

An Analysis of the Mind in the Theravāda Abhidhamma Piṭaka

Ven. Amunudowe Hemasiri Thero¹

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ථෙරවාද සම්ප්‍රදායාගත අභිධර්මය මෙන් ම ඊට අනුගත අටුවා හා ටීකාවන්හි එන 'චිත්ත' යන්න විෂයෙහි පවත්නා විග්‍රහ, නිර්වචන ප්‍රකට කිරීම මෙම ලිපිය සම්පාදනය කිරීමෙහි ලා මුඛ්‍ය භාවාර්ථය වේ. ඒ අනුව යමින් යථෝක්ත විග්‍රහ, නිර්වචනයන් මෙන් ම සිතෙහි පවත්නා අරමුණු ගැනීමේ හා දැනගැනීමේ සුවිශේෂත්වය, සිත හා චෛතසික අතර පවත්නා අනවරත සම්බන්ධය, සිත ප්‍රධාන වීමෙහි ලා බලපවත්නා සාධක මෙන් ම සිතෙහි ක්‍රියාකාරීත්වය පිළිබඳ ව ඉගැන්වෙන අතිසුක්ෂ්ම චිත්තවිචි ක්‍රියාකාරීත්වය වැනි කාරණා සම්බන්ධයෙන් මෙහි දී සාකච්ඡා කොට ඇත. මනස පිළිබඳව ආභිධර්මික විග්‍රහය ගම්භීර සහ පුළුල් බැවින් සමස්ත අභිධර්ම පිටකය ම නොව ධම්මසංගණි ප්‍රකරණය සහ තෝරාගත් අභිධර්ම අටුවා හා ටීකා ග්‍රන්ථ ආශ්‍රයෙන් විග්‍රහයක් කිරීම අභිලාෂය වන අතර මෙම ප්‍රයාසය චිත්ත විග්‍රහය කෙරෙහි හා ඊට සබැඳි සෙසු කරුණු කෙරෙහි රුචිකත්වයක් මෙන් ම ශාස්ත්‍රීය අධ්‍යයනයකට රුචිකත්වයක් ඇති අයට වැදගත් වනු ඇත.

ප්‍රමුඛපද: අභිධර්මය, චිත්තවිචි, චිත්ත, චෛතසික

1 Temporary Lecturer, Department of Pāli and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

In this comprehensive exploration of the term "citta" and its analysis within the context of Buddhist philosophy, we delve into the multifaceted nature of the mind. Derived from the roots 'ci' meaning 'to heap up or collect,' and 'ta' meaning 'to protect,' citta encompasses both an adjective, signifying diversification, and a noun, denoting thinking. The examination draws from pāli canon, the Sutta Piṭaka and Vinaya Piṭaka, with special reference to the Abhidhamma Piṭaka.

This 'citta' or mind is also analysed in both *Sutta Piṭaka*², and *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the analysis of the mind is broadly expounded in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. Three main methods have been used to analyse the mind in the *Pāli Aṭṭhakathā* tradition.

1. *Kattu Sādhana* - Way of an agent
2. *Karaṇa Sādhana* - Way of an instrument
3. *Bhāva Sādhana* - Way of activity or mode of operation³

By way of an agent

This means analysing based on the agent. '*Ārammaṇaṃ cinteti jānātīti cittaṃ*'⁴. When a person thinks of a certain dhamma, the nature of that thinking is called *citta* (the mind). The verbs in the above text are *cinteti* and *jānātīti*. *Ārammaṇaṃ* is the object. *Cittaṃ* acts as the agent. The process of the mind is knowing the objects. '*Cinteti cittaṃ ārammaṇaṃ vijānātīti*

2 See. *Vatthūpama sutta*, M.N., *Dvedhāvitakka sutta*, *Vitakkasaṅghāna sutta*, M.N., *Uṇṇābhibrāhmaṇa sutta*, S.N., *Vassūpanāyikakkhandhakaya*, *Mahāvaggapāli*.

3 Karunadasa, Y. (2015). p.81

4 *Abhidhammāvatāra Purāṇa Tīkā*, (CST)

*attho'*⁵, *visaya vijānana lakkhaṇaṃ cittaṃti*⁶. According to analysis in the *Atthasālinī*, here *visaya* means the spiritual forms of the eye (*chakkhu*), ear (*sota*), nose (*ghāna*), tongue (*jivhā*), and body (*kāya*), consciousness (*mana*), and external objects of the form (*rūpa*), sound (*sadda*), odour (*gandha*), taste (*rasa*), tangibility (*poṭṭhabba*), and dhamma.

By way of an instrument

*'Cintenti vā etena karaṇabhūtena sampayuttadhammāti cittaṃ'*⁷. This means thinking of the objects of dhamma like *phassa* (contact) attached to one's self through the instrument of mind. Agent of the above text is that *sammapayuttadhammā* or else mental concomitants. *Cintenti* or 'think' is the verb, and the instrument is *cittaṃ* or the mind.

By way of activity or mode of operation

The scholars point out *bhava sādhana* as the most appropriate method for the analysis of *citta* than the above methods. *'Cintanamattaṃ cittaṃ'*⁸. As an activity, *citta* itself is nothing but the process of cognising the object. The process of knowing the object or reflecting it is called the mind. The process of the mind to identify objects is interpreted as *cittavīthi* in *Abhidhamma*. Understanding the mind as a process is more important than searching for innovative agents.

The main characteristic of the mind is to know the objects in particular. The function of the mind is to appear first or chiefly to the mental concomitants (*pubbaṅgama*

5 *Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī*, p.14

6 *Atthasālinī* (PTS), p.119

7 *Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī*, p.14

8 *Ibid.*, p.16

rasam). Mental concomitants (*cetasika*) are the same as the vowels and consonants that are analysed in the alphabet. A class of vowels like 'a' and ā are taught in the teaching of characters, and they are also known as *prānākṣara*. However, no vowel is included in consonants. They are all consonants. In order to pronounce them, they must be combined with vowels or *prānākṣara*. Then they can be pronounced like *ka, kā, ki, kī*, etc. Also, these mental concomitants (*cetasika*) do not appear alone. They are combined with the mind. Mental concomitants (*cetasika*) never arise without a mind. Likewise, a mind does not appear without mental concomitants (*cetasika*). However, there are more or less *cetasika* dhamma occur in the mind. In *sobhana* consciousness, mental concomitants (*cetasika*) appear as 7, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 33, 34, 35, in *dhyāna* consciousness 33, 32, 31, and in transcendental consciousness 36, 35, 34, 33, 32, and they are named according to its applications. '*Vijānana lakkhaṇaṃ cittaṃ, pubbaṅgamarasaṃ, sandahanapaccupaṭṭhānaṃ, nāmarūpapadaṭṭhānaṃ*'⁹ This mind, which is one hundred twenty-one in detail as well as ninety-one, is characterised to aware of all objects like desirable (*iṣṭa*), undesirable (*aniṣṭa*), neutral (*madhyastha*), etc. The mind appears before the *cetasika* dhamma. It understands the continuous connection. It is close to the dhamma of mentality (*nāma*) -and -materiality (*rūpa*).

When we see something with our eyes, the eye consciousness (*cakkhuviññāṇa*) arises. Seven types of mental concomitants (*cetasikas*) converge in this *cakkhuviññāṇa*. The function of the eye consciousness is to perceive objects in forms such as blue, red, yellow, long, short, round, dark,

9 *Atthasālinī* (PTS), p. 119

and light. Form is the sight that catches the eye. It is called *sanidassana*, and it means 'caught in the eye'. That is to say, becoming an object to the eye. When the eye sees form, it is not the eye that sees it, but the consciousness that appears to the eye. The consciousness that emerges in this way is called *cakkhuvīññāṇa*. The consciousness thus emerges is neither merit nor demerit. It is consciousness of consequences. Eye consciousness (*cakkhuvīññāṇa*) arises as a consequence of past merit or demerit. But after a series of consciousness through the eye consciousness (*cakkhuvīññāṇa*), merits and demerits arise according to the way the mind is used. Thus, fourfold matters are important in seeing a certain form.

1. Eye sensitivity must be in good condition.
(*Cakkuppasāda*)
2. There must be a visible object. (*Vañṇa*)
3. The light also must be present. (*Āloka*)
4. The attention by the mind. (*Manasikāra*)

Vīññāṇa arises when these four things are completed. When you see something with that eye-consciousness (*cakkhuvīññāṇa*), the mind does not become immoral at the same time of seeing. It is seen with a resultant mind (*vipākacitta*). When you see something that is unpleasant, offensive, or inauspicious, for example, faeces, dead bodies, or something impure, an inauspicious or undesirable object will emerge. Eye consciousness (*cakkhuvīññāṇa*) that sees such an undesirable object is a consequence of an unwholesome deed. That consciousness and the seven mental concomitants (*cetasikas*) related to it are the consequences of an unwholesome deed. Therefore, it is called eye consciousness

(*cakkhuvīñṇāṇa*) that gives unwholesome consequences (*akusala vipākacitta*). For example, when one sees something bright, such as a colourful flower, a plant, a Buddha statue, a meritorious act, a good man, or a virtuous nobleman, the mind is refreshed and these are called desirable objects. The consciousness that arises from eye contact with those desirable objects is called eye consciousness (*cakkhuvīñṇāṇa*) that gives wholesome consequences (*kusala vipākacitta*). These are considered as weak minds because they are devoid of the reasons for craving (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), non-craving (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), non-delusion (*amoha*).

Our mind is unceasingly known as '*Bhavaṅga*'. Thus, when it exists in *bhavaṅga*, it is subject to the aforementioned object. At the same time, there is an upsurge in *bhavaṅga* mind. After the movement of the *bhavaṅga* mind, an awakening mind arises from *bhavaṅga*. There a mind called *āvajjana* will emerge. The function of the *āvajjana* consciousness is to investigate what is the base of the above object. Hence it is called five-door cognition (*pañcadvārāvajjana*). The main task of the *pañcadvārāvajjana* consciousness is to explore when a sense object impinges on one of the five doors which are eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. This mind contains ten mental concomitants (*cetasika*). Also, this is an action mind. The eye consciousness (*cakkhuvīñṇāṇa*) is born subsequently. The process is like taking a photo instantly with a modern camera. Accordingly, the colour object is caught by the eye and it does not have merits or demerits, but mind for consequences. After that, *sampaticchana* will emerge. It is the consciousness that receives the material objects. Here are also ten mental concomitants (*cetasika*). Next comes the *santīraṇa*

consciousness, and its function is to determine the objects received by previous consciousness through the five doors. After that, the *votthapana* consciousness appears, and its main function is to turn the taken object into wholesomeness or unwholesomeness.

A person who is always devoted to engaging in merits is capable of directing that object to merit, and after that seven *javana* minds will emerge. After the seven *javana* minds, a mind for consequences called *tadārammaṇa* arises as if relishing the object. Then the mind falls again into the state of *bhavaṅga*. This does not end the process. Based on the colour object taken by the eyes, the *javana* consciousness appears mentally in the mind again. It is called *aññārammaṇa citta*. The object seen from the *javana* *vīthi* is not seen with the eyes but with the mind. Again the mind falls into the state of *bhavaṅga*. Then again comes a *citta* in the mind whose function is to reflect on the name of the thing seen. The mind falls back into *bhavaṅga*. *Atthārammaṇa manōdvārika citta* is generated to contemplate what meaning can be derived from it. Again the mind falls into *bhavaṅga* and a *citta* appears and it becomes powerful. If a wholesome consciousness arises, a powerful wholesome *citta* will arise, and if an unwholesome consciousness arises, a powerful unwholesome *citta* will arise. When a colour image appears, the process of the mind should be clearly expressed as mentioned above and this entire process does not take a long time like a minute or an hour. This process takes place in a very short period, like a quarter of a crore of a second. Our mind is a fragile thing, born a million times in the blink of an eye.

Thus a mind arises because of the material object that catches the eye. Why is that mind named as *citta*? The reason is because that object is known. Because the objects are known in particular. Thus the mind is called *pubbaṅgamarasaṃ* or the pioneer and the mind is the main thing for the mental concomitants (*cetasikas*). The mind is the controller to carry out the aforementioned process in conjunction with the mental concomitants (*cetasikas*).

In this way, when the ear hears a sound, the nose feels the smell, the tongue feels the taste, and the body feels the pleasures and sorrows, the mind appears as mentioned earlier. Accordingly, in each of these places, the object-taking nature and the object-knowing nature are the mind. Hence, it is said ‘*cinteti cittaṃ*’. This is the existence of the mind.

The meanings of the mind should be examined. There are ten various types of names especially in *Abhidhamma* to introduce the mind in the Gautama Buddha's sermon. “*Katamaṃ tasmim̐ samaye cittaṃ hoti? Yaṃ tasmim̐ samaye cittaṃ mano mānasaṃ hadayaṃ paṇḍaraṃ mano manāyataṃ manindriyaṃ viññāṇaṃ viññāṇakkhandho tajjāmanoviññāṇadhātu idaṃ tasmim̐ samaye cittaṃ hoti*”¹⁰

1. *Cittaṃ* - In the sense of thinking about the objects
2. *Mano* - In the sense of measuring object
3. *Mānasaṃ* - In the sense of measuring object
4. *Hadayaṃ* - In the sense of bearing ideas
5. *Paṇḍaraṃ* - In the sense of undefiled

10 *Dhammasaṅgaṇī Prakaraṇa* (PTS), p. 10

6. *Manomanāyataṃ* - In terms of bases
7. *Manindriyaṃ* - In the sense of the chief who knows the objects
8. *Viññāṇaṃ* - In the sense of knowing objects in particular
9. *Viññāṇakkhandho* - Because it is not one but many
10. *Tajjāmanoviññāṇadhātu* - In the sense that it corresponds to the taken object

According to the functioning of the mind it is named. In the *Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī* sub commentary, there is a thorough and profound analysis of the mind.

*"Vicittakaraṇā cittaṃ, attano cittatāya vā
cittaṃ kammakilesehi cittaṃ tāyati vā tathā,
cinoti attasantānaṃ, vicittārammaṇanti cā" ti*¹¹

1. *Vicittakaraṇā cittaṃ*

All the wonderful things in the world are created by the mind. The mind deserves the credit for creating all the beautiful things in the world that have been created in the past and present and that are being created. *Mahabodhisattva*, while fulfilling the perfection of wisdom, used his mind to create miraculous actions creating automatic doors being as the scholar *Mahōṣadha*. The creator of the creations such as modern design technology, buildings, education methods, artificial rivers, and smart cities that make spectators amused, is the mind. The world's war conflicts are formed and those conflicts are settled based on the mind. The scholar *Mahōṣadha* settled one hundred and one countries without

¹¹ *Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī*, p.16

shedding any blood and ended the war and created peace for the people with his mind. Modern comfortable aeroplanes, ships, mobile phones, computers, etc. are created by the mind of man, not God or Brahma. It must be said that the mind is what creates such vivid things.

2. *Attano cittatāya*

The mind enhances itself. It is diverse. Sometimes, a smiling mind, a crying mind, an angry mind, an eating mind, a sleeping mind, a mind for changing posture, a condemning mind, a mind for contemplating kindness, a learning mind, etc. appear because of the vividness of the mind. There is indeed nothing in the world as vivid as the mind.

3. *Citaṃ kammakilesehi*

Action (*kamma*) and defilements (*kilesa*) are the main causes of the generation of the mind. To make it more comprehensible it is explained as follows. We are born in the human world. At the time of birth in the human world, the first thing that was generated was *paṭisandhi viññāṇa*. It is born not alone but with the five *upādānakkhandha*. The mind, mental concomitants (*cetasikas*) that arise in the mind, and the *rūpa dhamma* that supports the mind, also appear at the same time. The main cause for this is the wholesome deeds done in the previous birth. That wholesome deed is also known as *kamma bhava*. A volition was generated beforehand to perform this meritorious deed. It is called *saṃkhāra*. Before these volitions arose, an unwholesome consciousness emerged. It is an evil mind based on craving. It is the craving to be born in the human world. It was not realised at that time that the human world is a thing that arises and disappears due to the existence of *anitya* (impermanent),

dukkha (suffering), *anatta* (material), *asubha* (inauspicious), *asāra* (unproductive), *nāma* (mentality), *rūpa* (materiality), *panca upādānaskhandha* (five faculties), *dhātu* (roots), *āyatana* (bases), etc. That unawareness is called ignorance or *avijjā*. Because of that, a craving-based consciousness emerged about the human world. Therefore, a volition arose that I should be born in the human world itself. It is called clinging (*upādāna*). Hence ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*tanhā*), and clinging (*upādāna*) arose in the greedy mind. Therefore, it is convinced to do a wholesome deed with the desire to be born in the human world. Sometimes it can be *dāna* (donation), a *sīla*, or any kind of merit. The volition used to do this merit is *saṃkhāra*. Due to that *saṃkhāra*, the merit is fulfilled. This is called *kamma bhava*. According to that, ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*tanhā*), and clinging (*upādāna*) are conditioned in the unwholesome consciousness, and both *saṃkhāra* and *kamma* are also applied to the wholesome consciousness. Accordingly, both action (*kamma*) and defilements (*kilesa*) are analysed here. *Saṃkhāra* and *kamma* are actions (*kamma*), and ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*tanhā*), and clinging (*upādāna*) are defilements (*kilesa*). With the help of these two factors, we are born in the human world.

4. *Citaṃ tāyati*

The five aggregates (*pañcakkandha*) such as material (*rūpa*) are made up of defilements (*kammakleśa*). These faculties are protected by the mind. The purpose of eating, drinking, sitting, sleeping, bathing, protecting, educating, etc., in a proper manner at the proper time, is to maintain the five aggregates (*pañcakkandha*). No work cannot be done to protect the faculties. It is the mind that produces what is required and then consumes it first.

5. *Cinoti attasantānaṃ*

The mind also improves the spirit which is considered as *kandha, dhātu, āyatana, indriya paticcasamuppāda, twenty-four paccaya*, etc. The six senses of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and the mind gather merits and demerits, and the mind acts as the pioneer in that also. The mind is the precursor of wholesome and unwholesome dhamma (*manopubbamaṅgamā dhammā*). The mind rules the world and everyone is under its spell (*cittena nīyatī loko*).

6. *Vicittārammaṇa*

The mind is a unique thing that takes vivid objects. When the eyes are closed, many various objects come to mind. That's why we like to spend time thinking about the past and the future. The mind is constantly tempted to take up objects as material (*rūpa*).¹²

Therefore, the Gautama Buddha said, "*Nāhaṃ bhikkhave, aññaṃ ekadhammampi samanupassāmi yaṃ evaṃ bhāvitam mahato atthāya saṃvattati yathayidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ, bhikkhave, bhāvitam mahato atthāya saṃvattati.*"¹³ That is, "*I do not see any dhamma similar to this mind that brings a great meaning when it is used and multiplied. If one multiplies the uses of the mind, it leads to great meaning.*"

The mind is explored in the context of sensory experiences, such as eye consciousness, and its role in generating wholesome or unwholesome consequences based on the nature of the perceived objects. The mind is also analyzed in terms of its multifaceted characteristics, functions, and various names attributed to it in Abhidhamma.

12 Ariyadhamma, N., (2007), p.3-5

13 *Aṅguttara Nikāya I* (PTS) p.4

Furthermore, the mind is recognized as the creator of the world's wonders, enhancer of its own states, influenced by actions and defilements, and protector of the five aggregates. It plays a pivotal role in shaping one's experiences and governing the world. The mind is acknowledged for its unique ability to take vivid objects, constantly engaging in thoughts about the past and future.

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