

Necessity of The Abhidhamma For The Interpretation of Early Buddhist Discourses

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Abstract

This paper presents an overview about the necessity of the Abhidhamma for interpreting several main teachings found in the early Buddhist discourses. The study is based on the Tipiṭaka and some other information taken from exegetical literatures (Aṭṭhakathā). Several important points found in the early Buddhist discourses are critically analyzed in the light of the Abhidhamma. It is found that certain points referring the two kinds of truths which have not been clearly distinguished in the early discourses, are made clear in the Abhidhamma by introducing the two kinds truths, namely sammutisacca and paramatthasacca. Furthermore, some controversial matters such as the doctrine of puggala promulgated by some Buddhist schools, and the wrong views of eternalists and nihilists which are often stated in the early Buddhist discourses but yet not so much discussed, are successfully refuted in the Abhidhamma. Thus, the present study has highlighted the importance of Abhidhamma in giving a better explanation regarding some important and controversial points found in the early discourses.

Keywords: *Abhidhamma, interpretation, early Buddhist discourses*

Introduction

The Origin of Abhidhamma's Interpretation

The Abhidhammapiṭaka is one of the three collections of Tipiṭaka. The two others are Suttapiṭaka and Vinayapiṭaka. The Abhidhammapiṭaka which literally means as the collection of highly regarded teaching, has its own unique nature. The content of Abhidhamma is highly connected with the most fundamental teachings of the Buddha. Investigating deeper into its content, we can assume that the Abhidhamma can be considered as purely Buddhist philosophy. It deals only with the fundamental teachings of the Buddha. *Abhidhammikas* seem to have extracted the terms or most fundamental teachings of the Buddha and discussed them in detail in these texts. Unlike the Suttapiṭaka or Vinayapiṭaka which contain the prose, name of person, place, etc, the Abhidhammapiṭaka does not contain such things. Due to this reason, the Abhidhammapiṭaka is therefore considered as purely Buddhist philosophy. The most important words like *khandha* (aggregate), *dhātu* (element), *āyātana* (bases), and many other highly significant technical terms and discussions extracted from the early Buddhist discourses are the only discussions found in the Abhidhammapiṭaka.

It should be pointed here that when it is stated as early Buddhist discourses, it refers to discourses of the Buddha and His immediate disciples found specially in the first four *nikāya* and some other texts in the Khuddhakanikāya. The first four *nikāyas* are that of Dīghanikāya, Majjhimanikāya, Saṃyuttanikāya, and Aṅguttaranikāya. They are commonly known as containing the early discourses because they have their resemblances in other texts belonging to other schools. Dīghanikāya has its resemblance in the Dīrghagama, Majjhimanikāya in Madhyamāgama, Saṃyuttanikāya in Saṃyuktāgama, and the Aṅguttaranikāya in Ekottarāgama. Several books in Khuddakanikāya are considered as containing early discourses because some of them are found in other Buddhist traditions. They are Dhammapada, Udāna, Theragāthā, Therīgāthā, Suttanipāta and Itivuttaka.

On investigating the teachings of the Buddha as reflected in the *Tipiṭaka*, it is found that the existing *Tipiṭaka* come into being in a gradual stage. We can divide such process into four stages, namely 1) collecting the discourses, 2) classifying the discourses, 3) the arising of new discourses, and 4) the interpretation. The collection and classification of the discourses of the Buddha are generally known to have taken place for the first time during the First Buddhist Council that happened three months after the Buddha's great passing away. As we know, the Buddha had preached His teachings in various places, in different occasions and to different peoples. Before being collected, His discourses were therefore scattered here and there. Those scattered discourses were thereafter collected by the elders (Thera) during the First Buddhist Council, and classified them in order. Some long discourses were grouped under the long collection known as the Dīghānikāya, the middle length discourses were grouped and known as the Majjhimanikāya, the connected discourses were grouped and named as the Saṃyuttanikāya, some of gradual sayings or discourses are grouped and called as the Aṅguttaranikāya and some other books of minor collections are grouped under the name of Khuddhakanikāya (DA. I, 15). These five collections or *nikāyas* are generally known the Suttapiṭaka. Apart from that, the Buddha's discourses related to the rule and regulation for the Order of monks and nuns were also collected and classified. They were grouped under the Vinayapiṭaka. According to the Cūlavaggapāli of Vinayapiṭaka, the Suttapiṭaka was recited by Venerable Ānanda, while the Vinayapiṭaka recited by Venerable Upali (V. II, 286-287). Most of discourses of the Buddha especially in the Suttapiṭaka are generally being considered by Buddhist scholars as the early discourses of the Buddha. However, it should be noted here that the classification and collection of the discourses of the Buddha took place not only during the First Buddhist Council, but also in the Second Buddhist Council (Sumanapala, 1998:21).

It should be noted that although the discourses of the Buddha had been collected and classified by the elders during the First and Second Buddhist Council, in due time, there arose many controversies with regard to the fundamental teachings of the Buddha especially due to the non

existence of the Buddha. During the time of the Buddha, whenever problem arose within the community of monks or nuns regarding a particular teaching, they will seek the Buddha or His trusted disciples to solve their problems. Such an example can be seen in the Madhupiṇḍika Sutta of the Majjhimanikāya. Nevertheless, after the demise of the Buddha and his immediate disciples, a monk or group of monks began to interpret some teachings of the Buddha according to their own understanding. As a result, various controversies arose among them. Due to this reason, some learned monks tried to collect some important teachings and made new discourses in order to solve the problems. These new discourses were called as *Dharmasūtras*. These particular extracted discourses are devoid of story, metaphor, simile, etc. On seeing the style of their contents, some discourses like Saṅgīti Sutta, Dasuttara Sutta, etc and the contents of Aṅguttaranikāya can be supposed to be *Dharmasūtras* (Sumanapala, 1998:22).

However, it is also to stressed here that with the arising of the extracted discourses, there also arose various interpretations regarding those extracted discourses. Those extracted discourses are discussed and interpreted in detail particularly in the Abhidhammapīṭaka. This is how the interpretation of the early discourses discussed in the Abhidhammapīṭaka texts came into being. When the completion of four stages above mentioned in connection with the teachings, the Tipiṭaka was also completed. The completion of this Theravādin scripture took place probably during the Third Buddhist Council with the Kathavatthu as one of the seven books of Abhidhamma being composed by Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa Thera, the President of the Third Buddhist Council.

The Scope of Abhidhamma's interpretation

At present, the Abhidhammapīṭaka is divided into seven books namely Dhammasaṅgani, Vibhaṅga, Dhātukathā, Puggalapaññatti, Kathāvatthu, Yamaka and Paṭṭhāna. As mentioned earlier, the Abhidhamma is generally considered as purely Buddhist philosophy. Therefore, its content is devoid of story, name of person, place, etc. This text discusses only the fundamental teachings of the Buddha, such as discussions about *khandha* (aggregate), *dhātu* (element), *āyātana* (bases), etc.

Looking into the Abhidhamma texts, we can find that the themes interpreted in these texts do not deviate from the early discourses. Beside that, the topics have actually been first discussed in the early discourses, but they are reinterpreted by Abhidhammikas in more detail. It can be clearly seen in the Vibhaṅga. In this text, there are three stages in discussing some fundamental teachings of Buddha, namely 1) the explanation given in accordance to the early discourses (*suttantabhājanīya*), 2) the explanation given in accordance to the Abhidhamma (*abhidhammabhājanīya*), and 3) the question (*pañhāpuccha*).

In this Vibhaṅga text, a certain important topic is first discussed according to the explanation given in the early discourses. It is then further discussed according to the Abhidhamma's explanation. Thereafter, in this Abhidhammapīṭaka, such topic is elaborated in more detail. The last stage of Vibhaṅga's interpretation deals with various questions which are being connected with its particular topic, such as whether the phenomenon is related to wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*) or happiness (*sukha*) or unhappiness (*dukkha*), etc.

The Vibhaṅga of Abhidhamma consists of 18 chapters (*vibhaṅga*). It is interesting to note that this text has discussed all the fundamental teachings of the Buddha, such as *khandha* (aggregates), *āyātana* (bases), *dhātu* (elements), *catusacca* (four noble truth), *indriya* (faculties), *paticcasamuppāda* (dependent co-origination), *satipaṭṭhāna* (the foundation of mindfulness), *sammappadhāna* (right striving), *iddhipāda* (supernormal power), *bhojjhaṅga* (factors of enlightenment), etc. Considering the content of this text, it clearly shows that Abhidhamma's scope of interpretation is not gong away from the early discourses. Beside that, the interpretation given in the Abhidhamma is highly important in the history of Buddhist philosophy for it has given more information in regard with the fundamental teachings of the Buddha found in the early discourses.

Apart from that, it should be mentioned here that in order to interpret Buddhist terms or discourses, Abhidhammikas had based on the two grounds, namely *āgama* and *yutti* (Sumanapala, 1998:46). *Āgama* represents the early discourses. It means that in introducing new theories, Abhidhammakas always bases on the early discourses. It will not deviate from the early teaching. The topics discussion found in the Abhidhamma texts which contain the most fundamental teachings of the Buddha as mentioned above are a clear fact in this regard. Meanwhile, *yutti* means valid reasoning. In this connection, Abhidhammikas always use a proper logic in interpreting the early discourses. When we investigate the Abhidhamma texts, we find there are many new ideas which are not found in the early discourses. Some new terms which are not found in the early discourses are also sometime inserted in the Abhidhamma texts. However, even though some ideas are not found in the early teachings, in raising these new ideas into the Buddhist philosophy, Abhidhammikas use a proper logic, so that these new interpretations will be acceptable in the field of Buddhist philosophy. In this connection, one of the right examples can clearly be seen in the new inclusion of the term “*hadayavatthu*” or heart-basis. As we already know, according to the early discourses, there are six senses, namely eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. All these six senses have their own objects. Eyes have forms as their objects, ears have sounds, nose has smells, tongue has tastes, body has touch and mind has mind-objects. However, while giving a particular base in each of the first five material senses, the early discourses does not mention anything for the mind-base. This matter had logically become an interesting topic in the later period. Some who strictly followed the early discourses probably did not give any further interpretation and accepted early discourses as they are. Nevertheless, Theravādin Abhidhammikas concluded that there is a mind-base called as heart-basis (*hadayavatthu*). Like that of the five other bases, this mind-base is also material phenomenon. In the Visuddhimagga, venerable Buddhaghosa has explained this heart-basis as follows:

“The heart basis has the characteristic of being the material support for the mind element and for the mind-consciousness-element. Its function is to observe them. It is manifested as the carrying of them. It is to be found in dependence on the blood, of the kind described in the treatise on mindfulness of the body inside the heart. It is assisted by the primaries with their functions of upholding, etc. It is consolidated by temperature, consciousness, and nutriment. It is maintained by life, and serves as physical basis for the mind element and mind-consciousness-element, and for the states associated with them.” (Vism. XIV, 60).

The important of the new inclusion of *hadayavatthu* as one of the sense-bases is that this *hadayavatthu* had been included among the sense-bases due to the fact that all the first five senses have already had their bases. Since the first five senses have their bases, it can be logically accepted that there must be mind-base. Furthermore, since all other five senses have their bases in material phenomena, this mind-base should also be material phenomenon. In this regard, it should be born in the mind here that according to Buddhism mental and material phenomena are always connected to each other. The inclusion of *hadayavatthu* as one of the sense-bases is therefore logically acceptable for it is also material phenomenon. The use of this logical method in introducing new interpretation found in the Abhidhamma texts is what meant as *yutti*.

Furthermore, in the *Nettipakaraṇa-Aṭṭhakathā*, a statement is found that the Theravādin Buddhist commentators had given priority to the *Suttas* (discourses) in determining the meaning of the Buddha’s teachings, and this apparently had been an accepted procedure among them. It is said as follows:

“Here, in this case, these four – *Sutta*, *Suttānuloma*, *Ācariyavāda* and *Attanomati* – should be understood. Here, *Sutta* means the three collections of canonical texts (*tipiṭaka*) which were accepted in three councils. *Suttānuloma* means the four *Mahāpadesas*. *Ācariyavāda* means the commentaries. *Attanomati* refers to the understanding of one’s comprehension and keeping with logical method. Therein, *Sutta* should not be discarded. The four *Mahāpadesas* should be taken in connection with the *Suttas*. *Ācariyavāda* also should be taken only if it

connects with the *Suttas*. *Attanomati* has no place without reference to the *Suttas* because it is the weakest of all” (Sumanapala, 1998:45-46).

Thus, it is clear that the scope of Abhidhamma’s interpretation does not go away from the early discourses. The Theravādin Buddhist commentators had based their interpretations on the early teachings. Even when the new theories are introduced, these should be in concomitant with the early teachings.

The Theory of Two Truths: Sammuti and Paramattha

In order to understand the important of Abhidhamma for the interpretation of early discourses, it is necessary to discuss some main points found in the Abhidhamma itself. One of significant points deals with the theory of two truths, *sammutisacca* and *paramatthasacca*. *Sammuttisacca* means a conventional truth, while *paramatthasacca* is an absolute truth. Conventional truth is the referents of the ordinary conceptual thought (*paññātti*) and conceptual modes of expression (*voḥāra*). They include such entities like living beings, persons, men, women, etc. Since *sammuttisacca* are as a result of conceptual thought, it therefore does not possess the ultimate validity. In contrast, *paramatthasacca* or absolute realities are things that exist by reason of their own intrinsic nature (*sabhāva*). These are the dhammas which are final, irreducible components of existence, the ultimate entities resulted from a correctly performed analysis of experience. In such, the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha mentions there are four ultimate realities, namely consciousness (*citta*), mental factors (*cetasika*), matter (*rūpa*), and *nibbana* (Bodhi, 1999).

It is important to note that although this theory of two truths is not found in the early discourses there are some statements found in the early discourses which have paved the way for the arising of this idea. Generally, the canonical statements of *nibbāna*, *arahanta* or similar states of final liberation which refer to something that apparently cannot be fully explained by means of conventional forms of language have formed the conception of the two truths. There are some statements in the early discourses that form the conception of absolute truth in the Abhidhamma. For example, we can consider the following statement of *nibbāna* found in the Udāna specially in the discourse named Paṭhamanibbānapaṭisaṃyutta Sutta:

“Monks, there exists that condition wherein is neither earth nor water nor fire nor air; wherein is neither the sphere of infinite space nor of infinite consciousness nor of nothingness nor of neither consciousness nor unconsciousness; where there is neither this world nor a world beyond nor both together nor moon and sun. Thence, monks, I declare is no coming to birth; thither is no going from life; therein is no duration; thence is no falling; there is no arising. It is not something fixed; it moves not on, it is not based on anything. That indeed is the end of suffering”.

Furthermore, in the Suttanipata, the Buddha says to Upasiva that when all phenomena are eradicated all designations are also eradicated, which are in Cannon it is stated, “*Sabbesu dhammesu samūhatesu, samūhatā vādapathā pi sabbe ti* (Sn. V, 1076). In the case of *arahanta*, as mentioned in the Saṃyuttanikāya, it is stated that an arahant might still say, ‘I speak’, or might say, ‘They speak to me’. However, since he has eradicated his conceit tendency and attains the final liberation, he uses such terms as mere expressions (S. I, 14-15). Thus, the above examples statements quoted from the early discourses indirectly have paved the way for the formation of the theory of two truths in later Abhidhamma. Sumanapala (1998:58), in his book, ‘An Introduction to Theravāda Abhidhamma’, has identified some discourses which have led for the arising of the two truths, namely:

1. *Saṅkhittā dhammadesanā* (concise sermon) as *paramatthakathā*, while *vitthāradhammadesanā* (detailed sermon) as *sammutikathā*.
2. *Sāmuikkāmsikā dhammadesanā* (exalted sermon) as *paramatthakathā*, while *ānupubbikadhammadesanā* (graduated sermon) as *sammutikathā*.

3. *Nippariyāyadesanā* (non-discursive sermon) as *paramatthakathā*, while *pariyāyadesanā* (discursive sermon) as *sammutikathā*.

The important of this point is that this theory of two truths has facilitated an easy way to understand the early teaching especially in connection with the two kinds of discourses of the Buddha as mentioned in the *Āṅguttaranikāya*, namely discourses which have an indirect meaning (*neyyattha*) and those have a direct meaning (*nītattha*). According to this text, those who do not understand this distinction and explain the discourses in quite the opposite way have misinterpreted the Buddha as it is said as follows:

“Monks, these two misrepresent the *Tathāgata*. What two? He who proclaims as already explained a discourse which needs explanation and he who proclaims as needing explanation a discourse already explained. These are two” (A. I, 54).

The above statement clearly shows that even in the time of the Buddha there are some people who had misunderstood the two kinds of Buddha’s discourses. Hence, the theory of two truths proposed in the *Abhidhamma*, in fact, has given an easy understanding to distinguish these two types of early discourses. In this regard, on commenting the above statement, the Buddhist commentator referred it to the two kinds of truth, as follows:

“When the Buddha says ‘O monks, there is one individual, there are two individuals, there are three individuals, there are four individuals’, this kind of discourse is called ‘*neyyattha*’ or that which needs explanation. Here, although the Buddha speaks of one individual etc, there is no individual in the absolute sense (*paramatthato*). Therefore, the meaning of this kind of discourse is left to be inferred. However, an ignorant person taking this kind of discourse as not needing explanation (*nītattha*) concludes that there is an individual in the absolute sense. The discourses like impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), non-self (*anatta*), etc are explained as *nītattha*. Here just impermanence, suffering, and soullessness are the meanings intended. An ignorant person, however, takes these discourses as needing explanation (*neyyattha*) and interprets them assuming that there is something eternal, something pleasurable and something that is called soul” (AA. II, 118).

Thus, the introduction of the theory of two truths given by the *Abhidhamma* is therefore very necessary for the easy understanding of the early discourses particularly in distinguishing the two kinds of discourses of the Buddha, namely *neyyattha* and *nītattha*.

The Theory of Person (*puggalavāda*)

Another theme that should be addressed here in relation to the important of the *Abhidhamma* is the theory of person or *puggalavāda*. The theory of person was introduced by some Buddhist schools after the Buddhist Order was split into many sects. Some Buddhist schools like *Sammitīya*, *Vātsīputiya*, *Dhammuttarīya*, *Bhadrayānika* and *Channagarika* were the Buddhist schools who held the theory of person (Dutt, 1998:181). According to these schools, there is a person (*puggala*) who wanders from birth to birth during the course of *samsaric* life. These schools, however, stated that the Buddha had admitted the existence of an impermanent soul quite different from the *Upanisadic* conception of eternal soul (Dutt, 1998:184). These schools were therefore accepting the changing soul which wanders from birth to birth. Although this theory is not found in the early discourses, in introducing this new theory, *puggalavādins* had quoted some early discourses in order to support their argument. Accordingly, when the Buddha said there is a person who exerts for his own good (*atthi puggalo attahitāya paṭipanno*), the term ‘*puggalo*’ had been interpreted by *puggalavādins* as not mere conceptual word but a real thing (Dutt, 1998:185). Furthermore, when the Buddha said that a monk while practicing mindfulness remains always aware of what is passing within his body (so *kāye kāyānupassī viharati*, see in the *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta*), the term ‘*so*’ meaning ‘*he*’ had also been interpreted by *puggalavādins* as not mere concept (*prajñāti*), but it referred to actual ‘*puggala*’. One of the famous statements quoted from the early discourses by these *puggalavādins* is a discourse of the

Buddha in the Bhārahāra Sutta. On the basis of this *Sutta*, *puggalavādins* assumed that the Buddha had made a distinction between the *bhāra* (burden) and *hāra* (its carrier), the ‘*puggala*’ carrying the burden which is *pañcakkhandha* or the five aggregates. In this regard, *puggalavādins* had confirmed that there is an actual *puggala* or entity which is separated from *khandhas* (Dutt, 1998:191).

In order to refute the above interpretation given by *puggalavādins* who had based their idea on the early discourses, the interpretation given by Theravāda Abhidhamma plays an important role in this connection. The refutation of this theory of person has been discussed in the *Kathāvatthu*, the fifth book of the Abhidhammapitaka. In this text, Moggalīputtātissa thera as the composer of the text has in many ways refuted the theory of person. As mentioned in the *Kathāvatthu*, *puggalavādins* include statements like “*There is a person who follows his own good*” or “*There is one person who arises in the world and who is intent on the welfare of the many, the happiness of the many with compassion for the world, for the welfare, benefit and happiness of the many*” (Kalupahana, 1994:137). Moggalīputtātissa thera recognizes all of them, but counters with a series of quotations from the early discourses that emphasizes the non-substantiality (*anatta*) and emptiness (*suñña*) of all phenomena. Interestingly, the series begins with the famous statement of the Buddha, “*sabbe dhammā anatta*” which means “*All phenomena are non-substantial*” (Kalupahana, 1994:137). Furthermore, Moggalīputtātissa has raised some similes in refuting the *Puggalavādins*’ point of view, such as pot of ghee (*thela-kumbha*), pot of molasses (*phānita-kumbha*), pot of honey (*madhu-kumbha*), regular meal (*nicca-bhata*), thick broth (*dhuva-yagu*), etc. One of examples taken from these similes is that one can speak of a regular meal (*nicca-bhatta*) instead of permanent meal (also: *nicca-bhatta*) though still utilizing the same terms (Kalupahana, 1994:137-138).

It should be noted here that as discussed earlier, Theravāda Abhidhamma has introduced the theory of two truths in order to distinguish the two kinds of early discourses. The statements of the Buddha like, “*There is one individual, there are two individuals, etc*” are kinds of discourses which need further explanation. According to the Buddhist commentators, although the Buddha speaks of individual, there is no individual in the absolute sense (*paramatthato*). They are just conventional (*sammuti*) languages. Therefore, the theory of *puggala* brought by *Puggalavādins* is unacceptable in the light of Abhidhamma in which its interpretation based on the early discourses. Thus, by this view, the Abhidhamma Theravāda in the same time maintains the early Buddhist theory of non-self (*anatta*).

The Methods of Analysis and Synthesis

In carefully examining the early discourses, the Buddha had utilized the two kinds of methods to reject the eternalistic view (*sassatavāda*) and nihilistic view (*ucchedavāda*). By means of analyzing the world of experience into five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), the Buddha rejects the view of *Sassatavādins* who held the theory of eternal soul that wanders from birth to birth. According to the Buddha, there is no any permanent entity outside or inside the five aggregates. However, if the Buddha only rejected the existence of the soul, he might be considered by his contemporary religious teachers as a nihilist. Nihilists were those did not accept the existence of the soul. Since there was no soul, the rebirth theory was also refused by nihilists. During the time of *upanisads* and other religious teacher contemporary to the Buddha, all religious teachers believed that the rebirth theory could only be accepted when there was a permanent entity which wandered from birth to birth and experienced all happiness and suffering. Although the Buddha rejected the existence of soul, he, in fact, believed in rebirth. In this regard, the Buddha used his theory of *paṭiccasamuppāda* or dependent co-origination to support his theory of rebirth. The theory of dependent co-origination has shown the interconnection of the world of experience which results to the continuation of beings in the cycle of birth and death. The theory of dependent co-origination in connection with the rebirth theory can be clearly seen in the 12 links of dependent co-origination (*dvādasāṅgapaṭiccasamuppāda*). By means of this theory which represents the synthetic method of the Buddha, the Buddha had succeeded to accept the rebirth theory without

falling either to eternalistic view or nihilistic. The synthetic method of the Buddha had become a significant mean to reject the nihilistic view.

Like that of early discourses, the Abhidhamma also has contained the above mentioned two methods in order to reject the two extreme views. In attempt to reject the eternalistic view, the Abhidhamma has analyzed the world of experience into three main factors, namely 1) *Citta* (consciousness) which consists of 89 or 121 in number, 2) *Cetasika* (mental factors) which consists of 52 in number dan 3) *Rūpa* (matters) which consists of 28 in number (See: Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha Chapter I, II and VI).

Citta in the Abhidhamma is equivalent to the *viññānakkhandha* (the aggregate of consciousness) in the early discourses, *cetasika* to the *vedanakkhandha* (the aggregate of feeling), *saññākkhandha* (the aggregate of perception) and *saṅkharakkhandha* (the aggregate of mental dispositions), while *rūpa* is the same as *rūpakkhandha* in the early discourses. After analyzing the world of experience, Abhidhammikas concluded that there is no any permanent entity outside or inside the *citta*, *cetasika* and *rūpa*. In this regard, the soul theory is therefore totally rejected by the Abhidhamma. Apart from that, the Abhidhamma employed the theory of conditional relations (*paccaya*) in attempt to reject the nihilistic view. This theory is the development of the theory of dependent co-origination. The Abhidhamma texts especially in the Paṭṭhāna mentions there are such 24 kinds of conditional relations (*paccaya*) which operate in the continuing process of mental and material elements of existence. They are listed as root condition, object condition, predominance condition, proximity condition, contiguity condition, etc (Sumanapala, 1998:36). Thus, it is clear that the Abhidhamma with its theory of analysis and synthesis has given a great contribution to the early discourses in rejecting the two extreme views, *sassatavāda* and *ucchedavāda*.

Apart from the above-mentioned points, the analysis of the world of experience given by the *Abhidhamma* in fact has contributed a better understanding in other various aspects in the field of Buddhist philosophy. For examples, with the detail analysis of *citta* and *cetasika* into various aspects, we can easily recognize the wholesome consciousnesses or mental factors and their counterfeits; we can know different types of consciousnesses as well as mental factors which lead to different realms of *samsaric* existence; and we can understand the interrelation between *cittas* and *cetasikas*. The interrelation between *cittas* and *cetasikas* can therefore be regarded as the interrelation between feelings, perceptions and mental dispositions which have never been explain in detail manner in the early discourses. Due to all these reasons, it is therefore clear that the Abhidhamma's interpretation of *citta* and *cetasika* has given more light to the Buddhist practitioners while engaging in the cultivation of mind.

As mentioned before, the theory of conditional relations advocated by the Abhidhamma is actually the development of the theory of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Since it is a developed theory, the theory of conditional relations has given a more detail in understanding the theory of dependent co-origination. This fact can be clearly seen in the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, as follows:

“*Tattha tabbhāvabhāvībhāvākāramattopalakkhito paṭiccasamuppādanayo, paṭṭhānanayo pana āhaccapaccayaṭṭhitimārabbha pavuccati*”

Which means:

“The method of dependent co-origination is marked by the simple happening of a state in dependence on some other state. The method of conditional relations is discussed with reference to the specific causal efficacy of the conditions” (Bodhi, 1999:293).

The above-mentioned statement shows that theory of conditional relations has given a more comprehensive explanation regarding the law of dependently arising things. This theory is not only giving a simple happening of state in dependence on some other state, but also giving reference to the specific causal efficacy of the conditions. In the commentary to the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, the difference between the theory of dependent co-origination and the theory of conditional relations has also been clearly confirmed. Here it is said that in contrast to the method of dependent co-origination

which deals only with the conditioning states and conditioned states and the structure of their arising, the method of the conditional relations has also dealt with the conditioning forces (*paccayasatti*). It is said that a force (*satti*) is that which has the power to bring about or accomplish an effect. Just as the hotness of chili is inherent in the chili and cannot exist without them, so too, the conditioning forces are inherent in the conditioning states and cannot exist without them. All conditioning states have their particular force, and this force enables them to cause the arising of the conditioned states (Bodhi, 1999:295-296). This point has also been mentioned in the *Visuddhimagga*. In this book, after explaining the dependent co-origination regarding the “*avijja paccaya saṅkhara*” (ignorance is a condition for formations), Venerable Buddhaghosa, the author of the book, says that in order to know fully for which formations and in which way it is a condition, the twenty-four conditional relations (*paccaya*) have provided the answer (Ñānamoli, 1999:542). Here, Venerable Buddhaghosa has explained in detail how the ignorance (*avijja*) has become a condition for the arising of formations (*saṅkhārā*) according to the twenty-four conditional relations (Ñānamoli, 1999:542-552). Thus, the interpretation of Abhidhamma of the theory of conditional relations has given a detail understanding in the study of the early Buddhist theory of dependent co-origination.

Conclusion

The explanation discussed above has shown us a clear fact regarding the importance of Abhidhamma for the interpretation of early discourses. Various new ideas were advocated by the Abhidhamma to give more comprehensive understanding regarding several points which are not being clearly discussed in the early discourses. With the theory of two truths, *sammutisacca* and *paramatthasacca*, for instance, the Abhidhamma has successfully given a more light to some statements of the Buddha which referring to the dichotomy of conventional truth from the ultimate truth such as about *nibbāna* or the condition of *arahanta*, yet not being discussed clearly in the early discourses. Meanwhile, the word *puggala* which is commonly found in many early discourses of the Buddha that had been claimed by Puggalavādins to be a real entity, is successfully rejected by the teaching of Abhidhamma as found in the *Kathavatthu*, a book composed by Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa Thera. The theory of *sammutisacca* and *paramatthasacca* is also utilized by the Abhidhamma to oppose this theory of *puggala*. Furthermore, the analysis and synthesis theory which have not been emphatically stressed in the early discourses, are given in more detail in the Abhidhamma. The analysis of *citta*, *cetasika* and *rūpa* and their synthetical or interrelated nature through the explanation of *paccaya*, are introduced to reject the eternalistic view (*sassatavāda*) as well as the nihilistic (*ucchedavāda*). In fact, the analysis and synthesis theory of the Abhidhamma give us a better understanding with regard to five *khandhas* and their relationship which are not yet been explained in comprehensive manner in the early discourses.

It should be noted here that even though the *Abhidhamma* introduces some new ideas that have never been found in the early discourses, in introducing such new ideas the *Abhidhamma* bases its idea on the two grounds namely *āgama* and *yutti*. *Abhidhammikas* based their interpretation on the early discourses (*āgama*), and introducing new ideas after being logically reasoned (*yutti*). Hence, *Abhidhamma*'s interpretation is therefore always based on the early discourses. This is in concomitant with the statement found in the *Nettipakaraṇa Atthakathā* saying that in commenting the word of the Buddha the four procedures should be taken into consideration. The commentator should first bases on the *Sutta* (early discourses), then *Suttānuloma*, *Ācariyavāda* and *Attanomati*.

Abbreviation

- A *Aṅguttaranikāya*
- AA *Aṅguttaranikāya Atthakathā*
- DA *Dīghānikāya Atthakathā*
- S *Saṃyuttanikāya*

- Sn *Suttanipata*
- V *Vinayapiṭaka*
- Vism *Visuddhimagga*

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