

THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom

Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā)

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(3. Abhidhamma Piṭaka - Aṭṭhakathā)
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(18. Dhammahadaya-vibhaṅgo)



PaliVerse

2. Commentary on the Book of Analysis

18. Analysis of the Heart of the Teaching

1. Explanation of the All-Inclusive Section

978. Now, the division of the canonical text in the immediately following Dhammahadayaavibhaṅga should be understood thus - For herein, from the very beginning, the first section called the all-inclusive section is stated by way of the twelve categories of aggregates and so forth. The second is called the section showing arising and non-arising of those very same dhammas in the sense-desire element and so forth. The third is called the section showing inclusion and non-inclusion therein. The fourth is called the section showing dhammas that are present and not present at the moment of arising in the three planes. The fifth is called the section showing those dhammas by way of the different planes. The sixth is called the section showing the productive kamma and the measure of lifespan in the destinations. The seventh is called the section on what is to be directly known and so forth. The eighth is called the section on what has an object and what is without an object. The ninth is called the section showing those dhammas of aggregates and so forth by way of classifying them as seen, heard, and so forth. The tenth is called the section showing by way of classifying them according to the wholesome triad and so forth.

979. When the canonical text has been delimited by ten sections in this way, firstly in the all-inclusive section, when it is asked "From Avīci up to the highest existence, how many aggregates are there in between?" - "one" or etc. without saying "four" or "six," demonstrating his own power of knowledge that "there is no other capable of saying 'five'" - he gave the answer "five aggregates" in accordance with the question. For an answer in accordance with the question is called "an omniscient one's explanation." The same method applies also to "the twelve sense bases" and so forth. The classification of the aggregate of matter and so forth should be understood in the manner stated in the Khandha Vibhaṅga and so forth.

2. Explanation of the Section on Arising and Non-Arising

991. In the second section, whatever states arise for beings born in the sensual element in sensual existence - whether included in the sensual element or not included - having collected all of those, it is stated "in the sensual element, five aggregates" and so forth. The same method applies to the form element and so forth as well. However, because for beings included in the form element, due to the absence of the nose sense base and so forth, the odour sense base and so forth do not perform the function of sense bases and so on, therefore it is stated "in the form element, six sense bases, nine elements" and so forth. And because there is no such thing as a not-included element in terms of location or in terms of the arising of beings, therefore, without saying "in the not-included element," in order to show each and every thing that is not included as just that, it is stated "in the not-included, how many aggregates" and so forth.

3. Explanation of the Section on the Included and Non-Included

999. In the third section, "included in the sensual element" means included in the sense of belonging to the sensual element; the meaning is that they are dependent upon it, comprised within it, and have come to be reckoned as the sensual element itself. The same method applies to the remaining terms as well. "Included" means delimited by way of existence and by way of sphere. "Not included" means not so delimited.

4. Explanation of the Section on the Vision of the Dhamma

1007. In the fourth section, "eleven sense bases" means excluding the sound sense base. For that indeed does not arise at rebirth in any case. By this method the meaning should be understood everywhere. In the section of seven, it is stated "womb-born beings" without distinction, without specifying by destination as "of devas, of asuras." Therefore, wherever womb-born beings come into existence, there their seven sense bases should be understood. Likewise with the elements. The remainder here is clear in meaning. What should be said in the fifth section has already been stated in the Dhammasaṅgaha Commentary.

6. Explanation of the Section on Productive Kamma and Life-Span Measure

Producing Action

1021. In the sixth section, they sport (dibbanti) with the five strands of sensual pleasure or with various kinds of special powers, thus they are "gods" (devā). "Conventional gods": they are gods by worldly convention thus - "a god, a goddess." "Rebirth gods": they are gods by rebirth, owing to having been born in a celestial realm. "Purification gods": they are gods worthy of veneration by all gods, through the purification of all defilements. "Kings": warriors anointed on the head. "Queens": their chief consorts. "Princes": princes born in the womb of an anointed queen of anointed kings.

"Having performed the Observance practice": having observed the Observance endowed with eight factors on the fourteenth day and so forth. Now, since meritorious action such as giving of small gifts is a condition for human good fortune, when done in a moderate measure it is abundant for human good fortune, and even in its abundant state, due to the diversity of its various kinds, it is a condition for the various states such as that of wealthy warriors and so forth, therefore, showing the distinction of rebirth by means of that, he said "some in the company of wealthy householders" and so forth. Therein, "of great substance" (mahāsārā) means those who have great substance (mahāsāro etesaṃ). But by changing the letter "ra" to the letter "la," it is said "mahāsālā." "Wealthy householders" (gahapatimahāsālā) means householders who are wealthy, or the wealthy among householders. The same method applies in the remaining ones too. Therein, in whose household at the very least there is wealth of forty crores deposited in store, and a daily expenditure of five measures of coins goes out - this is called a wealthy householder. But in whose household at the very least there is wealth of eighty crores deposited in store, and a daily expenditure of ten measures of coins goes out - this is called a wealthy brahmin.

But in whose household at the very least there is wealth of a hundred crores deposited in store, and a daily expenditure of twenty measures of coins goes out - this is called a wealthy warrior.

"Company" (sahabyataṃ) means the state of being together; the meaning is that they arise having become of the same kind. Among "the gods ruled by the four great kings" and so forth, the gods ruled by the four great kings are situated in the middle region of Mount Sineru. Among them, there are those dwelling on the mountain and those dwelling in the sky; their succession extends to the world-encircling mountain. The sport-corrupted ones, the mind-corrupted ones, the cold-cloud gods, the warm-cloud gods, the moon god-son, the sun god-son - all these too are situated in the celestial realm of the gods ruled by the four great kings.

"The Thirty-three" (Tāvatiṃsā) means thirty-three persons were reborn there. Moreover, it is said that "Tāvatiṃsā" is simply the name of those gods. Among them too, there are those dwelling on the mountain and those dwelling in the sky. Their succession extends to the encircling world-mountain. Likewise for the Yāma gods and so on. For even in a single heavenly world there is no case where the succession of gods has not reached the encircling world-mountain. Therein, "Yāma" means those who have gone, proceeded, arrived at celestial happiness. Those who are satisfied and delighted - thus "Tusita." "Those who delight in creation" (Nimmānaratī) means those who, beyond the objects ordinarily prepared, at the time when they wish to enjoy, create enjoyments according to their liking and delight in them. Having known the disposition of the mind, they exercise mastery over enjoyments created by others - thus "those who control what is created by others."

Life-Span

1022. "Or a little more" means a hundred years exceeded by twenty, or thirty, or forty, or fifty, or sixty years, without reaching the second hundred years. That is the meaning. All of this is called "a little" because the second hundred years has not been reached.

1024. Regarding Brahmā's retinue and so forth: the retinue, the attendants of the Great Brahmās - these are Brahmā's retinue. Those established in the position of ministers to them - these are Brahmā's ministers. Great Brahmā means a Brahmā who is great by virtue of the excellence of his appearance and the length of his lifespan; of those Great Brahmās. These three groups of beings all dwell on a single plane in the realm of the first meditative absorption; however, the difference in their lifespans is varied.

1025. "Those whose radiance is limited" - thus they are "of limited radiance" (parittābhā). "Those whose radiance is immeasurable" - thus they are "of immeasurable radiance" (appamāṇābhā). Like the flame of a torch on a stick, the radiance from their bodies flows and spreads about as though breaking off and falling again and again - thus they are "radiant" (ābhassarā). These three classes of beings also dwell on a single plane in the realm of the second meditative absorption; however, the difference in their lifespans is varied.

1026. "Limited glory belongs to these" - thus they are the gods of Limited Glory. "Immeasurable glory belongs to these" - thus they are the gods of Immeasurable Glory. Suffused with glory, pervaded with glory, dense with the radiance and lustre of the body, resplendent like a mass of gold placed in a golden casket, blazing forth - thus they are the gods of Streaming Radiance. These three groups of beings also dwell on a single plane in the realm of the third meditative absorption; however, the difference in their lifespans is varied.

1027. "Diversity of object" means the state of diversity of the object. The same method applies to "diversity of attention" and so forth. Herein, for one person the earth kasiṇa is the object, etc. for one person the white kasiṇa - this is the diversity of object. One person attends to the earth kasiṇa, etc. one person to the white kasiṇa - this is the diversity of attention. For one person there is desire for the earth kasiṇa, etc. for one person for the white kasiṇa - this is the diversity of desire. One person makes an aspiration regarding the earth kasiṇa, etc. one person regarding the white kasiṇa - this is the diversity of aspiration. One person decides by means of the earth kasiṇa, etc. one person by means of the white kasiṇa - this is the diversity of decision. One person resolves the mind by means of the earth kasiṇa, etc. one person by means of the white kasiṇa - this is the diversity of resolution. For one person there is wisdom that discerns the earth kasiṇa, etc. for one person wisdom that discerns the white kasiṇa - this is the diversity of wisdom. Therein, object and attention are spoken of in terms of the preliminary stage. Desire, aspiration, decision and resolution occur both at absorption and at access. Wisdom, however, is spoken of as a mixture of mundane and supramundane.

"Of the non-percipient beings" means of beings devoid of perception. For certain persons, having gone forth in a sectarian school, seeing the fault in the mind thus: "Dependent on the mind there arise what are called lust, aversion and delusion," and having generated dispassion towards perception thus: "The state of being without mind is indeed beautiful; this is nibbāna in this very life," and having developed the fifth attainment leading to rebirth there, they are reborn there. At the moment of their rebirth, only one aggregate of form arises. One who was reborn standing remains just standing, one who was reborn sitting remains just sitting, one who was reborn lying down remains just lying down. Becoming like painted figures, they remain for five hundred cosmic cycles. At the end of that period, that material body disappears, and sense-sphere perception arises. By that arising of perception here, those gods are known to have passed away from that group.

"Great Fruit" means those for whom the fruits are abundant. "Aviha" means those who do not decline or fall away from their own attainment. "Atappa" means those who do not torment any being. "Sudassa" means those who are beautiful in appearance, handsome and pleasing. "Sudassī" means those who see well, or those whose appearance is beautiful. "Akaniṭṭha" means those who are the highest in all virtues and in the excellence of existence; there are none junior here.

1028. "Who have reached the plane of infinite space" means those who have reached the plane of infinite space. The same method applies to the others as well. Thus, six sense-sphere realms, nine Brahmā worlds, five Pure Abodes, four formless realms - together with the non-percipient beings and the Vehapphala realm, there are twenty-six celestial worlds; together with the human world, there are twenty-seven.

Therein, when the Perfectly Enlightened One was defining the lifespan of humans and deities, why was the lifespan in the four lower realms and among the earth-bound deities not defined? In the hells, to begin with, kamma alone is the measure. As long as the kamma is not exhausted, they do not pass away. Likewise in the remaining lower realms. For the earth-bound deities too, kamma alone is the measure. For among those born there, some remain for only seven days, some for a fortnight, some for a month, and there are even those who remain for a cosmic cycle.

Therein, among humans, while remaining in the household life, some become stream-enterers, and some attain the fruit of once-returning, the fruit of non-returning, and the fruit of arahantship. Among them, stream-enterers and the others remain for as long as they live. But those with taints destroyed either attain final nibbāna or go forth into the homeless life. Why? Arahantship is the supreme quality, the household state is inferior, and due to its inferiority it cannot sustain the supreme quality. Therefore they either wish to attain final nibbāna or wish to go forth.

But earth-bound deities, even having attained arahantship, remain for as long as they live. Among the six sense-sphere celestial realms, stream-enterers and once-returners remain for as long as they live; for a non-returner it is fitting to go to the form realm of existence, and for one with taints destroyed to attain final nibbāna. Why? Because of the absence of a place of seclusion. In the form-sphere and formless-sphere realms, all remain for as long as they live. Therein, stream-enterers and once-returners born in the form-sphere realm do not come here again; they attain final nibbāna right there. For these are called meditative absorption non-returners.

But for those who have attained the eight attainments, what determines it? The mastered meditative absorption. Whichever meditative absorption is mastered by him, by that he arises. But when all are mastered, what determines it? Aspiration. Wherever he aspires for rebirth, right there he is reborn. In the absence of aspiration, what determines it? The attainment entered at the time of death. If there is no attainment entered at the time of death, what determines it? The attainment of the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. For he is certainly reborn in the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. For noble disciples born in the nine Brahmā worlds, there is rebirth there or rebirth above, but not rebirth below. But for worldlings, there is rebirth there, rebirth above, or rebirth below. In the five Pure Abodes and the four formless realms, for noble disciples there is rebirth there or rebirth above. A non-returner born in the plane of the first meditative absorption, having passed through the nine Brahmā worlds, standing at the summit, attains final nibbāna. The Vehapphala realm, the Akaniṭṭha realm, and the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception - these three celestial worlds are called the supreme existences. Non-returners born in these three places neither go upward nor downward; they attain final nibbāna right there. This is the miscellaneous section herein.

7. Explanation of the Section on the Directly Knowable and So Forth

1030. In the seventh section, the state of being directly knowable should be understood by means of direct knowledge that discerns individual characteristics. The state of being fully understood should be understood by means of the three kinds of full understanding: full understanding as the known, full understanding as investigation, and full understanding as abandonment. And that, in such passages as "the aggregate of matter is directly knowable, is to be fully understood, is not to be abandoned," should be understood by means of full understanding as the known and full understanding as investigation only. In such passages as "the truth of origination is directly knowable, is to be fully understood, is to be abandoned," it should be understood by means of full understanding as abandonment.

In the eighth section, the state of having an object and not having an object should be understood by means of eye-consciousness and so on, which have form and so on as their objects. The ninth section is clear in meaning itself. In the tenth section too, whatever might need to be said has all been stated already in the respective sections on the questioning method.

In the Sammohavinodanī, the Commentary on the Vibhaṅga,

the Commentary on the Analysis of the Heart of the Dhamma is concluded.

Concluding Discussion

And to this extent -

Teaching the Abhidhamma, the one who reveres the Dhamma, in the city of the devas, to the devas who are worthy of reverence for the Dhamma, surrounded by thousands of hosts of devas,
To the devas in the city of the devas, surrounded by thousands of hosts of devas.

The Protector, the peerless person, spoke the Vibhaṅga treatise as the second, adorned with the quality of delightful sweetness through eighteen analyses. Adorned with eighteen analyses, possessing the quality of being delightful.

For the purpose of elucidating its meaning, I, requested by Buddhaghosa, an ascetic of steady virtue, of unhesitating progress, of excellent wisdom,
By the ascetic of unhesitating progress, of excellent wisdom, Buddhaghosa.

Began to compose a commentary on matters most subtle; because it dispels delusion, it is named the Dispeller of Delusion.
Because of the dispelling of delusion, it is named "Sammohavinodanī."

Having taken the essence of the ancient commentaries, this work has reached completion without obstruction, in forty-one recitation sections.
It has reached completion without obstruction, through the recitation portions of the text.

Just as with forty-one, so too may all the stainless aspirations of all beings reach fulfilment.
May the pure aspirations of all beings reach fulfilment.

For the sake of the endurance of the true Dhamma, may the world together with its devas attain the entirety of the merit acquired by me in composing this.

May the world together with its devas attain the entirety of the merit acquired thereby.

May the Dhamma endure for a long time; may the world always delight in the Dhamma; may the countries always possess the blessings of security, abundant provisions, and so on.

May the provinces always be endowed with security, abundance of provisions, and so forth.

This commentary on the Vibhaṅga named the Dispeller of Delusion was composed by the elder known by the name Buddhaghosa, given by his teachers - one adorned with supremely pure faith, wisdom, and energy; endowed with the accumulation of virtues such as moral conduct, good behaviour, uprightness, and gentleness; capable of plunging into the depths of his own system and other systems; possessed of the clarity of wisdom; a great expounder with unobstructed power of knowledge in the Teacher's dispensation comprising the learning of the three Piṭakas together with their commentaries; endowed with the charm of sweet and noble speech flowing forth with ease born of excellence of composition; one who speaks what is fitting and free, the foremost of debaters, a great poet; one who is an ornament to the lineage of the elders dwelling in the Great Monastery, elders who are lamps of the Theravāda lineage, whose understanding is well established in the superhuman states adorned with the distinguishing qualities of the six direct knowledges, the analytical discriminations, and so on, attended by the unimpeded analytical discriminations; one of vast and pure wisdom.

May it remain so long in the world, for those who seek to cross over the world;
Showing to sons of good family the method for purification of wisdom.

As long as even the name "Buddha" of such a one of pure mind;
The foremost of the world, the great sage, continues in the world.

The Commentary on the Vibhaṅga named Sammohavinodanī is concluded.



ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION

This translation is part of the PaliVerse Project - the first complete, unified English translation of the Pāli Canon together with its Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā) and Subcommentaries (Tīkā), accompanied by interactive study tools. PaliVerse is an ongoing project. The AI translations are continuously improved through experts' revisions and feedback. This text is the latest translation as of the date of download.

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