THE ELEMENTS OF EARLY BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY

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This publication has grown out of a lecture that I delivered in the R. V. Teachers' Training College, Bangalore, sometime ago. I have been working on this problem for some years now, and have collected sufficient material to justify a much larger volume. But there was no reason to withold this little account from the interested students till the intended volume comes out. I am indebted to my venerable teachers, the Ceylonese Theras, *Nārada and Soma, of the Vajirārāma monastery in Colombo for stimulating my interest in this subject.*

S. K. R.

ELEMENTS OF EARLY BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY

Being atheistic and ethical, Buddhism is naturally psychological in its approach: its centre of interest is man—his constitution, his functions and nature. The teachings of Gotama Buddha as preserved in the Pāḷi Canon frequently refer to psychological problems; and the seeds contained in these references later grew into an elaborate system styled as *Abhidhamma*. The word signifies 'distinction in the doctrine', 'expansion or exposition of the doctrine'. The books of this system, included in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, are doubtless later than the Buddha, but they echo to a large extent his ideas and arguments. In the tradition set by the more recent scholiasts and expositors, Indian and Sinhalese, have come numerous excellent tracts such as Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* and Anuruddha's *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, which are celebrated for their psychological contributions. The tradition has lived to this day, especially in Burma, where lived quite recently an eminent Abhidhamma master, U Nyāṇa, better known as Ledi Sayadaw. The body of thought that has thus gradually and continuously grown is at once orthodox and ever fresh. And in the following pages will be found the framework, in broad outlines

of this great tradition.

Analysis of Man

Analysis is the major method employed in Abhidhamma, and man has here been analysed into two aspects: physical and psychological. The Indian expression for the former is *rūpa* and for the latter *nāma*. The first word signifies 'subjection to modification'—it is in man the material body, aggregate and outcome of the elements. The other word connotes etymologically 'inclination towards objects'—it is whatever in man is besides the body, roughly what we now understand by 'mind'. The two aspects completely comprehend man, and the notion of an enduring individuality is conventional. Man is not a product but a process, a becoming (*bhavo*), like a flame, like a river. But in this continuous flux of material and mental processes there is a certain constancy of relations which generates the conception of an ego (*attabhāva*), the foundation for the feeling of identity in every individual. This is the locus of one's personality: it is little more than the coefficient, conventional though, of an interrelated succession (*santati*) of the physical and psychological phenomena.

The early analysis of man into *rūpa* and *nāma* underwent an elaboration soon: the latter was further analysed into four aspects, known in Pāli as *Vedanā, Saññā, Saṁkhāra and Viññāṇa*. We will examine each of them later. These four aspects together with *rūpa*

(that is, the material body) are described as *khandas*, which term comprehends the senses of aggregation, emergence and integration. The very birth of an individual is defined in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* as the appearance of the khandas, and death as their breaking-up. The khandas are the component parts of man's personality—each of them is a complex of similar processes grouped together. The operation of the khandas bring into being a subjective field in every individual (*ajjhittikāyatana*), which has six openings, *viz.*, the apparatus of vision, of audition, of olfaction, of gustation, of kinesthesis and of mentation. Correspondingly there is the objective field (*bahirāyatana*), outside the individual, in the environment; and this consists of six categories, *viz.*, form, sound, smell, taste, touch and thoughts. When the attachment is instituted between the objective and the subjective fields, there is the 'grasping' (*upādāna*) which transforms the component parts of personality into interdependent, active aspects. The Buddha likens man to a fire, which not only consumes the fuel but ignites the combustible objects in contact with it; the heat that is generated in fire is comparable to consciousness in man.

The Physical Body

The gross visible physical body, on analysis and investigation, turns out to be a mere constellation of forces and qualities. The forces are the continuous

vibration of four essential elements of existence, symbolised by Earth (extension, substantiality, tangibility), Water (cohesion, yielding), Heat (energy, change, maturation) and Air (movement, scattering). These are accompanied by four qualities which are the basic principles of phenomena, namely, colour (form), taste, smell and nutrition. Constituted by these units and their modifications there come to be the secondary or derived or grossly material forms: on the subjective side, eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and heart (*hadaya-vatthu*, the so-called seat of mind); on the objective side the corresponding sense-objects; and various other material properties such as sex, vitality, nutritive food, softness, lightness, pliability. It is interesting to note that in the list of secondary forms are included the two modes of communication, speech and gesture. The body with its sense- organs belongs to the group of *rūpa*: it is nourished by the intake and assimilation of food (*āhāra*), which is a secondary form. This is but one factor of personality. In a dialogue between Sāriputta and Mahākoṭṭhita in *Majjhima Nikāya*, the five organs are said to depend upon the life-function (*jīvitindriya*), and this upon heat in the body (*usmā*). It is this heat in the body that differentiates the dead from the living. It links up the *rūpa* with the *nāma* aspect.

The Mind

The aspect of *nāma* cannot be directly observed,

but its presence can easily be inferred. Introspection is an evidence. It is called *nāma* because it can only be conceived in ideas and expressed in words. This is the psychological counterpart of the physical body, and is tantamount roughly to what in modern psychology we are acquainted with as mind. But the Buddhist thinkers make a distinction between mind (or consciousness, *citta*) and mental states (*cetasika*); and the term *nāma* comprehends both.

The Pāli word for mind is *citta*, which has the sense of 'thought'; it is defined as 'thinking about an object' (*ārammaṇaṁ cintetī ti*). The other equivalent expressions are *viññāṇa*, which has the sense of consciousness, and the familiar *mano*. Along with the life-function and heat in the body, this factor is basic and most essential in the living man. It is marked by the character of being aware of something; it is the faculty of receiving information and impression concerning an object. Owing to this fundamental principle, the individual is put in relation with the environment, the subject (*ārammaṇika*) is related with the object (*ārammaṇa*); the ground for experience and action is prepared. An act of awareness is momentary and fleeting, but when several acts occur in succession there springs up the semblance of continuity, of solidity in the experience, of endurance for a while. This is described as 'the body of consciousness' (*viññāṇakāya*): and in accordance with its location or origin it is of six types. When consciousness arises at

the sense-door of eye, consequent on the reception of form or colour of a visible object, it is visual consciousness (*cakkhuviññāṇa*). Similarly we have auditory, olfactory, gustatory, cutaneous and mental types of consciousness. The last type has its locus in the so-called 'seat of mind' (*hadayavatthu*) and its objects are thoughts. For consciousness to occur there must be four essentials: the sense-object, the sense-organ, proper conditions and attention.

SENSE ORGAN	+ SENSE OBJECT	+ CONDITION		= CONSCIOUSNESS
Eye	Form	Light	Attention	Visual C.
Ear	Sound	Space	Attention	Auditory C.
Nose	Smell	Air	Attention	Olfactory C.
Tongue	Taste	Wetness of Tongue	Attention	Gustatory C.
Body	Touch	Tangibility	Attention	Cutaneous C.
Mind-seat	Thoughts	Psychological Continuum	Attention	Mental C.

The Mental States

Simultaneous with the arousal of consciousness arise also the mental states or rather the mental concomitants (*cetasikā*). The celebrated Burmese Scholar Aung has aptly described the relation between *citta* and *cetasika* as that between "shell and contents of a sphere." Consciousness cannot occur or exist independent of the concomitants. According to Anuruddha's enumeration there are seven concomitants which are indispensable to any consciousness; they are

styled as 'universal concomitants'. They are, contact (*phassa*), impression (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), concentration (*ek'aggatā*), attention (*manasikāra*) and life-function (*jīvitindriya*). There are six 'particular concomitants' such as effort, interest, and decision which arise on occasions.

Of the 'universal concomitants' there are singled out as component aspects of man's personality (*khandas*), *Vedanā, Saññā* and *cetanā* (or *saṁkhāra*). *Vedanā* is the psychological counterpart of the physical sensation: it is the preliminary *experience* of an object immediately subsequent to sense-stimulation, the subjective impression of an objective presentation. It is occasioned by contact between the individual and the external environment, contact between an organ and the object, such as, for instance, between eye and the form, ear and the sound. This mental state is not exhausted by sensory apprehension: it includes all receptive experience, ideational as well as emotional. Thus, the *impression* of an objective presentation starts with the subject's becoming aware of a sense-stimulation, but soon results in evaluating the agreeability of the same. Accordingly we have a hedonistic classification of *vedanā* into pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent. The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* points out that in the pleasant impressions there is an element of attachment, in the unpleasant impressions an element of aversion, and in the indifferent an element of ignorance.

Saññā operates at a higher level. It is the perception of objects in regard to their details: but this perception is not confined to the sensory realm, it extends to the ideational as well, provided that the ideational has originally been occasioned by the sensory. Mrs. Rhys Davids has discovered in the *Vibhaṅga* an interesting classification of *saññā*: the perception of resistance (*paṭighasaññā*) and the ideation by naming (*adhivacanasaññā*). The former springs into being when the mind is aware of the impact of impressions coming from the external objects. Buddhaghosa explains that the mind here regards the objects as external, as different from itself. Vasubandhu remarks that in perception we grasp the differences of characteristics. When thus the impressions are perceived, they are assimilated into a meaningful concept, which acquires definition by a *name*. An idea cannot emerge, nor can it endure, unless it is accompanied by a verbal label, descriptive or symbolic. "Its procedure is likened to the carpenter's recognition of certain kinds of wood by the mark he has made on each; to the treasurer's specifying certain articles of jewelry by the ticket on each."

The third universal mental state is *cetanā*, otherwise known as *saṁkhāra*. The first word signifies the work of mind (*cetayita*): it co-ordinates (*abhisandahati*) the various mental states, and decides upon action. The second word is wider in connotation: as a component part of the individual, it comprehends all the

mental states, excepting the two dealt with above (*vedanā* and *saññā*), and with *cetanā* as the foremost. *Saṁkhāra* etymologically means composition, synthesis, production. Oldenberg suggests the German rendering *Gestaltungen*: it is the integrating principle which organises the other component parts of the individual such as *rūpa* and *vedanā*. The Scholars see in this term 'the class of dispositions, capacities and all that goes under what we call character'. Important is the consideration that this is essentially activity, effort, and, as such, to describe it as the motor element in consciousness is not without justification. It gives direction to action, overt or covert. There is a celebrated statement ascribed to the Buddha which identifies volition with action: *Cetanā'haṁ, bhikkhave, kammaṁ vadāmi.*

This then is the composition of one's personality: five compounds of mental and physical phenomena, organised so as to function as a unit. The foundation of this organisation is the life-function (*jīvitindriya*), which comes into operation at the moment of conception and ceases at the moment of death: it is a controlling faculty (*indriya*). According to a forceful simile, even as lotus flowers are sustained by water, the mental and physical processes are sustained by this life-function. There is, however, no enduring entity or principle such as the self (*ātman*), although, as was indicated earlier, the ego (*attabhāva*) obtains.

The Bhavaṅga

The tripod on which the living person rests consists of life-function, heat (*usmā*) and Mind or consciousness (*citta*). The three arise and cease simultaneously. While the first two may be said more or less to be continuous during one's life-time, it is difficult to explain the continuity of the third, for it is a fleeting succession of discrete states. In order to account for this without reference to Soul or Self, the Abhidhamma thinkers postulated the concept of *Bhavaṅga*. The concept is not contemporaneous with the Buddha or his immediate disciples. We meet with the expression for the first time in the non-canonical *Miḷindapañho*, where it is employed to explain the continuity of consciousness during deep sleep. Since then the word is in great vogue among the Abhidhamma philosophers.

The exact etymology of the word is obscure. Of the numerous scholarly conjectures, the most reasonable seems to be the orthodox one, *viz.*, *bhavassa aṅga*, the factor of existence, or, the indispensable condition of individuality. The Sinhalese scholiast, Sumaṅgala, explains that it is owing to this cause or factor that one regards himself subjectively as continuous. That it is a variety of consciousness is evident from the association of the term *citta* along with it. But it is not the ordinary consciousness of our waking life, for it is described as 'process-freed' (*vīthimutta*), that is

to say, it is not related to the external objective world.

It is said to function in deep sleep, and as such it is only in a restricted sense that it can be described as 'consciousness': it might more be in the nature of a physiological condition. P. Vajirañāṇa Mahāthera views it as a passive state, the original condition of mental faculty. The idea becomes clearer when this *bhavaṅga* is looked upon as a stream (*sota*), flowing in an unceasing continuity, during the life-span of an individual; it is a state of consciousness that we find in a new-born babe, coming into operation at the moment of birth (*paṭisandhi*, relinking), linking up the individual with the previous existence. Perhaps it approximates to the modern conception of life-continuum.

The *bhavaṅga* continues in a state of passivity so long as it is not disturbed by any stimulation—sensory or mental: the flow will be smooth and even, below the threshold of awareness, so to say, *sub*consciously or *sub*liminally. When, however, there occurs a sense stimulation by an external agency or there is an idea occurring to mind by memory or imagination, the state is no longer passive, the stream gets disturbed, and the consciousness now active (*pavatti*) assumes an appropriate 'avenue' (*vīthi*), a definite process in connection with the physical body. When sensations disturb the *bhavaṅga*, the diverted consciousness is termed 'the avenue of five sense-doors' (*pañcadvāravīthi*) or sensory consciousness; and when thoughts arise to

disturb the flow of *bhavaṅga*, we get 'the avenue of the mental door' (*manodvāravīthi*) or representational consciousness.

There is a metaphysical point made in regard to consciousness and its processes. The *bhavaṅga* is inherited by the new-born individual as determined by the conditions and effects created by the individual during his previous existence. And the process is conditioned by the present experiences, which go to form the peculiar consciousness of an individual at the moment of death (*cuti*, falling away). It is this peculiar consciousness that is passed on to the new individual through the moment of birth. Thus *bhavaṅga* is the principle not only of the identity of an individual throughout life, but of the continuity of individuality through successive lives as well.

Perception

The transition of consciousness into processes is what is meant by perception: the mind adverts to the external objects, the individual becomes the subject of the flux of objective phenomena. The various stages in this transition are best illustrated in the classical texts by the 'mango simile' (*aṁbopama*).

A man with his head covered is asleep at the foot of a fruiting mango tree. A ripe mango dismembers itself from the stalk and falls to the ground grazing the man's ears. The man wakes up, uncovers his head, opens his eyes, sights the mango, stretches his hand

to get at it, holds it, examines the mango in regard to its eatability, decides to eat it, eats it and goes to sleep again, covering his head.

The sleeping man represents the even, undisturbed flow of the *bhavaṅga* consciousness; there is no awareness of the surroundings. The mango's fall is the occasion of sensory stimulus. Its grazing the man's ear is disturbing the *bhavaṅga* (*calana*), whereupon the man wakes up, or, the flow of *bhavaṅga* is interrupted (*upaccheda*). As soon as the man wakes up there is adverting (*āvajjana*), that is to say, the opening of the mind-door or the sense-doors. The *bhavaṅga* is no longer passive, a conscious process has started. The man's opening his eyes is the visual sensation (*dassana*) whereby the individual is aware of the presence of an external visible object. The man stretching out his arm to grasp the mango is the 'reciptient consciousness' (*saṁpaṭicchana*); the sense-impression now acquires clarity and definition. The examination of the mango in regard to its eatability is the 'momentary investigation' (*santīraṇa*). As a result of this arises the determination of the nature of the object (*voṭṭhapana*)—in the simile, the decision to eat the mango. At this stage, action is ready to begin. There is 'apperception' (*javana*) or full perception, as a result of which the object obtains complete mental attention: the actual eating of the mango, masticating it, mixing it with saliva and so on. Finally the last morsel of the mango being swallowed represents the

'registration' (*tadārammaṇa*), the integration of the new percept in a meaningful context. After this, the man's going to sleep again is the resumption of the passive *bhavaṅga* flow, which till now was interrupted or cut off.

This in short is the process of perception as explained by the early Buddhists. They have another interesting speculation. Perception as described above is said to occupy seventeen thought-moments (*cittakkhaṅa*): each thought-moment being the duration between a billionth and two billionth part of the time taken to wink an eye or snap a finger. This calculation is due to the Ven. Ledi Sayadaw; and regardless of the accuracy of this calculation, thought-moment is the unit of temporal measurement in the ever-changing flux of mental phenomena. Each thought-moment has three aspects or instants—arousal, endurance and cessation. The seventeen thought-moments occupy the process of perception in the following way:

Stage I – PREPARATORY
Thought-moments 1-3 – Interruption of *bhavaṅga* by object-presentation.

Stage II – OPERATIVE
Thought-moment 4 – Adverting
do 5 – Visual sensation
do 6 – Reception
do 7 – Momentary investigation
do 8 – Determination

Stage III – ACTIVE
Thought-moments 9-15 – Apperception

Stage IV – RESULTANT
Thought-moments 16-17– Registration

Resumption of *Bhavaṅga* unless disturbed again by object presentation.

The concept of *bhavaṅga* is peculiar to the Abhidhamma psychology and it is difficult to find its parallel in other systems of thought, eastern or western. While it offers a simple and almost satisfactory explanation to all conscious processes, it also emphasises the dynamic approach. It is a prop to support the fundamental ideas of Buddhist metaphysics—the idea of impermanence (*anicca*), of unsubstantiality (*anattā*) and of the consequent unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*). It would therefore be interesting to inquire into the evolution of the *bhavaṅga* conception in the Abhidhamma school, and to unearth its possible ancestral ideas in the Upaniṣads and in the Sāṁkhya system. The study may even assist modern psychology to unravel some of its own tangles.

The planes of Consciousness

Consciousness, in the Abhidhamma system, is simply defined as the relation between the subject and the object, between the ego and the external world. The Pāli word *Citta* signifies the awareness of an object, not any specific mental activity. It is ordinarily undirected, driven involuntarily by the internal urges such as instincts or by external impressions such as sensations: this is described as ordinary or mundane

(*lokiya*). But the Abhidhamma recognises the possibility of directing it towards a chosen goal, by deliberation, training and wisdom: such directed consciousness is no longer subject to urges or impressions, and is therefore described as extraordinary or supra-mundane (*lokuttara*). This is cultivated, while the former is natural.

Consciousness functions on three planes (*bhūmi*) or spheres of experience. In our everyday life we are frequently aware of the external physical objects as perceived through the sense-avenues. These sensory presentations retain objectivity in relation to the subjective ego. And for the Abhidhamma thinker sensory is also sensuous: the sense-perceptions are never entirely devoid of the fundamental organismic impulse of desire or craving, and it is therefore that consciousness functioning on this plane is described as 'dwelling in the domain of sensuous objects' (*kāmāvacara bhūmi*). Experience here is underlined by the notion of 'I' of ego; and, as such, it is not improper to style it as 'ego-involved consciousness'. As distinct from this, there is the plane of pure forms which are presented to the consciousness (*rūpāvacarabhūmi*)—objects here do possess identifiable form, but they are abstract and are free from both ego-involvement and sense-desires. A scholiast explains that in this plane consciousness is aware of the "subtle residua of matter," that do not correspond to sense-objects—consciousness intuitively contemplates upon pure

forms. The third plane is termed the sphere of formless objects (*arūpāvacarabhūmi*) which the consciousness is aware of in exceptional conditions. Objective presentation here has neither form nor desires; there are not even the delimiting factors, nor any ego involvement; it is purely mental. Here we have perceptions of the infinity of space, of consciousness, of nothingness.

This indeed is one of the most difficult, if also somewhat obscure, topics of Buddhist psychology. The major cause of the difficulty lies in that the issue is a highly practical one, and the accounts of the planes of consciousness depend, for exposition as well as evidence, upon personal experiences of the aspirants (*yogāvacara*). The subject is complicated, perhaps inevitably, by the introduction of the problem of trance-states (*jhāna*). But it is certain that a wealth of interesting psychological knowledge on this and related subjects is available in the classical Pāli books; what is needed is a competent mind to discover the wealth and to assess its value.

Practical Psychology

Abhidhamma recognizing the possibility of directing and controlling the mind, sets out to expound the method whereby this can be achieved. In this method there is a systematic development of higher mental faculties, so that the individual is freed from the mundane bonds of lowly life and starts walking through

the stages of sanctity. This is designated as 'mental culture' (*bhāvanā*). Generally two types thereof are mentioned—the culture that tends to tranquillise the mind (*samatha*), and the culture that leads to the insightful understanding of things as they are (*vipassanā*). The former is of course the indispensable precondition of the latter, and is said to be perfected by meditational exercises, known as *kammaṭṭhāna*. This Pāli expression means the work-place, and work here stands for mental direction and development which result in states of intent absorption (*jhāna*), which in turn bring about great quiet.

These exercises intended for mental purification are forty in number, and they are explained in detail in *Visuddhimagga*, a celebrated philosophical work by the fourth century South Indian monk, Buddhaghosa. Of them the most interesting is the meditation on the respiratory process, *ānāpānasati*, where the individual introspects in a special way and learns to erase the angularities of his mind: consciousness is concentrated on in-breathing and out-breathing, in stages, until the trance-like state of absorption is attained. It is recognized that any meditational exercise will not suit every one; the practice will be fruitful only when the constitution of the individual favours it and does not offer resistance. So the aspirant is expected to approach a teacher of attainments and insight, and receive from him the particular exercise likely to be most effective; in suggesting it, the teacher

(described as 'the beneficent friend', *kalyāṇamitta*) must study closely the temperament, the inclinations, the heredity, vocation and experience of the student in order to select the most appropriate exercise. The classical manuals insist that the teacher should watch the aspirant's actions and movements, likes and dislikes, ways of eating and observing, and so on.

This need for selection among the available meditational exercises has engendered a quaint classification of individuals. There is, in *Visuddhimagga*, a classification into six recognizable types: (1) the emotional type (*rāgacarita*), characterised by discontent, passion, ambition, pride, etc.: (2) the pugnacious type (*dosa*^{0}) known by anger, envy, prejudice and so on; (3) the ignorant type (*moha*^{0}), characterised by sloth, doubt, obstinacy, etc.; (4) the credulous type (*saddhā*^{0}), comprehending people who are charitable, religious, good, pleasant and simple; (5) the intelligent type (*buddhi*^{0}) characterised by friendliness, understanding, activety, alertness, etc., and (6) the discursive type (*vitakka*^{0}), composed of persons who are amiable and social but unsteady and infirm. It is refreshing to note that Buddhaghosa intends this to be rather a general scheme, admitting of further and nicer classifications.

The dominant note in the first type is attachment, which must be minimised by the practice of developing an insight into the foul nature and impermanence of all phenomena. The second type is marked by

aversion, which must be brought under control by practices such as *mettābhāvanā* (development of loving kindness). The third type is characterised by ignorance, and the practice chosen must help thinking develop. The fourth type, marked by faith, needs not to be counteracted by the practice, but the practice selected must enable the individual to harness the wholesome qualities of this nature towards mental culture. And so in regard to the other two types. The general rationale is that the weakness of mind must be eradicated, and strength must be acquired and cultivated, in gradual and definite stages.

Higher Mental States

The mental states that result from such meditational exercises are known as *jhānas*, which word does not admit of an exact English translation but signifies an intent condition of deliberate absorption, caused by directing the consciousness steadfastly on a particular object or theme. Trance is not analogous, for the subject will not be in *jhāna* unconscious: he has temporarily dissociated himself from the outside world of sense-stimulations and has suppressed the involuntary undirected mental conditions, but he is alert all the while, active and awake. It is not self-oblivion, but an attainment (*samāpatti*), positive and productive. And four such mental states of absorption are recognised; they are stages of progress in the course of sanctity and are styled merely as first (*paṭhamaj-*

jhāna). second, third and fourth absorptions.

In the first stage, mind is turned away from objects of desire and from impurities, and is directed towards the topic of meditation. Even as a bee wanders in close proximity to the lotus flower, the consciousness of the aspirant is said to hover round the subject chosen for meditation. Consequent on the removal of hindrances (that are natural to worldly life), a quiet pleasant satisfaction (*pīti*) springs up. The development of satisfaction is important, for it not only resolves conflicts and overcomes the natural resistance to meditational exercises, but facilitates subsequent progress. I gratefully recall in this connection the point made in a personal conversation by the venerable Kheminda Thera of Ceylon that during meditational practice the coefficients must be ease and exhiliration and not pain or hardship. This indeed is an important consideration that is generally not recognized or seriously taken. Along with this satisfaction there grows an inward delight (*sukha*). But the mind is applied to (*vitakka*) and attentively considers (*vicāra* the object and its details. The consciousnes is concentrated (*citt'ekaggatā*). These five, *viz.*, satisfaction, delight, application, consideration and concentration, are described as the limbs (*aṅga*) of the first absorption.

When the practice is continued and the state of absorption maintained, the aspirant enters the second absorption. Concentration here is so intense that even

application and consideration are no longer present as such, that is to say, deliberation and effort in these functions cease. Satisfaction born out of concentration, however, mounts and becomes mild rapture. In the third absorption, this satisfaction also fades, for even satisfaction hinders absolute quiet—mind now is truly indifferent (*upekkhako*), and inactive (in the normal sense). Happiness born out of this indifference characterises this absorption. The fourth absorption is the result of the three earlier ones, a solid state of absolute indifference and the maximum quiet emanating therefrom. The aspirant now is purified, and is in proper and favourable condition to receive the insightful understanding into the nature of phenomena, which ultimately secures for him the emancipation—the object of his venture.

Literature

Tradition ascribes the emergence of Abhidhamma to the conception in the Buddha's mind during the fourth of the seven weeks immediately after the great enlightenment. And the Buddha is believed to have preached Abhidhamma for three months to the spirit of his departed mother and others in the *Tāvatiṁsa* heaven. The preservation of this preaching is attributed to Sāriputta, the foremost of the master's pupils—and this may contain a historical truth. But the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* as an integrated body of psychological and metaphysical doctrines is in all probability later

than the other two *Piṭakas*, although its fundamental ideas can be traced back to the Buddha.

The first book of this *Piṭaka*, *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, along with Buddhaghosa's commentary entited *Atthasālini*, is important and interesting: it contains an analysis and classification of conscious processes. An extension of this forms the second book, *Vibhaṅga*. *Dhātukathā*, *Puggalapaññatti*, *Kathāvatthu*, *Yamaka* and *Paṭṭhāna* are the other canonical books of the Piṭaka. The non-canonical *Miḷindapañho* contains interesting psychological material strewn through its pages. Buddhagosa's *Visuddhimagga* is one of the most excellent philosophical treatises of the world. There are Buddhadatta's manuals concerning the Abhidhamma problems. But by far the best handbook on this subject is Anuruddha's *Abhidhammatthasangaha*, a 12th century work.

Shwe Zan Aung has published a beautiful translation of this work under the title 'Compendium of Philosophy' (PTS 1910). Recently the Ven. Nārada Mahāthera of Vajirārāma has brought out the first volume of his valuable *Manual of Abhidhamma*, which contains Anuruddha's text along with its English rendering and copious explanatory notes for five chapters. Of the numerous independent treatises on Abhidhamma in the recent years mention may be made of the works of the celebrated theras; Ñyāṇatiloka, Ñyāṇaponika, Nārada, Vajirañāṇa, Jagadīśa Kāśyapa and Anagārika Govinda.

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