A Study of Philosophical and Psychological Importance of the Analysis of Citta, Cetasika and Rupa in the Theravada Abhidhamma

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Introduction

Abhidhamma is summarised into two: Nama (Citta & Cetasika) and Rupa (matter). According to Buddhist view, Rupa or matter is larger than Nama. “Kumbhupamam kayamimam viditva, nagarupamam cittamidam thapetva, yodetha maram pannavudena, jitmva rakkhe anivesano siya” understanding of this body is to be a clay pot, having protected this mind is like a city, which has long history and both good and bad (mind can develop from undeveloped stage to developed stage), fight the Mara with the weapon of wisdom, protect what is won there, should not to be changed”. And the Buddha also gave an example regarding Nama and Rupa as bamboo, which is propped or bind up together that is they are inter-dependence. No one can exist without the others.

When we focus on the Philosophy in Western context we can see that Ethics, Aesthetics, Epistemology, Metaphysics and Logic (method of thinking) are basically concerned. Similarly in Abhidhamma, we can see such as Buddhist Ethics, Epistemology, Metaphysics and Logic but not Aesthetics.

According to psychology, in Western viewpoint, they considered mind mainly by product of matter. Therefore, any discussion on psychology in Western way has several aspects or characteristics, which can be differentiated from Buddhist psychoanalysis. They are:

1. Basically theoretical
2. Scientific and critical
3. Philosophy
4. Its objective than being subjective

According to Buddhist psycho-analysis, which differentiates from Western psychoanalysis are:

1. Practical,
2. Ethics for religious,
3. Subjective,
4. It aims at attaining a goal in this life itself.

In order to have understanding Buddhist psycho-analysis, through its theory development, within the Theravada tradition view, can be seen three strata or levels. They are:

1. Psycho-analysis in discourses (the Buddha own words)
2. Psycho-analysis in Abhidhamma texts (Scholastic words)
3. Psycho-analysis of commentators
Analysis of Mind in Discourses

There are number of terms used in early discourses to name different facets of human thinking. Some of them are:

1. Aggregate (Khandha)
2. Elements (Dhatu)
3. Bases (Ayatana)
4. Dhamma (thought)
5. Limbs of enlightenment (Bodhipakkhiya)
6. Faculty (Indariya)
7. Power (Bala)

These all are good or skilful sight of mentality.

And there are also other terms for using unskilful thought. Some of them are:

1. Nivarana- hindrance
2. Samyojana-fetter
3. Mula-root
4. Kelesa- defilement

The main purpose of analysis of mind in the discourses by the Buddha is to develop spirituality of human beings. Therefore he teaches or advises the basic underling that “Sacittapariyo dapanam-disciplining one’s mind completely”. The Vathupama Sutta of M.N (the simile on the cloth) states about the explanation of how one develops the mindful of defilement to a state of spiritual development, which makes our mind free from defilement.

Analysis of Mind in Abhidhamma texts

What is observed in the Abhidhamma texts are different aspects of thought process identified with more information than discourses. In this we can find the classification of Citta and Cetasika. For the first time, in these different terms occurred in the text called Patisampitamagga one of the Khuddaka texts, which shares most of the characteristic of Abhidhamma. In all the texts of Abhidhamma pitaka there is analysis of mind in different aspects and they have kept room clearly for its further development. This is evidence at the end of each group of analysis. There is “Peyala-meaning the Pali term uses for the word etc or so on occurring.

Analysis of Mind in Abhidhamma commentary

The third level of development in the Theravada analysis of mind can be seen in three commentaries of Ven. Buddhaghosa, which he composed on (7) Abhidhamma texts. What is due to commentaries are explanations, illustration and example, growing from different sources to establish all the facts of thinking and thoughts.

By the way, Abhidhamma commentary used ten reasons for getting angry. They are:

1. Unhappy
2. Thinking that he is doing something bad for me
3. Thinking that one may do something ill for me
4. Thinking so and so someone did something bad to my beloved one
5. So and so is doing something bad to my beloved one
6. So and so may do some harm to my beloved one
7. So and so was friendly with my enemy
8. So and so is friendly with my enemy
9. So and so may be friendly with my enemy
10. Get anger with inanimate things

From the ongoing observation what becomes clearly is the pragmatic attitude adopted in Buddhist psycho-analysis. Buddhist texts in old levels define and classify human thinking for the sole purpose of understanding one’s own mind clearly. It does not lead to mere philosophical knowledge but it aims at spiritual advancement or the purification and the development of mind.

Buddhism does not recognises a physic faculties a part from thinking. Thinking itself the mind according to definition given. The purpose of classification consciousness and its concomitants into a number of factors was to make it easy to be understood by everybody who begins the practice. In other word, a subject of highly philosophical interest has been brought into simple discussion and explanation considering it to be a valuable instrument for overcoming the floods of defilements.

Among the numerous evidences scatter in the basket of discourses, Vatthupama Sutt of M.N furnishes us with the most enlightening example to realise the nature of Buddhist psychological development.

According to the Sutta human mind has the nature of used cloths. For dye it a new you need to clean it well to make the dying process easier once the old dirty was away. The cloth will absorb new dye and turn to be a new piece of cloth. The average mind does get defined it by the advent of defilement if the individual does not attempt to clear the collected heap of spoiled thought can lead the person to a state of lost. Therefore one who understands the function and the nature of mind interferes the own thought process to control ill thoughts and develop skilful thought of blessing. It is for this purpose and analysis of mind can be seen in Buddhist texts.

Philosophical Significance of Abhidhamma

Among the early discourses of the Buddha there are no discourses, which cover the entire philosophy of the Buddha. And even the discourses were preached according to different intellectual capacity of the listeners. Therefore early discourses are valid in their significances and sizes. For the realization of Nibbana the Buddha preached such as Gata, Discourse, and Discourses. The ones who understood the truth, through one stanza or Gatha of the Buddha are Sariputta, Bahiya Daruciriya etc. After the first Buddhist
Council when Abhidhamma began to emerge for the first time attempts were made to organise the Buddha teachings in the form of philosophy.

Abhidhamma philosophy (or the main teachings of Abhidhamma) consists of seven aspects they are:

1. Citta- consciousness
2. Cetasika- mental concomitants discuss about the personality
3. Rupa- form or matter
4. Nibbana- liberation
5. Pannatti- methods of the use of language
6. Paccayakaranaya- theory of causality
7. Bhavanga- mental culture

By developing causality in Paccayakaranaya they used the method of simple synthesis to show the continuity of elements. Then in their explanation of this process there came some questions to answer whatever arose and they added some new concepts to solve the issues arose when they analysed the process of continuity of doctrine.

In order to explain the continuity, some of the new concepts with its examples are given. It is seen that according to Buddhism the existence of beings are analysed according to their spiritual advance such as Human being, Naraka-hell, Tiracchana, Peta-hungry ghost, Asura, 6-heavens, and Brahama world (which divided into two: Rupa-only matter and Arupa-mind only. Regarding these Abhidhamma introduces, in their explanation of matter or mind, Jividindriya-life principle, which belongs to all beings, and Rupa-jividindriya-life principle.

It is also said that thoughts are born depending on two objects: Indriya and Dhamma. And through these one gains eye-consciousness, which is born in form and being related to the eye (Cakkhun paticca rupe uppajjati cakkhuvinnanam). If the mind-consciousness is born with related to some object that is the physical basis of mind-consciousness (Yam rupam nissaya dhamma uppajjati mano vinnanam tam rupam………).

Conclusion

Abhidhamma attempts to explain unexplained topics in early discourses e.g Nibbana, there are ten points, which Buddha did not explain. It does not mean that Buddha did not know and did not give the answers. It is seen that these are many occasions, which Buddha explained to some of these questions. In the Ratana Sutta the Buddha said that “Nibbanti dhira yathayam padipo-just as this lamp (is blown out) the wise ones become passionless). The lamp exists due to two reasons: wick and oil. When these two things come to an end the flame disappeared. In the same way when Tanha and Mana come to an end the individual comes to an end. Then the Buddha said that when the lamp extinguish we couldn’t see or say whether the flame or light has gone to South or North etc. therefore the Buddha did not answer whether the Tathagata exists after death or not.