

Fundamental Knowledge of Abhidhamma

Collected By [Ven.Paññādhikālaṅkāra](#)

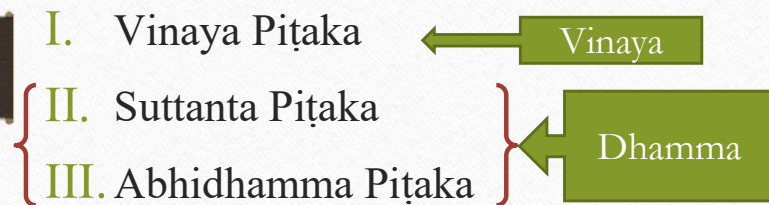
Recommended Books

- **A comprehensive Manual Of Abhidhamma** – by Bhikkhu Bodhi
- **A Manual Of Abhidhamma** – By Nārada Mahāthera, Kandy, BPS, 1980
- “Abhidhamma in daily life” Ashin Janakābhivamsa.
- Handbook Of Abhidhamma Studies (I,II,III) – Ven. Sayardaw U Sīlānanda
- Fundamental Abhidhamma – (I,II) Dr. Nandamālābhivamsa

Introduction to Abhidhamma

- The Origin Of abhidhamma
- Dhamma and Abhidhamma
- What are the contents taught in the Abhidhamma?
- Texts & Learning process to understand Abhidhamma

Tipiṭaka Pāli texts
Three ‘**Baskets**’ or
collections of the teachings



Suttanta and **Abhidhamma** are collectively called **Dhamma** (which is the work of Ven. Ānanda) at the First Buddhist council.

(Abhidhamma Piṭaka – A Profound teaching among the Three Tipiṭaka)

The *Tipiṭaka* – The three ‘**Baskets**’ or
collections of the teachings

- **Vinaya Piṭaka** — the collection of discipline, containing the rules of conduct for the bhikkhus (monks) and bhikkhunis (nuns), and the regulations governing the Sangha, the monastic order.
- **Suttanta Piṭaka** — the collection of discourses on various occasions during the Buddha’s ministry work of forty-five years.
- **Abhidhamma Piṭaka** — the collection of ‘higher’ or ‘special’ doctrines of the Buddha

Five Nikāya texts - ‘Collection’ of the teachings

- 1) *Dīgha-nikāya* — the collection of Long Discourses, (3)
- 2) *Majjhima-nikāya* — the collection of Middle Length Discourses, (3)
- 3) *Samyutta-nikāya* — the collection of Kindred / Miscellaneous Discourses, (3)
- 4) *Aṅguttara-nikāya* — the collection of Gradual / Numerical / Discourses, (3)
- 5) *Khuddaka-nikāya* — the collection of Minor Discourses

{(Vinaya – (5), Abhidhamma – (12), }

(ṭhapetvā caturo p’ete, Nikāye Dīgha-ādike :

Tadaññaṃ Buddhavacanaṃ, Nikāyo Khuddhako mato” (Vi-com.I / Aṭṭhasālinī -26)

“The rest of the word of the Buddha excluding these four Nikāya such as *Dīgha* should be understood as *Khuddhaka-Nikāya*”. Thus, the whole Vinaya-Piṭaka and the whole Abhidhamma-Piṭaka are belong to the *Khuddhaka-nikāya*.

The Seven Abhidhamma Texts

The Abhidhamma comprises seven texts, viz.,

- (1) ***Dhammasaṅgaṇī*** — the Explanation of Dhammas, Enumeration of Phenomena
- (2) ***Vibhaṅga*** — the Book of Analysis,
- (3) ***Dhātukathā*** — the Speech on the Elements,
- (4) ***Puggalapaññatti*** — the Designation of Individuals,
- (5) ***Kathāvatthu*** — the Points of Controversy,
- (6) ***Yamaka*** — the Book of Pairs, and
- (7) ***Paṭṭhāna*** — the Book of Conditions.

This is the list that is widely accepted in the *Theravāda* tradition.

Kathāvatthu is a work of Thera **Moggaliputta Tissa** – 218 (263) years after the Buddha's *parinibbāna* at the time of Emperor Asoka. (234 years – U Sīlānanda Sayardaw – Handbook of Abhidhamma Studies- I)
(Abhi – 12 books – 4981 pages)

The Authorship of Abhidhamma –

Who is the author? - The Buddha is the author of Abhidhamma.

There was a controversy about the authorship. It has been said that Abhidhamma is not the teaching of the Buddha. Indeed, that it is only later work.

- In Theravāda Buddhist tradition, it is widely accepted that Abhidhamma was taught by the Buddha himself to the deity. In the seventh year after His enlightenment, the Buddha went to the world of the deity and taught Abhidhamma for three months.
- The complete teaching of Abhidhamma was taught at the **Tāvātimsā Deva realm** (Realm of thirty-three Gods), to the *Devas* and *Brahmas*.
- The *Aṭṭhasālinī* said that the Buddha, in the fourth weeks after His enlightenment, contemplated the complete set of Abhidhamma, in the jewel house (*Ratanāghara*) in the northwest direction of Bodhi-tree. Beginning with the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, seven books of *Abhidhamma* are contemplated in turn.
- ☐ While investigating the first six books, His body did not emit rays. But while the book of *Paṭṭhāna* is contemplated the Buddha's body emits the ray as the result of the working of Omniscience (*Sabbaññūta-ñāṇa*)

Two conclusions – taught by the Buddha himself, and later development

- Here, in this class, we are not going to elaborate the argument about the authorship of Abhidhamma. We will follow the traditional conclusion and proceed to understand the Abhidhamma.

Who brought Abhidhamma to the human world?

- During these days of teaching Abhidhamma in *Tāvatisa*, the Buddha briefly taught Ven. *Sāriputta*, one of the chief disciples, about what He had taught in the deity world in every morning.
- Ven. Sāriputta thus learnt the Abhidhamma from the Buddha and taught his Bhikkhu pupils.
- In this way, Abhidhamma was introduced into human world.
- However, it should be noted that the Abhidhamma taught to the deity is in great detail and that the Abhidhamma retold by Ven. Sāriputta is in a concise form.

Three Versions / Modes Of Abhidhamma Teaching

❖ **Large / complete version**— taught to the gods by the Buddha

- at the Tāvātimsa deva realm

(to gratitude to mother— to let the beings understand the gratitude of parents etc.,)

❖ **Concise version** — taught to the Ven. Sāriputta by the Buddha

- on the bank of the lake, *Anotatta*.

❖ **Medium version** — taught to 500 pupils by Ven.Sāriputta

(Neither too large nor too small)

(The last version is the one which was recorded in the First Buddhist Council and what we have now)

(In this way, during the *Vassa (rain retreat)* of seventh year after the Buddha's enlightenment, in 109 Mahā Era, the three versions of Abhidhamma teaching appeared simultaneously in the human world and *deva* realms)

What is Abhidhamma?

- Abhidhamma is one of the *Tipiṭaka Pāli* texts. It can be considered as Universal Education.

(Abhidhamma divides the whole universe into the reality to understand the underlying ultimate nature of things and beings.)

❖ Abhidhamma is not only a theory - but subject to be experienced by human knowledge

- In the Suttas, the doctrines are more or less explained in the words of the philosophically incorrect ‘conventional’ everyday language (*Vohāra-vacana*) understood by anyone, while the *Abhidhamma*, on the other hand, makes use of purely philosophical terms true in the absolute sense (*paramattha-vacana*)
- Thus the Suttas often speak of individuals and persons, of ‘I,’ ‘you,’ and ‘self,’ even of the rebirth of a self, etc., as if such so-called individualities really existed. The Abhidhamma, however, treats of realities (*paramattha-dhamma*), i.e. of psychical and physical phenomena, which alone may be rightly called realities, though only of momentary duration, arising and passing away every moment. **(Intro-Guide through the Abhidhamma Pitaka)**

Why is it called Abhidhamma?

Abhidhamma is a **unique / higher** teaching

– which explains dhammas **in detail** and **in an analytical way**.

(It explains the dhammas in more detail than *Suttanta*.)

Abhidhamma = ‘which exceeds and is distinguished from the dhamma (sutta teaching)’

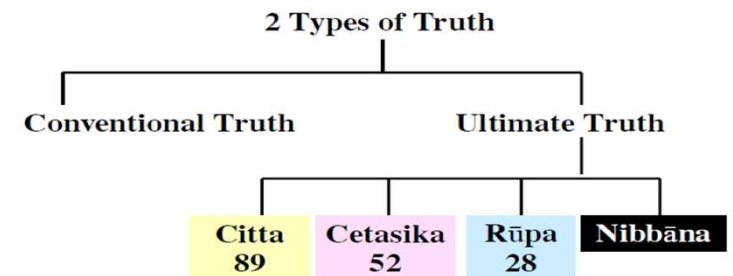
(*Abhi* --- (having the sense of preponderance and distinction,
(excelling or distinguished)

Dhamma --- the teaching of Sutta)

Contents in Abhidhamma Teachings

In the 'absolute sense' (*paramattha*), there does not exist any real, self-dependent, permanent 'entity,' no such thing as the so-called 'ego,' but only this ever-changing process of conditionally arising and passing phenomena. Hence, the whole Abhidhamma has to do on with the description, analysis, and elucidation of such phenomena. (Intro- Guide through Abhidhamma Pitaka)

- **The conventional truth** — something that is true in conventional sense, and the ultimate truth — something that is true according to ultimate sense.
- **The Ultimate truth** = Ultimate realities - exist in the nature, can be approved by characteristic, function, manifestation, proximate cause.



The Dhamma taught in the *Abhidhamma* – (*Abhidhammattha*)

Five topics – expounded in the Abhidhamma texts:

1. *Citta* - (consciousness),
2. *Cetasika* - (mental factors/ states / concomitants),
3. *Rūpa* - (matter),
4. *Nibbāna* (a state of freedom from attachment) and
5. *Paññatti* (concept).

Paramattha - the Ultimate and absolute truth

- 1) Consciousness 2) Mental factors. 3) Matters 4) Nibbāna (~~5) Paññatti~~)

Two Types Of Truths (Saccā)

Sammuti.saccā (Conventional Truth)	Paramattha.Saccā (Ultimate Truth)			
Names (of things and beings)	Consciousness	Mental Factors	Matter	Nibbāna
	Aggregates of Mentality		Aggregate of Materiality	
	Five Aggregates (<i>Paññcakkhandha</i>)			(Not included under the classification of Aggregate)
	Conditioned reality (<i>Saṅkhata-dhātu</i>)			Unconditioned reality (<i>Asaṅkhata-dhātu</i>)

Paramattha - the Ultimate and absolute truth The Ultimate truths are free from bias or partiality. In essence, being constant, steadfast and unchanging is *Paramattha*, the Ultimate and absolute truth.

Three types of living Beings (Satta)/ Sentient Beings

- 1) - ***Ekavokāra*** – Beings with a single aggregate of material
[the beings in the fine-material-sphere known as ***Asññasatta***] {1}
 - 2) - ***Catuvokāra*** – Beings with four aggregates of mentality
[the beings in the immaterial-sphere known as ***Arūpa-brahma***]
{4}
 - 3) - ***Paññcavokāra*** – Beings with complete five aggregates
[the beings in the rest 26 realms] {26}
- {***Eka*** – one, ***Catu*** – four, ***Paññca*** – five, / ***Vokāra*** (same as khandha)– aggregate,}

The Ultimate reality – (*Paramattha*)

Paramattha - the Ultimate and absolute truth

- In essence, being constant, steadfast and unchanging is *Paramattha*, the Ultimate and absolute truth.
(An intimate truth is an unchanging truth. The Ultimate truths are free from bias or partiality.)
- There are four kinds of Ultimate reality, namely,
 - 1) consciousness (*citta*), – basic awareness of an object
 - 2) mental factors (*cetasikas*),
 - 3) Matter / material phenomena (*rūpa*) and
 - 4) Ultimate peace (*Nibbāna*) .

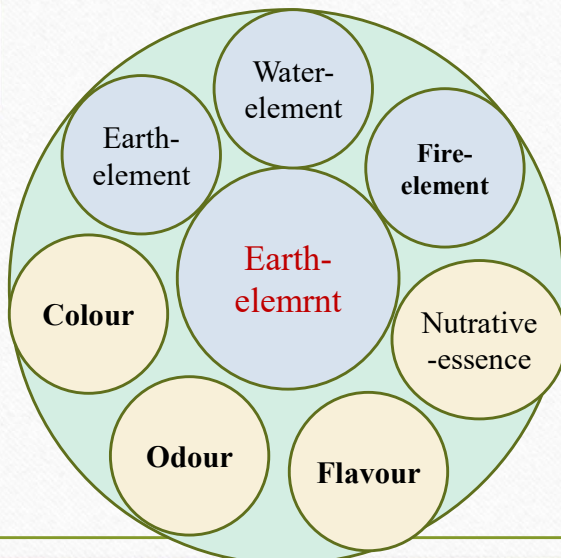
The Ultimate realities (*Paramatthas*) can also be classified (**into three**) as :

1. matter - (*rūpa*)
2. Nāma – combination of - consciousness (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasikas*), and
3. *Nibbāna*, the absolute reality of Nibbāna is the unconditioned element.

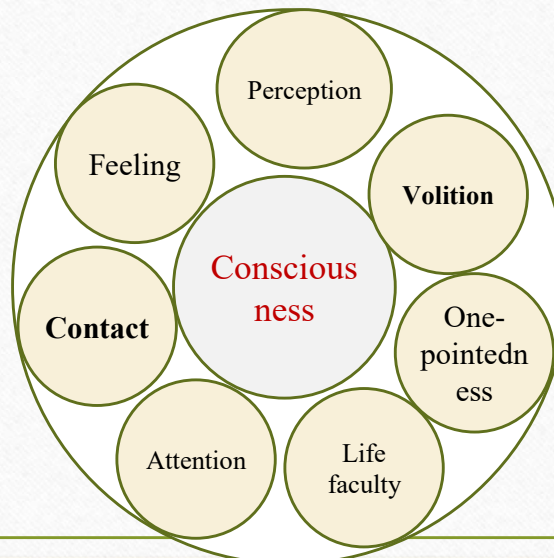
The **body of materiality** (*Rūpa-kāya*) and
the **body of mentality** (*Nāma-kāya*).

The smallest group of materiality consists of eight phenomenon:
earth-element, water-element, fire-element, wind-element, colour, odour,
flavour, and nutritive essence.

The smallest group of mentality also consists of eight phenomenon:
Consciousness, and **seven associated mental factors** of contact, feeling,
perception, Volition, One-pointedness, Life faculty, and attention.



A group of Materiality



A group of Mentality



Photo credit to: <http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-DkDss8DuU5k/V9tWvr9BapI/AAAAAAAAA8/WzqL0mZ2gm4BYFH9EjZjV4qt-dLFjVfigwCK4B/s1600/how-to-boost-immune-system.jpg>

Text = Abhidhammattha.saṅgaha

“Abhidhammattha.saṅgaha”

- Author – Ācariya Anuruddha
(From southern India)
- Between – 10 and 11 AD
- Type – commentary – (concise / compendium)
- English Translations
- Aung, Shwe Zan Aung and Rhys Davids, C.A.F – **Compendium Of Philosophy:** PTS, 1910, 1979.
- **A Manual Of Abhidhamma** – By Nārada Mahāthera, Kandy, BPS, 1980
- **A comprehensive Manual Of Abhidhamma** – by Bhikkhu Bodhi

What is explained in this book?

All the theoretical analysis of mind and matter finally converges upon the practice of meditation, and the practice culminates in the attainment of the supreme goal of Buddhism, the liberation of the mind by non-clinging.)

(Com.M.A -P.20)

Abhidhamma literature Commentaries on Abhidhamma

The commentaries were written to explain the profound teaching of Abhidhamma texts.

- *Mahā aṭṭhakathā* - the first commentary

(Indian origin and was brought to Sri Lanka island by Ven. Mahinda)

Then Ven. Buddhaghosa condensed Mahā aṭṭhakathā and translated it into Pāli.

Ven. Buddhaghosa's commentaries are translated into three texts:

- (1.) *Atthasālinī*, the commentary on *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*,
- (2.) *Sammohavinodanī*, the commentary on *Vibhaṅga*, and
- (3.) *Pañca-pakarāṇa aṭṭhakathā*, the commentary on the other five texts.

- *Mūlaṭīkā*, (sub-commentary on the new commentary) - by Ven. Ānanda.

- *Anuṭīkā* (to explain Mūlaṭīkā - advocating the opinion of Ven. Buddhaghosa, which was rejected in Mūlaṭīkā) - Ven. Dhammapāla

Outline Of Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha

Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha is composed of 9 chapters

– Enumeration , detail analysis, concise notes (explanation),

- First six chapter come with the Enumeration , detail analysis of *Paramatthas*
- *Ch-1* – the compendium of consciousness – defines and classifies the 89 and 121 types of consciousness
- *Ch-2* –Saṅgahaenumerates 52 *Cetasikas*, mental factors (concomitants of consciousness), defines the relationship between Citta and Cetasika by two means – the method of association (*Sampayoganaya*), and the method of inclusion or combination(*Saṅgahanaya*)
- *Ch-3* – the compendium of Miscellaneous – classifies types of consciousness along with their factors with respect to six categories: (Root, feeling, function, door, object, and base)
- *Ch-4* – the compendium of Cognitive process – explores the nature of the cognitive process
- *Ch-5* – the compendium of Passive flow or process – freed flow(of Consciousness) –
- *Ch-6* – the compendium of Matter – enumerates the 28 types of material phenomena, classifies them in various ways, and explain their modes of origination. It also describes the occurrence of material processes in the different realms of existence and concludes with a short section on the *Nibbāna*.

Outline Of Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha (2)

- *Ch-7* – the Compendium of Categories – arranges the ultimate realities into a variety of categorical schemes that fall under four broad beadings: (i) a compendium of defilements; (ii) a compendium of mixed categories, which include items of different ethical qualities; (iii) a compendium of the requisites of enlightenment; and (iv) a compendium of the whole, an all-inclusive survey of the Abhidhamma ontology. (this chapter leans heavily upon the *Vibhanga*, and to some extent upon the *Dhammasaṅgāṇī*.)
- *Ch-8* – the Compendium of Conditionality – is introduced to include the Abhidhamma teaching on the inter-relatedness of physical and mental phenomena, thereby complementing the analytical treatment of the ultimate realities with a synthetical treatment laying bare their functional correlations. The exposition summarily presents two alternative approaches to conditionality found in the Pāli Canon. (i) One is the method of dependent arising, prominent in the Sutta and analyzed from both Suttanta and Abhidhamma angles in the *Vibhanga*(VI). (ii) The other is the method of Paṭṭhāna, with its twenty-four conditional relations. This chapter concludes with a brief account of concepts (Paññatti), thereby drawing in the *Puggalapaññatti*, at the last by implication.
- *Ch-9* – the Compendium of Meditation Subject – functions as a kind of summary of the *Visuddhimagga*. It concisely surveys all the methods of meditation exhaustively explained in the latter work, and it sets forth condensed account of the stages of progress in both systems of meditation, concentration and insight. It concludes with an account of the four types of enlightened individuals and the attainments of fruition and cessation.

Abhidhammaṭṭha-vibhāvinī

(A commentary Of Abhidhammaṭṭha-saṅgaha)

- The work of Sumaṅgalasāmi
- Known as “Ṭīkā-Kyaw” = “the Famous Ṭīkā” in Myanmar,

During the Konbaung period (1753-1885) there have been some *Abhidhammic* scholars whom criticize *Vibhāvinī*. They asserted that *Vibhāvinī* is full of mistakes.

Although it is so, *Vibhāvinī* continues to maintain its popularity among those who study *Abhidhamma* in Myanmar.

- *Ledi Sayadaw*, a great teacher of *Abhidhamma*, wrote a book named *Paramatthadīpanī*, a commentary on *Abhidhammattha saṅgaha* In 1897. It is considered one of the most important book in the history of *Abhidhamma*.

Paramatthadīpanī, the critique of *Vibhāvinī*

Paramatthadīpanī made several unfavourable comments about the opinion of *Vibhāvinī* and presented innovative ideas. *Ledi Sayadw* pointed out some opinions were mistakenly informed in *Vibhāvinī*. And it is full of grammatical, logical and philosophical mistakes.

Aspiration & Sharing Merit

**Iminā Puññkammena mā me bālasamāgamo.....,
Sataṃ samāgamo hotu yāva Nibbānappatīy
Idaṃ me puññaṃ.....āsavakkhayā'vahaṃ hotu.
Idaṃ me puññaṃ.....Nibbānassa paccayo hotu.**

**Mama puññabhāgaṃ sabbasattānaṃ bhājemi.
Te sabbe.....me samaṃ.....puññbhāgaṃ labhantu.**

Sādhu... Sādhu... Sādhu

By this action of merit,May I not be associated with fools!,

May I be associated with the wise until the attainment of Nibbāna.

May my (this) merit bring about the cessation of taints (as a result)!

May my (this) merit be the condition for (the achievement of) Nibbāna.

I share my portion of merits with all beings. May all of them achieve my portion of merit evenly.

Well-done Well-done Well-done

