When the sense-door process of *cittas* is finished, the sense object experienced by those *cittas* has also fallen away. Very shortly after the sense-door process is finished, a mind-door process of *cittas* begins, which experience the sense object which has just fallen away. Although it has fallen away, it can be object of *cittas* arising in a mind-door process. The first *citta* of the mind-door process is the mind-door adverting-consciousness (*mano-dvārāvajjana-citta*) which adverts through the mind-door to the object which has just fallen away. The mind-door adverting-consciousness is neither *akusala citta* nor *kusala citta*; it is an *ahetuka kiriyacitta*. After the mind-door adverting-consciousness has adverted to the object it is succeeded by either *kusala cittas* or *akusala cittas* (in the case of non-*arahats*), which experience that same object. When visible object is experienced through the mind-door the *cittas* only know visible object, they do not pay attention to shape and form or think of a person or a thing. But time and again there are also other mind-door processes of *cittas* which think of people or things and then the object is a concept, not visible object. The experience of visible object conditions the thinking of concepts of people and things which arises later on. All the time sense objects impinge on the different doorways. They appear just for a moment, and then they fall away. The Buddha pointed out the dangers of being infatuated with the objects we experience through the six doors. He taught people to develop the wisdom which knows the realities experienced through the six doors as *nāma* and *rūpa*, phenomena which are impermanent and non-self.

¹ The five-sense-door adverting-consciousness (*pañca-dvārāvajjana-citta*) turns towards the object through one of the five sense-doors. It is named after the relevant sense-door, such as eye-door adverting-consciousness or ear-door adverting-consciousness.

What is impermanent is “dukkha”, it cannot be happiness. When we come to know things as they are, we will be less infatuated with objects.

10 Life-continuum, bhavanga-citta

There are moments when there are no sense-impressions, when one does not think, when there are no akusala cittas or kusala cittas. Even when there are no sense-impressions and no thinking there must be citta; otherwise there would be no life. The type of citta which arises and falls away at those moments is called bhavanga-citta. Bhavanga literally means “factor of life”; bhavanga is usually translated into English as “life-continuum”. The bhavanga-citta keeps the continuity in a lifespan, so that what we call a “being” goes on to live from moment to moment. That is the function of the bhavanga-citta. There are countless bhavanga-cittas arising at those moments when there are no sense-impressions, no thinking, no akusala cittas or kusala cittas. When we are asleep and dreaming akusala cittas and kusala cittas arise, but even when we are in a dreamless sleep there still has to be citta. There are bhavanga-cittas at such moments. Also when we are awake countless bhavanga-cittas arise; they arise in between the different processes of citta. It seems that hearing, for example, can arise very shortly after seeing, but in reality there are different processes of citta and in between these processes bhavanga-cittas arise. When an object contacts one of the five senses the stream of bhavanga-cittas is interrupted and a sense-cognition arises. However, there cannot be a sense-cognition immediately. When sound, for example, impinges on the earsense, there is not immediately hearing. There are still some bhavanga-cittas arising and falling away before the five-sense-door adverting-consciousness (pañca-dvārāvajjana-citta) adverts to the sound through the ear-door and hearing arises. The bhavanga-cittas do not perform the function of adverting to the sound which contacts the earsense, they do not experience the sound. They have their own function which is keeping the continuity in a lifespan. In the “Atthasālinī”, the commentary to the first book of the Abhidhamma, the Dhammasaṅgāṇī, the parable of the Mango is given, explaining a process of cittas after the stream of bhavanga has been arrested. We read (Expositor, 271, part X, no 2, Discourse on the moral result of the sensuous realm) that a man went to sleep under a mango-tree. A ripe mango fell down, grazing his ear. Awakened by the sound he looked, stretched out his hand, took the fruit, squeezed it, smelt it and ate it. We read:

“What does this simile signify? The function of the object striking the sentient organism. When this happens there is the function of adverting by the five doors just agitating the life-continuum, the function of just seeing by visual cognition, of just receiving the object by the resultant mind-element (receiving-consciousness), of just the examining of the object by the resultant element of mind-cognition (investigating-consciousness), the determining of the object by the inoperative element of mind-cognition (the kiriyacitta which is determining-consciousness). But verily only the apperception (the series of javana-cittas) enjoys the taste of the object.”

Processes of cittas occur at this moment: seeing, attachment to what is seen, thinking about it and taking it for a person or thing. It seems that when there is seeing we think at the same time of a person or thing, but each citta cognizes only one object at a time. It is beneficial to learn about the different processes of cittas that succeed one another extremely rapidly. When one has not studied the Dhamma one confuses the different doorways and the different objects, one “joins” them together. One is inclined to believe that there is a self who coordinates all the different experiences. In reality there are only different cittas arising because of their appropriate conditions that experience different objects one at a

time. When we look at people they seem to last, and this is because we think for a long time of shape and form of people and of things. There are many different moments of thinking and these fall away. Thinking is a paramattha dhamma, but the concepts that are the objects of thinking are not paramattha dhammas. We can learn to discern when we are in the world of concepts and when in the world of paramattha dhammas.

11 Feelings (part 1)

We think of ourselves as having happy feeling or unhappy feeling. We take feeling for something lasting and we take it for my feeling. In reality feeling is a *cetasika* accompanying each and every *citta*. It arises with the *citta* it accompanies and then it falls away immediately. Feeling experiences the same object as the *citta* it accompanies, but it is different from *citta* that is the leader in cognizing an object. Feeling experiences the object in its own way, it experiences the flavour of the object. There is no moment without feeling. Feelings are manifold and they can be classified in different ways. When there is not pleasant feeling or unpleasant feeling, there is indifferent feeling. When mental feelings and bodily feelings are taken into account, feelings can be classified as fivefold:

- pleasant bodily feeling (*sukha*)
- painful bodily feeling (*dukkha*)
- happy feeling (*somanassa*)
- unhappy feeling (*domanassa*)
- indifferent feeling (*upekkhā*)

Feeling is different as it accompanies *cittas* of the four *jātis* (classes) of *kusala*, *akusala*, *vipāka* or *kiriya*. *Somanassa*, happy feeling, can arise with *cittas* of all four *jatis*: with *kusala citta*, *akusala citta*, *vipākacitta* and *kiriyacitta*. It is important to know of which *jāti* feeling is, otherwise we are misled by our feelings. When we have happy feeling, we may believe that this is *kusala*, but most of the time it accompanies *akusala citta* rooted in *lobha*, attachment. When *somanassa* accompanies *lobha-mūla-citta* (*citta* rooted in attachment), *somanassa* is also *akusala*. There can be pleasant feeling when one likes a pleasant visible object, a beautiful sound, a fragrant odour, a delicious taste, a soft touch or an agreeable thought. When we enjoy delicious food with pleasant feeling, that feeling is different from pleasant feeling arising when we appreciate someone else's *kusala*. In the latter case it is more refined and calm. There are many *sobhana cetasikas* accompanying *kusala citta*: calm, evenmindedness, confidence in *kusala*, mindfulness. They all condition the pleasant feeling that is *kusala*. *Somanassa* can accompany *kusala citta*, but it does not accompany each *kusala citta*. When we perform *dāna* (generosity), observe *sīla* (morality) or apply ourselves to mental development, there can be *somanassa* or *upekkhā*, indifferent feeling, with the *kusala citta*. When we give a present to someone else with pleasant feeling, we may think that there is one kind of feeling which lasts, but in reality there are different moments of feeling accompanying different *cittas*. There can be a moment of pure generosity accompanied by pleasant feeling, but many moments of attachment are bound to arise after the *kusala cittas* have fallen away. We may be attached to the person we give to or to the thing we give, or we may expect something in return; we want to be liked by the person who receives our gift. Such moments of attachment may be accompanied by *somanassa*. *Somanassa* which is *kusala* and *somanassa* which accompanies *lobha* are different kinds of *somanassa* arising closely one after the other, and it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. It seems that there is one kind of *somanassa* and that it lasts. In reality there are many different moments of *somanassa*.

12 Feelings (part 2)

Domanassa, unhappy feeling, arises only with cittas of the jāti which is akusala; it always arises with dosa-mūla-citta, citta rooted in aversion, and it does not arise with lobha-mūla-citta, citta rooted in attachment, nor with moha-mūla-citta, citta rooted in ignorance. When we see someone else suffer, we have compassion and want to help him. However, kusala cittas and akusala cittas arise closely one after the other. We may be sad because of someone else's suffering and then akusala citta rooted in dosa, aversion, arises. This is accompanied by unhappy feeling. At such a moment there is no compassion, but we may not notice this.

Upekkhā, indifferent feeling, is different from somanassa and from domanassa; it is neither happy nor unhappy. Upekkhā can arise with cittas of all four jātis, but it does not arise with every citta. Indifferent feeling can accompany lobha-mūla-citta. When we walk or when we get hold of different things we use in our daily life, such as a pen or a book, there is bound to be clinging even when we do not feel particularly glad. We cling to life and we want to go on living and receiving sense-impressions. Seeing, hearing, smelling and tasting which are vipākacittas experiencing a pleasant or unpleasant object, are always accompanied by indifferent feeling. Often it is not known whether the object experienced by these cittas was pleasant or unpleasant, they fall away immediately. When a pleasant or unpleasant tangible object is experienced through the bodysense, the body-consciousness, which is vipākacitta, is not accompanied by indifferent feeling but by pleasant bodily feeling or by painful bodily feeling. The impact of tangible object on the bodysense is more intense than the impact of the other sense objects on the corresponding senses. Pleasant bodily feeling and painful bodily feeling are nāma. We can call them "bodily feeling" because they are conditioned by impact on the bodysense. When, for example, temperature which is just the right amount of heat or cold impinges on the bodysense the body-consciousness which experiences it is accompanied by pleasant bodily feeling. Body-consciousness is vipākacitta and in this case kusala vipākacitta. When it experiences a pleasant object, it is the result of kusala kamma, a wholesome deed, and when it experiences an unpleasant object, it is the result of akusala kamma, an unwholesome deed. We attach great importance to feeling, we let ourselves be carried away by the feelings which arise on account of pleasant or unpleasant objects we experience through the senses. The Buddha classified feeling as a separate khandha because people cling very much to feeling. We are enslaved to our feelings, but they are only realities which arise because of the appropriate conditions and do not last.

13 The four Great Elements

Rūpas, material phenomena, are not mere textbook terms, they are realities that can be directly experienced. Rūpas do not know or experience anything; they can be known by nāma. Rūpa arises and falls away, but it does not fall away as quickly as nāma. When a characteristic of rūpa 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 rūpa lasts longer than citta, it falls away again, it is impermanent. Rūpas 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 rūpa, and the rūpas in such a group arise together and fall away together. There are four kinds of rūpa, the four “Great Elements” (Mahā-bhūta rūpas), which have to arise together with each and every group of rūpas, no matter whether these are rūpas of the body or rūpas outside the body. The types of rūpa other than the four Great Elements depend on these four rūpas and cannot arise without them. They are the following rūpas:

- the Element of Earth (paṭhavīdhātu) or solidity
- the Element of Water (āpodhātu) or cohesion
- the Element of Fire (tejodhātu) or heat
- the Element of Wind (vāyodhātu) or motion

Earth, Water, Fire and Wind do not in this context have the same meaning as in conventional language, neither do they represent conceptual ideas as we find them in different philosophical systems. In the Abhidhamma they represent ultimate realities, specific rūpas each with their own characteristic. The element of earth, paṭhavī dhātu, 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 this rūpa “element of earth” in order to experience it. It is an element that arises and falls away; it has no abiding substance, it is devoid of a “self”. We take softness and hardness of the body for self, but these are only elements arising because of conditions. It may seem that hardness can last for some time, but in reality it falls away immediately. The hardness that is experienced now is already different from the hardness that arose a moment ago. The element of earth appears as hardness or softness; the element of fire as heat or cold; the element of wind as motion or pressure. These three elements can be experienced by touch. The element of water cannot be experienced through touch, but only through the mind-door. When we touch what we call water, cold which is the element of fire, or hardness, which is the element of earth, can be directly experienced. Every day we experience a great variety of sense objects, but they are, in fact, only different compositions of rūpa elements. When we touch a cushion or chair, tangible object may appear, such as hardness or softness. We used to think that a cushion or chair could be experienced through touch. When we are more precise, it is hardness or softness that can be experienced through touch. Because of 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 combinations of rūpas may be new to us. Gradually we shall realize that rūpas are not abstract categories, but that they are realities appearing in daily life.

14 The Eight Inseparable Rūpas

Rūpas always arise in groups, and 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 rūpas, namely twentyfour “derived rūpas” (in Pāli: upādā rūpas). The derived rūpas cannot arise without the four Great Elements, they are dependent on them. Four among the derived rūpas always arise together with the four Great Elements in every group of rūpas and are thus present wherever materiality occurs, no matter whether rūpas of the body or materiality outside the body. These four rūpas are the following:

- visible object (or colour)
- odour
- flavour
- nutrition

The four Great elements and these four derived rūpas, which always arise together, are called the “inseparable rūpas” (in Pāli: avinibbhoga rūpas). Wherever solidity arises, there also have to be cohesion, temperature, motion, colour, odour, flavour and nutritive essence. 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. Only one rūpa at a time can be experienced by citta. 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. Odour cannot arise alone, it needs the four Great Elements which arise together with it and it is also accompanied by the other rūpas included in the eight inseparable rūpas. 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. Flavour is another rūpa included in the eight inseparable rūpas. 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 rūpa. When we recognize what kind of flavour we taste, we think about a concept, but this thinking is conditioned by the experience of flavour through the tongue. Nutrition is another kind of rūpa which has to arise with every kind of materiality. It can be experienced only through the mind-door. 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. 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. If someone thinks that there is a self who can own what is seen, touched or smelt, he may be inclined to commit unwholesome deeds such as stealing. In reality all these objects are insignificant, they arise and then fall away immediately. 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.

15 The Sense organs

For the experience of objects through the senses there have to be sense organs and these are rūpas. Visible object and also the rūpa which is eyesense are conditions for seeing. Eyesense does not know anything since it is rūpa, but it is a necessary condition for seeing. Eyesense is a rūpa in the eye, capable of receiving visible object, so that citta can experience it. For hearing, the experience of sound, there has to be earsense, a rūpa in the ear, capable of receiving sound. There must be smellingsense for the experience of odour, tastingsense for the experience of flavour and bodysense for the experience of tangible object. 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. The bodysense is all over the body, also inside the body. Thus, there are five kinds of sense organs. These sense organs can be the doorways for the cittas that experience sense objects. As we have seen, visible object, sound, odour, flavour and tangible object (which consists of three of the four Great Elements) are experienced through the corresponding sense-doors and they can also be experienced through the mind-door. Rūpas of the body and also rūpas outside the body do not arise without there being conditions for their arising. There are four factors that produce rūpas of the body: kamma, citta, temperature (the element of heat) and nutrition. As we have seen, kamma is actually the volition that motivates good and evil deeds. Kamma that has been committed has fallen away, but since it is a mental activity it is accumulated and can produce result later on. Throughout our life kamma produces seeing, hearing and the other sense-impressions that are vipākacittas, cittas that are results. Rebirth-consciousness is the mental result of kamma, vipākacitta, but at that moment kamma also produces rūpas and kamma keeps on producing rūpas throughout life; when it stops producing rūpas our life-span has to end. Kamma produces particular kinds of rūpas such as the sense organs. Citta also produces rūpas. Our different moods become evident by our facial expressions and then it is clear that citta produces rūpas. Temperature, which is actually the element of heat, also produces rūpas. Throughout life the element of heat produces rūpas. Nutrition is another factor that produces rūpas. When food has been taken by a living being it is assimilated into the body and then nutrition can produce rūpas. Some of the groups of rūpas of our body are produced by kamma, some by citta, some by temperature and some by nutrition. The four factors which produce the rūpas of our body support and consolidate each other and keep this shortlived body going. If we see the intricate way in which different factors condition the rūpas of our body we shall be less inclined to think that the body belongs to a self. There are not only rūpas of the body, there are also rūpas which are the material phenomena outside the body. What we take for rocks, plants or houses are rūpas and these originate from temperature. We may wonder whether there are no other factors apart from the element of heat that contribute to the growth of plants, such as soil, light and moisture. It is true that these factors are the right conditions that 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 combinations of rūpas, none of which can arise without the element of heat or temperature that produces them. Rūpas outside the body are only produced by temperature, not by kamma, citta or nutrition.

16 The Five Khandhas

All that is real can be classified as four ultimate realities, paramattha dhammas: as citta, cetasika, rūpa and nibbāna. Citta, cetasika and rūpa are conditioned realities that arise and fall away and nibbāna is the unconditioned element that does not arise and fall away. All conditioned realities that arise and fall away can be classified as five khandhas, aggregates. The five khandhas are not different from the three paramattha dhammas which are citta, cetasika and rūpa. The five khandhas are:

- Rūpakkhandha, all physical phenomena
- Vedanākkhandha, feeling (vedanā)
- Saññākkhandha, remembrance or “perception” (saññā)
- Saṅkhārakkhandha, comprising fifty cetasikas (mental factors arising with the citta)
- Viññāṇakkhandha, comprising all cittas

As regards the fifty-two kinds of cetasika which may arise with citta, they are classified as three khandhas: the cetasika which is feeling (vedanā) is classified as one khandha; the cetasika which is remembrance or “perception” (saññā) is classified as one khandha; as regards the other fifty cetasikas, they are classified altogether as one khandha, the khandha of formations, saṅkhārakkhandha. For example, in saṅkhārakkhandha are included cetasikas such as volition or intention (cetanā), attachment (lobha), aversion (dosa), ignorance (moha), loving kindness (mettā), generosity (alobha) and wisdom (paññā). All defilements and all good qualities are included in saṅkhārakkhandha, they are impermanent not “self”. Saṅkhārakkhandha is sometimes translated as “activities” or “mental formations”. As regards citta, all cittas are one khandha: viññāṇakkhandha. Thus, one khandha is rūpakkhandha and the other four khandhas are nāmakkhandhas. Three nāmakkhandhas are cetasika and one nāmakkhandha is citta. Anything which is khandha does not last; as soon as it has arisen it falls away again. Although khandhas arise and fall away, they are real; we can experience them when they present themselves. The khandhas arise and fall away all the time. When seeing arises, there is viññāṇakkhandha, and there are the accompanying cetasikas: vedanākkhandha, saññākkhandha, saṅkhārakkhandha (including cetasikas apart from feeling and saññā), and there is eyesense which is rūpa-kkhandha. Thus, the khandhas are: citta, cetasika and rūpa arising at this moment. We do not have to name them in order to know them, they each have their own characteristic that can be realised without naming. Thinking arises shortly after seeing has fallen away, but we may be confused about different cittas and take seeing and thinking together. Thus, it seems that we see immediately a person or a tree, but these are concepts we think about, they are not seen through the eyesense. Seeing sees only what is visible and it is different from thinking. At the moment of thinking there are five khandhas, but these are different from the khandhas that arose at the moment of seeing. We may think of a person or tree with clinging and wrong view. The citta that thinks is viññāṇakkhandha, and there are the accompanying cetasikas: vedanākkhandha, saññākkhandha and saṅkhārakkhandha in which are now included clinging and wrong view. Moreover there is a rūpa that is the physical base of thinking. Cittas arise and fall away so rapidly that it is difficult to distinguish different cittas from each other. It seems that there is one citta performing different functions at the same time. We take seeing and thinking for my seeing and thinking. We read in the “Kindred Sayings” (III, 140, translated by Ven. Bodhi) that the Buddha, while he was dwelling at Ayojjhā, said to the monks:

“Bhikkhus, suppose that this river Ganges was carrying along a great lump of foam. A man with good sight would inspect it, ponder it, and carefully investigate it, and it would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in a lump of foam? So too, bhikkhus, whatever kind of form there is, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near: a bhikkhu inspects it, ponders it, and carefully investigates it, and it would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in form?”

The Buddha then goes on to make the same observation by way of similes on the four *nāmakhandhas* of feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness. When we take the *khandhas* as a “whole” of a person, we have wrong view of self. Thus, when we fail to see the different characteristics of *naama* and *ruupa* when they appear one at a time, we take them for a self or a person.

17 The World

The study of the different kinds of *nāma* and *rūpa* and the various conditions for their arising will help us to understand that they are *anattā*. Gradually we shall come to understand that all our experiences in life, all the objects we experience, our bodily movements and our speech are only conditioned *nāma* and *rūpa*. In the planes of existence where there are *nāma* and *rūpa*, *nāma* conditions *rūpa* and *rūpa* conditions *nāma* in different ways. The *rūpas* that are sense objects and the *rūpas* that can function as sense-doors are conditions for the different *cittas* arising in processes which experience sense objects. The study of *rūpas* can help us to have more clarity about the fact that only one object at a time can be experienced through one of the six doors. Visible object, for example, can be experienced through the eye-door, it cannot be experienced through the body-door, thus, through touch. Seeing-consciousness experiences what is visible and body-consciousness experiences tangible object, such as hardness or softness. Through each door the appropriate object can be experienced and the different doorways should not be confused with one another. When we believe that we can see and touch a flower, we think of a concept. A concept or conventional truth can be an object of thought, but it is not a *paramattha dhamma*, an ultimate reality with its own inalterable characteristic. When we are thinking about the world and all people in it, we only know the world by way of conventional truth. It seems that there is the world full of beings and things, but in reality there is *citta* experiencing different *dhammas* arising and falling away very rapidly. Only one object at a time can be cognized as it appears through one doorway. Without the doorways of the senses and the mind the world could not appear. So long as we take what appears as a ‘whole’, a being or person, we do not know the world. We read in the “Kindred Sayings” (IV, *Salāyatana vagga*, Kindred Sayings on Sense, Second Fifty, Ch I, 68, *Samiddhi sutta*) that when the Buddha was staying near *Rājagaha*, in *Bamboo Grove*, *Samiddhi* came to see him and addressed him:

“ ‘The world! The world!’ is the saying, lord. Pray, lord, to what extent is there the world or the concept of ‘world’? ” “Where there is eye, *Samiddhi*, visible object, seeing-consciousness, where there are *dhammas* cognizable by the eye, there is the world and the concept of ‘world’.” (The same is said with regard to the other doorways.) In our life happy moments and sad moments alternate. We attach great importance to our experiences in life, to our life in this world, but actually life is extremely short, lasting only as long as one moment of *citta*. We read in the “*Visuddhimagga*” (VI, 39) : “Life, person, pleasure, pain - just these alone Join in one conscious moment that flicks by. Ceased aggregates of those dead or alive Are all alike, gone never to return. No [world is] born if [consciousness is] not Produced; when that is present, then it lives; When consciousness dissolves, the world is dead: The highest sense this concept will allow (Nd.1,42).”

18 Death and Rebirth

What is birth, and what is it actually that is born? We speak about the birth of a child, but in fact, there are only *nāma* and *rūpa* which are born. The word “birth” is a conventional term. We should consider what birth really is. In order to understand what causes birth we should know what conditions the *nāma* and *rūpa* which arise at the first moment of a new lifespan. The *citta* which arises at that moment is called the rebirth-consciousness or *paṭisandhi-citta*. *Paṭisandhi* means relinking, it “links” the previous life to the present life. It is usually translated as rebirth-consciousness, but, since there is no person who is reborn, birth-consciousness would be more correct. Since there isn’t any *citta* which arises without conditions, the *paṭisandhi-citta* must also have conditions. The *paṭisandhi-citta* is the first *citta* of a new life and thus its cause can only be in the past. One may have doubts about past lives, but how can people be so different if there were no past lives? We can see that people are born with different tendencies and talents. *Cittas* which arise and fall away succeed one another and thus each *citta* conditions the next one. The last *citta* of the previous life (dying-consciousness) is immediately succeeded by the first *citta* of this life, without there being any interval. That is why tendencies one had in the past can continue by way of accumulation from one *citta* to the next one and from past lives to the present life. Since people accumulated different tendencies in past lives, they are born with different tendencies and inclinations. Rebirth-consciousness is the result of *kamma*, it is *vipākacitta*. Our life starts at the moment the *paṭisandhi-citta* arises together with the *rūpa* which is at the same time produced by *kamma*. A lifespan ends when the last *citta*, the dying-consciousness (*cuti-citta*) falls away. *Kamma* produces *rūpa* not only at the first moment of life but throughout our life. *Kamma* produces the *vipākacittas* which experience pleasant and unpleasant objects through the sense-doors, and it also produces throughout our life the *rūpas* which can function as the sense-doors through which these objects are received. Some *kammās* produce results in the same life in which they have been performed, some produce result in the form of rebirth-consciousness of a future life, or they produce result in the course of a future life. We have performed deeds in past lives which could produce rebirth but which have not yet come to fruition. We cannot know which *kamma* will produce the next rebirth. If *akusala kamma* produces the rebirth of the next life there will be an unhappy rebirth. In that case the *cittas* which arise shortly before the dying-consciousness are *akusala cittas* and they experience an unpleasant object. The *paṭisandhi-citta* of the next life which succeeds the *cuti-citta* (the dying-consciousness), experiences that same unpleasant object. If *kusala kamma* produces the rebirth there will be a happy rebirth. In that case *kusala cittas* arise shortly before the *cuti-citta* and they experience a pleasant object. The *paṭisandhi-citta* of the next life experiences that same pleasant object. The object experienced shortly before the dying-consciousness may be a sign of *kamma* one performed, or a sign of one’s future destiny, or it may be any object experienced through one of the senses. The *kamma* that will produce the next rebirth conditions the last *javana-cittas* arising before the *cuti-citta* to experience that object.

There is no self who transmigrates from one life to the next life; there are only *nāma* and *rūpa* arising and falling away. The present life is different from the past life but there is continuity in so far as the present life is conditioned by the past. The *Visuddhimagga* (XVI, 164-168) explains by way of similes that although the present is different from the past there is continuity. The being who is born is not the same as the being of the past life, but it is

conditioned by the past. There is “neither absolute identity nor absolute otherness”, as the Visuddhimagga explains. We read with regard to the paṭisandhi-citta:

“An echo, or its like, supplies The figures here; connectedness By continuity denies Identity and otherness. And here let the illustration of this consciousness be such things as an echo, a light, a seal impression, a looking glass image, for the fact of its not coming here from the previous becoming and for the fact that it arises owing to causes that are included in past becomings. For just as an echo, a light, a seal impression, and a shadow, have respectively sound, etc., as their cause and come into being without going elsewhere, so also this consciousness.”

19 Rebirth in different planes of existence (1)

Akusala kamma and kusala kamma of different beings can produce nineteen different types of rebirth-consciousness, *paṭisandhi-citta*, in all, arising in different planes of existence. The *paṭisandhi-citta* is *vipākacitta*, the result of kamma. One *paṭisandhi-citta* is akusala *vipāka* and eighteen types are kusala *vipāka*. There are many degrees of each of these nineteen types of *paṭisandhi-citta* because the kamma that produces them can be of many degrees. Birth in a woeful plane is the result of a bad deed and birth in a happy plane is the result of a good deed. Since the deeds of beings are of many different degrees of kusala and akusala, the results are of many different degrees as well. The *paṭisandhi-citta* that is akusala *vipākacitta* arises in an unhappy plane of existence and the *paṭisandhi-citta* that is kusala *vipākacitta* arises in a happy plane of existence. A plane of existence is the place where one is born. There are different woeful planes and different happy planes of existence. Only one type of *paṭisandhi-citta* is akusala *vipāka*, but it is of many degrees. There are many varieties of akusala kamma and thus there must be many varieties of an unhappy rebirth. The unhappy rebirth we can see in this world is birth as an animal. Apart from the animal world there are three more classes of woeful planes, which we cannot see; they are the world of *petas* (ghosts), the world of *asuras* (demons), and the hell planes. There are different kinds of hell planes because there are many degrees of akusala kamma which produce different kinds of unhappy rebirth. The akusala *vipāka* in hell is more intense than the sufferings which can be experienced in the human plane. The descriptions of hells in the Buddhist teachings are not merely allegories; the experience of unpleasant things through eyes, ears, nose, tongue and bodysense is akusala *vipāka* and akusala *vipāka* is reality. Life in a hell plane is not permanent; when one's lifespan in a hell plane is over there can be rebirth in another plane. Birth as a human being is a happy rebirth. In the human plane there is opportunity for the development of kusala. One can study Dhamma and learn to develop the way leading to the end of defilements, to the end of birth and death. Birth in the human plane is kusala *vipāka*, but during one's lifespan in this plane there are both kusala *vipāka* and akusala *vipāka*. Each person experiences different results in life: there are gain and loss, honour and dishonour, praise and blame, happiness and misery. It is due to kamma whether someone is born into pleasant or unpleasant surroundings, whether he belongs to a family which is well-to-do or which is poor. The experience of pleasant and unpleasant things through eyes, ears, nose, tongue and bodysense are the results of kamma. Other happy planes, apart from the human plane, are the heavenly planes. In the heavenly planes there is more kusala *vipāka* than in the human plane and less akusala *vipāka*. There are several heavenly planes and although life in a heavenly plane lasts a very long time, it is not permanent. The woeful planes, the human plane and the six heavenly planes which are *deva* planes, are sensuous planes of existence. Sensuous planes of existence are planes where there is seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, the experience of tangible object through the bodysense and other *kāmāvacara cittas* (*cittas* of the sensuous plane of consciousness). There are eleven classes of sensuous planes of existence in all. In the "Discourse on the Lesser Analysis of Deeds" (Middle Length Sayings III, sutta 135) we read that Subha asks the Buddha what the cause is of the different results human beings experience from the time of their birth:

"Now, good Gotama, what is the cause, what is the reason that lowness and excellence are to be seen among human beings while they are in human form? For, good Gotama, human beings of short lifespan are to be seen and those of

long lifespan; those of many and those of few illnesses; those who are ugly, those who are beautiful; those who are of little account, those of great account; those who are poor, those who are wealthy; those who are of lowly families, those of high families; those who are weak in wisdom, those who are full of wisdom.” The Buddha answered Subha: ”Deeds are one’s own, brahman youth, beings are heirs to deeds, deeds are matrix, deeds are kin, deeds are arbiters. Deed divides beings, that is to say by lowness and excellence.”

20 Rebirth in different Planes of Existence (2)

Rebirth-consciousness does not only arise in sensuous planes of existence, *kāma-bhūmi*, it can also arise in higher heavenly planes which are not sensuous planes of existence. If one is born in one of the *kāma-bhūmis* and one sees the disadvantage of sense impressions, one may cultivate *jhāna*, absorption. Then one can, besides *kāmāvacara citta*s, also have *rūpa-jhānacitta*s and *arūpa-jhānacitta*s. If one cultivates the eightfold Path one can have *lokuttara citta*s, supramundane *citta*s which directly experience *nibbāna*. There are four planes of *citta*: *kāmāvacara citta*s, *rūpāvacāra citta*s which are *rūpajhānacitta*s, *arūpāvacāra citta*s which are *arūpajhānacitta*s and *lokuttara citta*s. Which of these planes of *citta* a particular *citta* belongs to, depends on the object it experiences. *Kāmāvacara citta* experiences a sense object. *Rūpāvacāra citta*s and *arūpāvacāra citta*s experience with absorption the meditation subjects of *rūpa-jhāna* and *arūpa-jhāna*. *Lokuttara citta* experiences *nibbāna*. A plane of *citta* is different from a plane of existence which, as we have seen, is the place where rebirth-consciousness arises.

When someone attains *jhāna*, the *kusala kamma* he performs is not *kāmāvacara kusala kamma*; at the moment of *jhāna* there are no sense impressions. The *kusala kamma* which is *jhāna* does not produce result in the same lifespan one attains it, but it can produce result in the form of *paṭisandhi-citta*, the *paṭisandhi-citta* of the next life. In that case there are *jhānacitta*s arising shortly before death and the *paṭisandhi-citta* of the next life experiences the same object as those *jhānacitta*s. The result of *rūpāvacara kusala citta* (*kusala citta* which is *rūpa-jhānacitta*) is birth in a heavenly plane which is not *kāma-bhūmi* (sensuous plane of existence) but a *rūpa-brahma-plane* (fine-material world). The result of an *arūpāvacara kusala citta* (*kusala citta* which is *arūpa-jhānacitta*) is birth in a heavenly plane which is an *arūpa-brahma plane* (immaterial world). There are different *rūpa-brahma planes* and *arūpa-brahma planes*. Those who attain *rūpa-jhāna* can be reborn in *rūpa-brahma-planes* where there are less sense-impressions. There are sixteen *rūpa-brahma planes* in all. One of these is the plane of unconscious beings, *asaññasatta*. Those who cultivate *rūpa-jhāna* and see the disadvantage of *nāma* may be reborn in a plane where there is only *rūpa*, not *nāma*. Thus, here there is not a rebirth-consciousness, only *rūpa-paṭisandhi*. Those who see the disadvantages of the meditation subjects of *rūpa-jhāna* which are still bound up with materiality, cultivate *arūpa-jhāna*. If they attain *arūpa-jhāna* they can be reborn in *arūpa-brahma planes* where there is no *rūpa*, only *nāma*. There are four classes of *arūpa-brahma planes*. There are thirty-one classes of planes of existence in all, namely:

11 sensuous planes:

- 4 woeful planes
- 1 human plane

- 6 deva planes
- 16 *rūpa-brahma planes*
- 4 *arūpa-brahma planes*

Kusala kamma can cause a happy rebirth, but the end of birth is to be preferred to any kind of rebirth. If one cultivates the eightfold Path and attains arahatship there will be no more rebirth. The dying-consciousness (*cuti-citta*) of the arahat is not succeeded by

a paṭisandhi-citta. The Buddha reminded people of the dangers of birth and encouraged them to be mindful, in order to attain the “deathless” which is nibbāna. We read in the Mahā-parinibbāna-sutta (Dialogues of the Buddha I, no. 16, chapter I, 1-4):

“... The Exalted One proceeded with a great company of the monks to Kotigāma; and there he stayed in the village itself. And at that place the Exalted One addressed the monks, and said: ‘It is through not understanding and grasping four Ariyan Truths, O monks, that we have had to run so long, to wander so long in this weary path of rebirth, both you and I!’ And what are these four? The Ariyan truth about dukkha; the Ariyan truth about the cause of dukkha; the Ariyan truth about the cessation of dukkha; and the Ariyan truth about the path that leads to that cessation. But when these Ariyan truths are grasped and known the craving for future life is rooted out, that which leads to renewed becoming is destroyed, and then there is no more birth!’ ”

21 Accumulated inclinations

The first citta in a life span is the rebirth-consciousness or paṭisandhi-citta. It is a vipākacitta produced by kamma and it links the past life to the present life. As we have seen, there are nineteen types of vipākacitta that can perform the function of rebirth. The paṭisandhi-citta is succeeded by the bhavanga-citta (life-continuum). The bhavanga-citta is the same type of citta as the paṭisan-dhi-citta and it experiences the same object. As we have seen, this object is the same as the object experienced by the last javana-cittas of the previous life and it is conditioned by the kamma that produces the rebirth-consciousness of the following life. The bhavanga-citta keeps the continuity in a lifespan. So long as one is still alive, bhavanga-cittas arise and fall away during the time there is no sense-door process or mind-door process of cittas. Bhavanga-cittas arise in between the different processes of cittas which experience an object through one of the six doors. It performs its function of keeping the continuity in life until the dying-consciousness, the cuti-citta, arises and one passes away from this life. The dying-consciousness of a life that is ending experiences the same object as all the previous bhavanga-cittas and it is of the same type. Thus, the rebirth-consciousness, the bhavanga-citta and the dying-consciousness do not experience objects that impinge on the six doors like the cittas that arise in the different processes. The whole day cittas arising in processes experience objects through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind-door and in between the processes there are bhavanga-cittas. Each citta is succeeded by a following citta in the long series of cittas in our life, there isn't any moment without citta. In the course of life kammās produce different vipākacittas which experience objects through the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue and the bodysense. Vipākacittas neither like nor dislike the object, they do not react to the object in an unwholesome or a wholesome way. However, shortly after they have fallen away there are cittas which react to the objects experienced through the senses either in an unwholesome way or in a wholesome way. Akusala cittas or kusala cittas arising in a sense-door process or mind-door process, are called javana-cittas (literally: readiness, impulse, going). They arise usually in a sequence of seven cittas of the same type. They fall away immediately but the inclination to akusala and kusala is accumulated so that there are conditions for the arising again of akusala citta and kusala citta. Since each citta is succeeded by the next citta without any interval, the process of accumulation can go on from moment to moment, from one life to a next life. Each moment of kusala citta or akusala citta arising today is a condition for the arising of kusala citta or akusala citta in the future. There are different types of kusala citta and of akusala citta. It is important to learn more about them in order to understand ourselves, about the way we behave towards others in action and speech, and the way we react towards pleasant and unpleasant events. It is citta which motivates good deeds and evil deeds and these will produce their results accordingly. The Buddha exhorted people to abstain from akusala, to perform kusala, to purify the mind, and his impressive words were a real support for people to follow his advice.

22 Four Planes of Consciousness (part 1)

There are many ways of classifying citta and one way is the classification by way of plane of consciousness, in Pali: bhūmi. There are four planes of consciousness:

- the sensuous plane of consciousness, kāma-bhūmi,
- the plane of rūpa-jhāna, rūpa-bhūmi,
- the plane of arūpa-jhāna, arūpa-bhūmi,
- the plane of supramundane citta, lokuttara-bhūmi

As we have seen, plane of consciousness is different from plane of existence which is the place where one is born. What plane of consciousness a citta belongs to depends on the object it experiences. The sensuous plane of consciousness (kāmāvacara cittas) are the cittas that experience sense objects, such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, the experience of tangible object through the bodysense and the experience of these objects through the mind-door. On account of pleasant and unpleasant objects experienced through the senses, kusala cittas (wholesome cittas) and akusala cittas (unwholesome cittas) arise. We usually cling to all the sense objects. Those who see the disadvantage of sense impressions and the defilements bound up with them cultivate samatha (tranquil meditation) and may attain absorption (jhāna). The jhānacitta is of another plane of citta, and this is higher than the sensuous plane of citta. Jhānacittas do not experience sense objects, they experience with absorption a meditation subject through the mind-door. For the development of samatha, tranquil meditation, it is essential to have a keen understanding of the characteristic of calm and of the way to develop calm with a suitable meditation subject. True calm has to be wholesome, it is freedom from defilements. Right understanding, paññā, that knows precisely when the citta is kusala citta and when akusala citta is indispensable. When the objective of citta is not dāna, sīla or mental development, bhāvanā, the citta is usually akusala, but we may not notice this. Indifferent feeling seems to be very calm, but actually, indifferent feeling arises with kusala citta as well as with akusala citta rooted in attachment or rooted in ignorance. One may be attached to silence, and without right understanding one may erroneously believe that there is kusala citta with calm. The Visuddhimagga (Chapters IV-XII) describes forty meditation subjects which can condition calm such as disks (kasinas), recollection of the excellent qualities of the Triple Gem, mindfulness of death, loving-kindness or mindfulness of breathing. A meditation subject does not necessarily bring about calm. Only when there is right understanding of calm and the way to develop it, calm can grow. Through samatha the “hindrances” (nīvaraṇa), which are akusala cetasikas, are temporarily suppressed. The hindrances arise time and again in daily life. They are sensuous desire (kāmacchandha), ill-will (vyāpāda), torpor and languor (thīna and middha), restlessness and worry (uddhacca and kukkuccha) and doubt (vicikicchā). Someone who wants to develop samatha so as to be able to attain jhāna, has to develop five jhāna-factors which can inhibit the hindrances, and these are the following cetasikas:

- applied thinking (vitakka)
- sustained thinking (vicāra)
- rapture (pīti)
- happy feeling (sukha)
- concentration (samādhi)

Jhāna is developed in stages, with each succeeding stage being more refined than the preceding one. For the first stage of rūpa-jhāna it is still necessary that all five jhāna-factors arise with the jhānacitta, but at each higher stage, when one has become more advanced, jhāna-factors are successively abandoned. Jhānacittas do not produce vipāka in the same lifespan: their result is rebirth in higher planes of existence. The result of rūpāvacara kusala cittas is rebirth in rūpa-brahma planes. Those who have attained the highest stage of rūpa-jhāna and see the disadvantages of rūpa-jhāna which is still dependent on materiality, might want to cultivate arūpa-jhāna or “immaterial jhāna”. The meditation subjects of arūpa-jhāna are not connected with materiality. There are four stages of arūpa-jhāna and each one of these is more subtle and more peaceful than the preceding one. These stages are: the “Sphere of Boundless Space” (ākāsānañcāyatana), the “Sphere of Boundless Consciousness” (viññāṇañcāyatana), the “Sphere of Nothingness” (ākīñcaññāyatana), and the “Sphere of Neither Perception Nor Non-Perception” (n’eva-saññā-n’āsaññāyatana). Even when one has attained the highest stage of jhāna, defilements cannot be eradicated. They can only be eradicated by lokuttara magga-citta.

23 The Four Planes of Consciousness (part 2)

As we have seen, there are four planes of citta: the sensuous plane of consciousness, the plane of rūpa-jhāna, the plane of arūpa-jhāna, and the plane of lokuttara citta, supramundane citta. When enlightenment is attained lokuttara cittas arise which directly experience nibbāna. The lokuttara citta is the highest plane of consciousness. There are four stages of enlightenment: the stages of the sotāpanna (streamwinner), the sakadāgāmi (once-returner), the anāgāmi (no-returner) and the arahat. At each of these stages the lokuttara kusala citta, the path-consciousness (magga-citta), arises which experiences nibbāna and eradicates defilements. The magga-citta of each of these stages is succeeded immediately by the lokuttara vipākacitta, the fruition-consciousness (phala-citta) which also experiences nibbāna.

Wrong view has to be eradicated first. So long as one takes realities for self there cannot be the eradication of any defilement. The sotāpanna, the ariyan who has attained the first stage of enlightenment, has eradicated diṭṭhi completely, so that it can never arise again, but he has not eradicated all defilements. Defilements are eradicated stage by stage and only when arahatship has been attained all defilements have been eradicated. Only the right Path, the eightfold Path, can lead to enlightenment. The eightfold Path is developed by being mindful of the nāma and rūpa which appear in daily life, such as seeing, visible object, hearing, sound, thinking, feeling, attachment, anger or the other defilements which arise. This is actually the development of vipassanā, insight-wisdom. There are several stages of insight-wisdom. The characteristics of nāma and rūpa have to be investigated over and over again until they are clearly understood as they are and there is no more wrong view about them. The realization of the arising and falling away of nāma and rūpa, their impermanence, is a higher stage of insight which cannot be attained so long as the characteristic of nāma cannot be distinguished from the characteristic of rūpa. All the different stages of insight have to be attained in the right order. Paññā should continue to investigate the characteristics of realities as they appear through the six doors so that the three characteristics of conditioned realities, namely: impermanence (anicca), dukkha and non-self (anattā), can be penetrated more and more. When paññā has clearly understood these three characteristics enlightenment can be attained. Paññā which has become lokuttara paññā experiences nibbāna, the unconditioned reality. Nibbāna does not arise and fall away; it is the end of the arising and falling away of nāma and rūpa, the end of birth, old age, sickness and death. Nibbāna is the end of dukkha. When one has attained the first stage of enlightenment, the stage of the sotāpanna, it is certain that there will eventually be an end to the cycle of birth and death, an end to dukkha. When the person who is not an arahat dies, the last citta of his life, the cuti-citta (dying-consciousness) is succeeded by the paṭisandhi-citta (rebirth-consciousness) of the next life and thus life goes on. So long as there are defilements life has to continue. The fact that we are here in the human plane is conditioned by defilements. Even if there is birth in a heavenly plane, in a rūpa-brahma plane or in an arūpa-brahma plane, it is conditioned by defilements. The arahat has no more defilements, he does not have to be reborn in any plane. For him there will not be the arising of nāma and rūpa in a new life any more, and this means the end to the cycle of birth and death. We read in the Kindred Sayings (IV, Kindred Sayings on Sense, Third Fifty, Chapter 5, 152, Is there a Method?), that the Buddha spoke to the monks about the method to realize through direct experience the end to dukkha:

“Herein, monks, a monk, seeing visible object with the eye, either recognizes within him the existence of lust, malice and illusion, thus: ‘I have lust, malice

and illusion,' or recognizes the non-existence of these qualities within him, thus: 'I have not lust, malice and illusion.' Now as to that recognition of their existence or non-existence within him, are these conditions, I ask, to be understood by belief, or inclination, or hearsay, or argument as to method, or reflection on reasons, or delight in speculation?' 'Surely not, lord.' 'Are not these states to be understood by seeing them with the eye of wisdom?' 'Surely, lord.' 'Then, monks, this is the method by following which, apart from belief. . . a monk could affirm insight thus: Ended is birth, lived is the righteous life, done is the task, for life in these conditions there is no hereafter.' "

We then read that the same is said with regard to the experiences through the doorways of the ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind. The development of understanding of all that is real, also of one's defilements, is the way leading to the eradication of defilements, to the end of rebirth. This is the end to dukkha.

24 Latent Tendencies

Defilements, akusala cetasikas, are of different levels, they may be subtle or more coarse. Defilements that are transgressions (vītikkaṃa kilesa), are coarse defilements of the degree of unwholesome courses of action through body or speech. Defilements one is possessed with and that arise with akusala citta (pari-yuṭṭhāna kilesa) are medium defilements that disturb the citta. Latent tendencies (anusaya kilesa) are subtle defilements that lie dormant in the citta and do not arise but condition the arising of akusala citta. The latent tendencies are enumerated in the Tipiṭaka and the Commentaries, where it is stated that the Buddha, the Fully Enlightened One, understood these by his perfect knowledge of beings' biases and underlying tendencies (āsayaṇusaya ñāṇa). Since each citta that arises and falls away is immediately succeeded by the next citta, unwholesome and wholesome behaviour and inclinations are accumulated from moment to moment and from life to life. The latent tendencies which are unwholesome inclinations that are accumulated are the following: sense-desire (kāma-rāga), aversion (paṭigha), conceit (māna), wrong view (diṭṭhi), doubt (vicikicchā), desire for becoming (continued existence, bhavarāga), and ignorance (avijjā). It is essential to have more understanding of the latent tendencies and their power. They are called subtle defilements because they do not arise with the akusala citta, but they are powerful. Since they have not been eradicated they can strongly condition and influence our behaviour. They lie dormant in the citta like microbes infesting the body. So long as they have not been eradicated we are like sick people, because they can condition the arising of akusala citta when there are the appropriate conditions. They can condition the arising of akusala citta even to the degree of transgression of sīla at any time, and thus, more defilements are accumulated again and added to the latent tendencies. The teaching of the latent tendencies helps us to see why the defilements in our life are so tenacious, arising again and again, and why their arising is unforeseeable and uncontrollable. When we study the enumeration of the latent tendencies, we should remember that these latent tendencies are not abstract notions. The latent tendency of sense-desire or sensuous clinging conditions akusala citta with attachment to any kind of pleasant object. We may have expectations as to kind words or praise from other people. This is selfish desire that has been deeply accumulated and is very powerful. The latent tendency of aversion conditions akusala citta with aversion, but we should know that this has many shades. It is not only a matter of hate or anger, but it also arises when we are upset or depressed because we do not receive the pleasant object we were hoping for. The latent tendency of conceit conditions the arising of akusala citta with clinging to the importance of self. It can arise on account of any object experienced through the six doorways, and it often motivates our speech and actions. All latent tendencies condition the arising of akusala citta, but because of accumulated ignorance we do not notice their arising, we are deluded time and again. The latent tendencies are subsequently eradicated by the lokuttara magga-citta of each of the four stages of enlightenment. Wrong view and doubt are eradicated at the first stage, the stage of the sotāpanna. At the second stage sense-desire and aversion are not yet eradicated but they are diminished. They are completely eradicated at the third stage, the stage of the anāgāmi. Conceit, desire for becoming and ignorance are eradicated at the stage of the arahat. Thus we see that the eradication of the latent tendencies takes a long time. It can only be achieved by the development of understanding of all dhammas appearing in daily life.

25 The Seven Books of the Abhidhamma

26 Introduction

The Abhidhamma consists of the following seven books:

1. Dhammasaṅgaṇī (translated as “Buddhist Psychological Ethics”, P.T.S. and also translated by U Kyaw, Myanmar.)
2. Vibhaṅga (translated as “Book of Analysis”, P.T.S.)
3. Dhātukathā (Translated as “Discourse on Elements”, P.T.S.)
4. Puggalapaññatti (Translated as “A Designation of Human Types”, P.T.S.)
5. Kathāvatthu (Translated as “Points of Controversy”, P.T.S.)
6. Yamaka (the Book of Pairs, not translated into English)
7. Paṭṭhāna (Translated in part as “Conditional Relations”, P.T.S.)

A summary of the contents of these seven books has been given by Ven. Nyanatiloka in his “Guide through the Abhidhamma Piṭaka” (B.P.S. Kandy, 1971) and also by U Kyaw Khine in the introduction to his translation of the Dhammasaṅgaṇī. Therefore, I will render only some salient features of each book with the purpose to show that the classifications found in the Abhidhamma are not mere lists to be read and memorized. They all point to the investigation of the realities of our daily life. In this way the paññā is developed that sees realities as they are, as impermanent, dukkha and anattā. This kind of paññā leads to the eradication of defilements. The commentary to the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, the first book, is the “Atthasālinī”, edited by the venerable Buddhaghosa and translated as “Expositor”. The Dhammasaṅgaṇī begins with the Mātika, a table of contents or matrix, which is an introduction. It is more extensive than a table of contents. This mātikā has been arranged by way of triads and dyads. It is a survey of the contents of the first book and can even serve as an introduction to all seven books. Different groups of defilements have been listed, such as the intoxicants (āsavas), fetters, ties, floods, yokes, hindrances. After the Abhidhamma matrix there is a Suttanta matrix, explaining sutta terms. The Atthasālinī, the commentary to the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, dedicates a whole chapter to explain the notions of the Mātika. The Mātikā begins with: kusala dhammā, akusala dhammā, avyākata dhammā. In these three terms all that is real has been contained. In avyākata dhammā, indeterminate dhammas, are included all realities that are not kusala or akusala, namely: vipākacittas, kiryacittas, rūpas and nibbāna. The whole Tipiṭaka is directed towards the liberation from the cycle of birth and death through insight. This appears also in the Mātika, where we read (1013-1015):

"Dhammas going to building up; going to pulling down; going to neither." The Atthasālinī elaborates: "... 'accumulation' means that which is accumulated by kamma and corruptions. It is a name for the processes of rebirth and decease. 'Leading to accumulation' are 'those causes which by being accomplished to go to, lead a man, in whom they arise, to that round of rebirth'. It is a name for co-intoxicant moral or immoral states. Nibbāna being free from 'cumulation', which is another word for 'accumulation', is called dispersion. 'Leading to dispersion' is 'going towards that dispersion which he has made his object.' It is a name for the Ariyan Paths. Or, 'leading to accumulation' are those states which go about severally arranging (births and deaths in) a round of destiny like a bricklayer who arranges bricks, layer by layer, in a wall.' 'Leading to dispersion' are those states which go about destroying that very round, like a man who continually removes the bricks as they are laid by the mason."

27 The Dhammasaṅgaṇī, the first Book of the Abhidhamma

The Dhammasaṅgaṇī, begins, after the Mātika, with a description of mahā-kusala citta accompanied by paññā. It enumerates all the sobhana cetasikas assisting this citta while they accompany it just for a moment. It refers to mahā-kusala citta experiencing an object, be it visible object, sound, odour, flavour, tangible object or dhamma object. This points to daily life. Time and again citta experiences an object through one of the six doors. The Dhammasaṅgaṇī states with regard to the first type of mahā-kusala citta of the sense sphere: "At a time (yasmim samaye) when mahā-kusala citta of the sense sphere accompanied by joy and associated with understanding has arisen..." and then sums up the accompanying cetasikas. The "Expositor" (p. 76) explains the word samaya as time, occasion, concurrence of conditions, the mutual contribution towards the production of a common result: "By this word showing thus the condition, the conceit of one who believes that states unconditionally follow one's own will is subdued." We cling to the idea of our own will that can direct dhammas, but this is not according to reality. Will or volition, be it wholesome, unwholesome or indeterminate, is only a conditioned element. The mahā-kusala citta is accompanied by the cetasikas that always accompany citta, the "universals", such as contact, feeling or remembrance, saññā, as well as by the "particulars", pakinnakas, cetasikas that accompany many cittas but not all. Then follows a list of all the sobhana cetasikas necessary for the arising of even one moment of kusala citta of the sense sphere. For example, the cetasika confidence or faith, saddhā, always has to accompany kusala citta. If there is no confidence in kusala, kusala citta could not arise. There have to be non-attachment and non-aversion. When we perform dāna or observe sīla we are not selfish, we are not thinking of our own pleasure and comfort. There is calm with each kusala citta, at such a moment there is no agitation. There has to be sati which is non-forgetful of kusala. Sobhana cetasikas are necessary so that mahā-kusala citta with paññā can arise just for one extremely brief moment and perform its function, and then citta and cetasikas fall away together. The cetasikas condition the citta by way of conascence-condition and by several other conditions. Thus, we cannot make kusala arise at will, it has no possessor; there is no one who can direct its arising. It arises when the right conditions are present and then it falls away immediately; nobody can cause it to last. All the sobhana cetasikas that fall away are accumulated from moment to moment so that there are conditions for the arising again of kusala citta. We shall see that several cetasikas are listed more than once under different aspects, such as understanding as faculty, or as power. The list ends with: sampajañña (sati and paññā), samatha, vipassanā, paggāha (grasp, which is the faculty of energy), avikkhepa (balance, self-collectedness, another word for ekaggata cetasika, one-pointedness or concentration). Thus we see that these lists are not a mere summing up, but that they point to the development of right understanding of realities.

28 The Vibhaṅga, the Second Book of the Abhidhamma

The second book of the Abhidhamma is the Vibhaṅga, the Book of Analysis, and its commentary is the “Sammoha Vinodanī” , translated as the “Dispeller of Delusion” (P.T.S.). The Vibhaṅga gives an explanation of the khandhas (aggregates), āyatanas (sense bases), dhātus (elements), and several other subjects. It gives explanations according to the Suttanta method, by way of conventional terms, and the Abhidhamma method, by way of ultimate realities. It also has sections of interrogation. The aim is, as is the case of the whole of the Abhidhamma, to develop right understanding of nāma and rūpa as they appear in daily life. This book helps one to know more about the deeper-lying motives of one’s thoughts and actions. One may take them for wholesome, but in fact there are very often selfish motives that are unnoticed. The section on ‘the Small Items’ (Khuddakavatthu Vibhaṅga) is most revealing in the descriptions of akusala such as conceit. It gives an impressive list of all the objects on account of which conceit may arise (832), namely: pride of birth, of clan, of health, of youth, of life, of gain, of being honoured, of being respected, of prominence, of having adherents, of wealth, of appearance, of erudition, of intelligence, of being a knowledgeable authority.... Conceit is compared to hoisting a banner; at the moment of conceit one finds oneself important. There are many definitions of akusala, but the purpose is to know them when they arise through the development of satipaṭṭhāna. We read in the section of “the Heart of the Teaching” (1031): “The three bad roots are to be known fully, are to be comprehended, are to be abandoned...” Abandonment can only be accomplished by fully knowing them and comprehending them. Among the many word explanations we read about understanding (here translated as awareness, 525): “Therein what is awareness? That which is wisdom, understanding, investigation, research, truth investigation, discernment, discrimination, differentiation, erudition, proficiency, subtlety, analysis, consideration, breadth, sagacity, guidance, insight, awareness, goad, wisdom, controlling faculty of wisdom, power of wisdom, sword of wisdom, tower of wisdom, light of wisdom, lustre of wisdom, splendour of wisdom, jewel of wisdom, absence of dullness, truth investigation, right view...” It is well worth to consider these definitions. When we read about the subtlety of wisdom we are reminded that the teachings are very subtle and have to be carefully considered. Only thus there can be the lustre and splendour of wisdom that causes the darkness of ignorance to disappear.

29 The Dhātu-Kathā, the Third Book

The third book of the Abhidhamma is the Discourse on Elements, Dhātu-Kathā. This book deals with all realities, classified with reference to the khandhas, the āyatanas (translated as bases) and the dhātus, elements. It deals with realities that are ‘included’ (sangahita), or not included (asangahita), and this pertains to the different classifications of dhammas. It deals with dhammas that are associated (sampayutta) or dissociated (vippayutta). Only nāma can be associated with another nāma, such as citta and cetasikas. Rūpa does not have such a close association with nāma. The charts added by the translator makes the reading of these classifications easier. But we should not forget that all these classifications pertain to the reality appearing at this moment. The khandhas are citta, cetasika and rūpa arising and falling away at this moment. When seeing arises, there is the khandha of consciousness, viññāṇakkhandha, and there are the accompanying cetasikas: the khandha of feeling, vedanākkhandha, saññākkhandha, saṅkhārakkhandha (including other cetasikas apart from feeling and saññā), and there is eyesense which is rūpakkhandha. As to the āyatanas, there are six internal āyatanas and six external āyatanas. The internal āyatanas are the five senses and mind-base, manāyatana, which includes all cittas. The external āyatanas are the five sense objects and dammāyatana, which includes cetasikas, subtle rūpas and nibbāna. When we see, hear or think we believe that a self experiences different objects, but in reality there is the association of the internal āyatana and the external āyatana, the objects “outside”. As to the elements, these can be classified in different ways, and in this book they are classified as eighteen: the five senses, the five sense objects, the “five pairs” of sense-cognitions experiencing the five sense-objects (one of each pair being kusala vipākacitta and one akusala vipākacitta), and in addition: mind-element (mano-dhātu), dhamma-dhātu and mind-consciousness- element (mano-viññāṇa-dhātu). Mind-element and mind-consciousness-element comprise cittas other than the sense-cognitions. Dhamma-dhātu comprises cetasikas, the subtle rūpas (sukhuma rūpas) and nibbāna. In all these classifications concepts such as person or thing have not been included. Only paramattha dhammas have been included. We may think of concepts, but these are not real in the ultimate sense. Thinking itself is citta, it is a reality. If there is no understanding of realities as just elements, we shall continue to cling to the wrong view of self who sees, hears or thinks. Seeing is a dhātu that experiences an object, it is nāma. Visible object is rūpa, it is included in rūpakkhandha. Visible object or colour does not know anything, it is dissociated (vippayutta) from nāma, it is completely different from seeing. Dhātus are not mere names, they have characteristics that can be directly experienced when they appear. We are reminded by the Dhātukathā that the teaching on elements pertains to realities appearing at this moment which are anattā, devoid of a self.

30 Puggalapaññatti, the fourth Book

The fourth book of the Abhidhamma is the Puggalapaññatti (Translated as “A Designation of Human Types”). This book deals with the cittas and the different accumulated tendencies of individuals. Some people are easily inclined to anger, whereas others are full of mettā. We read about an angry person: ‘What sort of person is angry? What then is anger? That which is anger, and the state of being angry, hatred, hating, hatefulness, malice, the act of being malicious, maliciousness, hostility, enmity, rudeness, abruptness, resentment of heart—this is called anger. He who has not got rid of this anger is said to be an angry person.’ In this definition we read about the “state of being angry”, and this teaches us that anger is not a person, that it is a dhamma which is conditioned. We think of an angry person, but anger, after it has arisen, is gone completely, it does not last. The contents of this book are the evil and good qualities of individuals, but actually, these are cetasikas, mental factors arising because of conditions. Thus, we are constantly reminded that these are not persons, they are impermanent and not self. We read (II, 17) about a person who is guarded as to the sense-doors. There is no person who is guarding the sense-doors, but the realities of sati and paññā are guarding the sense-doors. When there is mindfulness and understanding of visible object appearing through the eye-door, of sound appearing through the ear-door, of the other sense objects appearing through the other sense-doors, one is not enslaved by these objects but one learns to see these realities as they are: impermanent and non-self. At such moments there is no opportunity for akusala cittas rooted in lobha, dosa and moha. Some persons are able to attain jhāna, others do not. We read (I, 30):

“Which is the person who is twice-liberated (ubhatobhāga-vimutta)? It is one who, in his own person, has attained to the eight liberations (jhānas), and through wise penetration his taints (āsava) have come to extinction.” (I, 31)

“Which is the person who is liberated by wisdom (paññā-vimutta)? It is one who has not attained, in his own person, to the eight liberations, but through wise penetration his taints have come to extinction.”

When we read about the attainments of different individuals we should not forget that these are citta and cetasikas with highly developed paññā.

31 Kathāvatthu, the Fifth Book

The Fifth book of the Abhidhamma is the Kathāvatthu (Translated as “Points of Controversy”). Its commentary has been translated as “The Debates Commentary”, P.T.S.) This book which is a treatise against schismatic monks has been composed by Moggali-putta-tissa. It was recited at the third Buddhist Council. The First Buddhist Council was held by fivehundred arahats headed by the Venerable Mahākassapa in Rājagaha shortly after the Buddha passed away. Here the Abhidhamma Piṭaka was also included along with the Vinaya and Suttanta. The Second Buddhist Council was held by sevenhundred arahats headed by the Venerable Mahāyasa one century after the Buddha’s passing away. The version of the Texts in the First Buddhist Council was re-approved or re-affirmed. The Third Buddhist Council was convened by King Asoka at Pataliputta, about 240 B.C. Thousand Arahats were headed by Moggaliputta-Tissa Thera who preached the Kathāvatthu treatise against schismatic monks. At that time there were seventeen schismatic schools. Thereupon, the Abhidhamma-Piṭaka reached its completeness and became seven books. The Kathāvatthu consists of questions and answers, it is a dialogue between the sakavādin (theravada) and the opponent. For example, the first question is: ‘Is there, in the absolute sense, any personality (puggala) to be found?’. In the teachings the term person is used in figurative speech, in conventional sense, but in the ultimate sense there is no person. Schismatic monks believed that a person really existed. Similar questions about the person or the world are raised today. We read, for instance, about questions on rebirth. The opponent thinks: ‘the person transmigrates’. The Sakavādin asks whether it is the identical person who transmigrates or a different person. Or, the question is asked (Ch VIII, 75) whether there is an intermediate stage between the end of a lifespan and the beginning of the next life at rebirth. This book covers a wide range of subjects, and each question is viewed from various angles. We read about speculative questions with regard to the Dependent Origination, the four Truths, kamma and result, emancipation, arahats, the future and the present, destinies, impermanence, jhāna attainments, insight and many other subjects. Such questions can remind us that so long as understanding of the dhamma appearing at this moment is not being developed stage by stage, there will always be doubt and ignorance of the truth.

32 Yamaka, the Sixth Book of the Abhidhamma

The Sixth Book of the Abhidhamma is the ‘Yamaka’, the Book of Pairs. This book and its commentary have not been translated into English. Venerable Nyanatiloka renders a summary of it in his “Guide through the Abhidhamma Piṭaka”. This book consists of questions and answers about subjects such as the roots (mūla), the khandhas, the āyatanas, the dhātus, the four noble truths, the conditions and the anusayas, latent tendencies. These questions and answers can correct misunderstandings that may arise about the terms used in the scriptures. For instance, one may think that with regard to the first noble Truth, the Truth of dukkha, dukkha is the same as unhappy feeling. Dukkha is often translated as sorrow and this is misleading. We learn that the Truth of dukkha does not only refer to painful feeling but to all phenomena that arise because of conditions and fall away. Since they are impermanent they cannot be of any refuge and are therefore dukkha. The text of this book is rather compact and therefore it is most helpful to study it together with its commentary. We shall see that the subjects of this book are not theoretical but that they pertain to daily life. When we, for example, read about the latent tendencies, there are short lists, but the commentary goes very deeply into this subject, it is most revealing. As we have seen, the latent tendencies are sense desire, aversion, conceit, wrong view, doubt, craving for existence and ignorance. In the text we read: “Where does the bias of sensuous craving adhere? To the two feelings”. These are happy feeling and indifferent feeling. The commentary states: “When the latent tendency of sense desire arises it is conascent with unwholesome pleasant feeling or indifferent feeling, and it can also take these two feelings as object. It can also take as object the feelings that accompany kusala citta, vipākacitta and kiriyacitta of the sense-sphere.” We read in the commentary:

“When the latent tendency of sense desire arises...”

We should know that the word “arisen” (uppanna) has several meanings. In the context of the latent tendencies, it is said:

“arisen” in the sense of “having obtained a soil” (bhūmiladdhuppanna), which means: not cut off. “Arisen in the sense of having obtained a soil” refers to the defilements which have not been eradicated and which have obtained a soil. Thus, the latent tendencies do not arise with the citta, they condition the arising of akusala citta.

We also read in the commentary:

“Surely, the latent tendency of sense desire that adheres to an object, does not merely adhere to these two feelings and to the dhammas that are conascent with them. It also adheres to visible object that is desirable, and so on.

The Buddha taught in the ‘Book of Analysis’ (Ch 16, Analysis of Knowledge, 816, And what is the latent tendency of beings?):

“That which in the world is a lovely thing, pleasant thing (piyarūpaṃ, sātārūpaṃ), the latent tendency of sense desire of beings adheres to this...”

Thus, desirable nāma dhammas and rūpa dhammas can be the objects of sense desire. When sense desire arises and has as object desirable nāmas and rūpas, the accumulation of the latent tendency of sense desire continues. Whenever there is a pleasant object sense desire clings. We can verify this in daily life. The only dhammas that are not objects of clinging are the nine lokuttara dhammas of nibbāna and the eight lokuttara cittas.

33 The Paṭṭhāna, the seventh book of the Abhidhamma

The Seventh Book of the Abhidhamma is the “Paṭṭhāna” (translated partly by the Venerable U Nārada as “Conditional Relations”). The translator also wrote a “Guide to Conditional Relations” with many explanations. The “Paṭṭhāna” describes in detail all possible relations between phenomena. There are twentyfour classes of conditions. Each reality in our life can only occur because of a concurrence of different conditions which operate in a very intricate way. These conditions are not abstractions, they operate now, in our daily life. What we take for our mind and our body are mere elements which arise because of their appropriate conditions and are devoid of self. We should consider the conditions for the bodily phenomena which arise and fall away all the time. At the first moment of our life kamma produced the heart-base and other rūpas together with the rebirth-consciousness, and throughout our life kamma continues to produce the heartbase and the sense-bases. Not only kamma, but also citta, heat and nutrition produce rūpas of the body. The cittas which arise are dependent on many different conditions. We tend to forget that seeing is only a conditioned reality and that visible object is only a conditioned reality, and therefore we are easily carried away by sense impressions. Each citta experiences an object, be it a sense object or a mental object, and the object conditions citta by object-condition, ārammaṇa-paccaya. It is beneficial to remember that seeing, hearing and the other sense-cognitions are vipākacittas, cittas which are results of kamma. They arise at their appropriate bases, vatthus, which are also produced by kamma. Hearing is conditioned by sound which impinges on the earsense. Both sound and earsense are rūpas which also arise because of their own conditions and fall away. Thus, hearing, the reality which they condition, cannot last either; it also has to fall away. Each conditioned reality can exist just for an extremely short moment. When we understand this it will be easier to see that there is no self who can exert control over realities. How could we control what falls away immediately? When we move our hands, when we walk, when we laugh or cry, when we are attached or worried, there are conditions for such moments. Cittas succeed one another without any interval. The citta that has just fallen away conditions the succeeding citta and this is by way of proximity-condition, anantara-paccaya. Seeing arises time and again and after seeing has fallen away akusala cittas usually arise. In each process of cittas there are, after the sense-cognitions have fallen away, several moments of kusala cittas or akusala cittas, called javana-cittas. These experience the object in a wholesome way or unwholesome way. There are usually seven javana-cittas and each preceding javana-citta conditions the following one by way of repetition-condition, āsevana-paccaya. We cling to visible object, or we have wrong view about it, taking it for a being or a person that really exists. Defilements arise because they have been accumulated and they are carried on, from moment to moment, from life to life. They are a natural decisive support-condition, pakatūpanissaya-paccaya, for akusala citta arising at this moment. The study of conditions helps us to have more understanding of the “Dependent Origination”, the conditional arising of phenomena which keep beings in the cycle of birth and death. Each link of the Dependent Origination conditions the following one by way of several types of conditions. It is necessary to know which conditioning factors are consonant with the dhamma they condition and which are not. The “Paṭṭhāna” helps us to understand the deep underlying motives for our behaviour and the conditions for our defilements. It explains, for example, that kusala, wholesomeness, can be the object of akusala citta, unwholesome citta. On account of generosity which is wholesome, attachment, wrong view or conceit, which are unwholesome realities, can arise. The “Paṭṭhāna”

also explains that akusala can be the object of kusala, for example, when akusala is considered with insight. This is an essential point which is often overlooked. If one thinks that akusala cannot be object of awareness and right understanding, the eightfold Path cannot be developed.

34 Conclusion

All the texts of the Tipiṭaka , including the Abhidhamma, are not meant merely for intellectual study or memorizing, they are directed to the practice, the development of vipassanā. All the classifications of cittas, cetasikas and rūpas are terse reminders of the truth, they are an exhortation to develop understanding of what appears at this moment. This is the development of the eightfold Path leading to the eradication of all defilements.