

THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom

Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā)

3. The Canon of Higher Teaching - Commentaries
(3. Abhidhamma Piṭaka - Aṭṭhakathā)
2. Commentary on the Book of Analysis (2. Vibhaṅga-
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PaliVerse

2. Commentary on the Book of Analysis

5. Analysis of Faculties

1. Commentary on the Abhidhamma Classification

219. Now, in the immediately following Analysis of Faculties, "twenty-two" is the delimitation by number. "Faculties" is the indication of the delimited phenomena. Now, showing them in their own nature, he said beginning with "the eye-faculty." Therein, that which exercises the function of dominance at the eye-door is the eye-faculty. That which exercises the function of dominance at the ear-, nose-, tongue-, and body-doors is the body-faculty. That which exercises the function of dominance in the characteristic of cognising is the mind-faculty. That which exercises the function of dominance in the state of femininity is the femininity-faculty. That which exercises the function of dominance in the state of masculinity is the masculinity-faculty. It exercises the function of a controlling faculty with the characteristic of safeguarding, thus it is "life faculty." That which exercises the function of dominance in the characteristic of pleasure is the faculty of pleasantness. That which exercises the function of dominance in the characteristics of pain, pleasure, displeasure, and equanimity is the equanimity-faculty. It performs the function of a controlling faculty with the characteristic of resolution - thus it is the faith faculty. It exercises the function of lordship in the characteristic of exertion - thus it is the energy faculty. That which exercises the function of dominance in the characteristic of establishing is the mindfulness-faculty. That which exercises the function of dominance in the characteristic of non-distraction is the concentration-faculty. That which exercises the function of dominance in the characteristic of seeing is the wisdom-faculty. That which exercises the function of dominance in the characteristic of knowing occurring as "I shall know the unknown" is the faculty of "I shall know the unknown." That which exercises the function of dominance in the further knowing of already known phenomena is the faculty of final knowledge. That which exercises the function of dominance in the state of one who has final knowledge is the faculty of one who has final knowledge.

Here, the Suttanta-classification has not been included. Why? Because in the Suttantas, twenty-two faculties have not come in this sequence. For in the Suttantas, in some places two faculties are spoken of, in some places three, in some places five. But twenty-two coming together without interruption in this way - that is not found. This is the commentary method here for now. But this is another method - for regarding these,

One should understand the determination by meaning, by characteristics and so forth, by sequence;

By division and non-division, likewise by function, and by plane.

Therein, the meaning of the eye and so forth has first been made clear by the method beginning with "it sees, thus it is the eye." Among the last three, the first is called the faculty of "I shall know the unknown" because it arises in one who has practised thus: "In the earlier stage I shall know the unknown, the deathless state, or the dhamma of the four truths," and because the meaning of faculty is applicable. The second is the faculty of final knowledge, because of fully knowing and because the meaning of faculty is applicable. The third is the faculty of one who has final knowledge, because it arises only in one who has final knowledge, whose task of knowledge regarding the four truths is completed, who is one with taints destroyed, and because the meaning of faculty is applicable.

But what is this meaning of faculty? The meaning of faculty is the meaning of the sign of the ruler, the meaning of faculty is the meaning of being taught by the ruler, the meaning of faculty is the meaning of being seen by the ruler, the meaning of faculty is the meaning of being created by the ruler, the meaning of faculty is the meaning of being employed by the ruler. All of that is applicable here as appropriate. For the Blessed One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, is the ruler because of his state of supreme sovereignty. And wholesome and unwholesome kamma is also a ruler, because of its sovereignty over all kammas. Therefore, herein the faculties generated by kamma indicate wholesome and unwholesome kamma. And they are created by that ruler - thus they are faculties in the meaning of the sign of the ruler and in the meaning of being created by the ruler. Moreover, all of these were made known by the Blessed One as they really are and were fully awakened to by him - thus they are faculties in the meaning of being taught by the ruler and in the meaning of being seen by the ruler. By that very Blessed One, the chief of sages, some were employed for the cultivation of their domain and some for the cultivation of development - thus they are faculties also in the meaning of being employed by the ruler. Furthermore, these are faculties also in the meaning of sovereignty, which is called predominance. For in the occurrence of eye-consciousness and so forth, the predominance of the eye and so forth is established; when that is keen, they are keen, and when it is dull, they are dull. This is the determination here "by meaning" for now.

"By characteristic and so forth" means that one should understand the determination of the eye and so forth also by characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause. Their characteristics and so forth are just as stated below. For the four beginning with the wisdom faculty are, in meaning, simply non-delusion. The remaining ones have come there in their own form.

"By sequence" - this too is just the sequence of teaching. Therein, because the attainment of the noble plane comes through the full understanding of internal phenomena, the eye faculty and so forth, which are included in one's own existence, were taught first. That existence, depending on which dhamma it comes to be designated as "woman" or "man" - to show "this is that," the femininity faculty and the masculinity faculty come after that. That existence, though twofold, has its continuance dependent on the life faculty - to make this known, the life faculty comes after that. As long as there is the continuance of that, so long there is no cessation of these feelings. Whatever is felt, all that is pleasant or painful - to make this known, the faculty of pleasantness and so forth come after that. But for the cessation of that, these dhammas should be developed - to show the practice, the faith faculty and so

forth come after that. Through this practice, this dhamma first becomes manifest in oneself - to show the fruitfulness of the practice, the faculty of "I shall know the unknown" comes after that. Because it is the fruit of that very practice, and because of what should be developed immediately after that, the faculty of final knowledge comes after that. Beyond this, through development there is the attainment of this, and when this is attained there is nothing further to be done - to make this known, at the end the faculty of one who has final knowledge, which is the supreme consolation, was taught. This is the order herein.

"Division and non-division" - here there is division only of the life faculty. For that is twofold: the material life faculty and the immaterial life faculty. The remaining are without division - thus one should understand the determination here in terms of division and non-division.

"Functions" - if asked, what is the function of the faculties? As for the eye faculty, firstly, according to the statement "the eye base is a condition by way of faculty condition for the eye-consciousness element and the states associated with it," that which is to be accomplished by way of being a faculty condition - namely, causing eye-consciousness and other states to conform to its own character in terms of keenness, dullness, and so forth, through its own keenness, dullness, and so forth - this is its "function." So too for the ear, nose, tongue, and body. For the mind faculty, however, it is causing co-arisen states to come under its own control; for the life faculty, it is the maintenance of co-arisen states; for the femininity faculty and masculinity faculty, it is conformity to the characteristics, behaviour, deportment, and appearance of women and men respectively; for the faculties of pleasantness, pain, pleasure, and displeasure, it is overpowering co-arisen states and bringing about their respective gross appearances; for the equanimity faculty, it is bringing about a peaceful, refined, and neutral appearance; for faith and the rest, it is overcoming their opposites and bringing the associated states to a condition of clarity and so forth; for the faculty of "I shall know the unknown," it is both the abandoning of the three fetters and causing the associated states to be directed towards that abandoning; for the faculty of final knowledge, it is both the thinning out and abandoning of sensual lust, ill will, and so forth, and causing co-arisen states to conform to its own control; for the faculty of one who has final knowledge, it is both the abandoning of eagerness in all tasks and being a condition for the state of being directed towards the deathless for the associated states - thus one should understand the determination here in terms of function.

"In terms of plane" - here the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, femininity, masculinity, pleasantness, pain, and displeasure faculties belong exclusively to the sense-sphere. The mind faculty, life faculty, and equanimity faculty, and the faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom faculties are included in the four planes. The pleasure faculty is included in three planes, namely the sense-sphere, the fine-material sphere, and the supramundane. The last three are exclusively supramundane - thus one should understand the determination in terms of plane. For one who understands thus -

A monk abundant in spiritual urgency, established in the restraint of the faculties,
Having fully understood the faculties, reaches the end of suffering.

220. In the exposition section, all beginning with "whatever eye derived from the four primary elements" should be understood in the same manner as stated in the word-analysis of the Dhammasaṅgaṇī. And in the expositions of the energy faculty, concentration faculty, etc., right endeavour, wrong endeavour, right concentration, wrong concentration, and so forth are not stated. Why? Because they are all-inclusive. For here the faculties are spoken of as all-inclusive. This being so, herein ten faculties are mundane and of the sensual-sphere of existence only, three are supramundane, and nine are mixed mundane and supramundane.

Commentary on the Abhidhamma Classification.

2. Commentary on the Questions Section

221. In the section on the asking of questions, the classification of all the faculties into wholesome and so forth should be understood in accordance with the method of the canonical text itself.

223. In the object triads, however, "seven faculties are without object" is said with reference to the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, femininity, and masculinity faculties. The life faculty, however, being mixed with materiality, is not brought in here. "Two faculties" means two faculties; this is said with reference to the pair of pleasure and pain. For those have exclusively a limited object. "The faculty of displeasure may have a limited object, may have an exalted object" - when occurring with reference to sense-sphere states it has a limited object, but when occurring with reference to fine-material and immaterial states it has an exalted object, and when occurring with reference to concepts it has an object that is not to be said. "Nine faculties may have a limited object" - this is said with reference to the mind faculty, the life faculty, the pleasure faculty, the equanimity faculty, and the five beginning with faith. For the life faculty, being mixed with materiality, although included among material states that are without object, is included in the "may be" category by virtue of its immaterial portion.

"Four faculties" means the faculties of pleasure, pain, displeasure, and final knowledge. For those do not fall into the path-as-object triad. "Connected with the path as root" is said with reference to the conascent root. When energy or investigation is predominant, it may have path predominance; when desire or consciousness is predominant, it may be not to be said.

"Ten faculties may be arisen, may be subject to arise" - this is said with reference to the seven material faculties and the three resultant faculties. The ten faculties together with displeasure are as stated above. Therein, the faculty of displeasure, when occurring with reference to concepts, has an object that is not to be said; the remaining ones likewise even at the time of reviewing nibbāna. "Three faculties have an external object" means the three supramundane faculties. "Four" means pleasure, pain, joy, and displeasure. For those occur with reference to both internal states and external states. "Eight faculties" means the mind faculty, the life faculty, the equanimity faculty, and the five beginning with faith. Therein, at the time of the base of nothingness, the state of having an object that is not to be said should be understood.

Thus in this question section too, ten faculties are sense-sphere, three are supramundane, and nine are spoken of as mixed mundane and supramundane. This too forms one single chapter together with the Abhidhamma classification. This faculty analysis, however, has been shown by extracting and classifying two rounds.

In the Sammohavinodanī, the Commentary on the Vibhaṅga,

The Exposition of the Faculty Analysis 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.

PDF Creation Date: 14 September 2026

HOW TO CITE

PaliVerse (2026). Commentaries. 3. The Canon of Higher Teaching - Commentaries. 2. Commentary on the Book of Analysis. 5. Analysis of Faculties Retrieved from paliverse.org

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