

Buddhist Psychology I

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INTRODUCTION TO ABHIDHARMA

The Abhidharma, the third basket of the Tripitika, consists of seven books.

Books 1, 2, and 7 were probably recited at the “second” 2nd Great Council that met 137 years after the Buddha. Books 3, 4, and 6 were from before the time of Ashoka, and were recited at the 3rd Great Council that was held during the time of Ashoka’s reign. Book 5, “Points of Controversy,” dates from the 3rd Council, whose president, Thera Moggaliputta Tissa composed to refute the pernicious views of all schismatics, but did not succeed. (Such was not accomplished until the time of Nagarjuna—and even after that, schisms still occurred.)

An Overview of the seven books (in the Theravada School):

1. *Dhammasangani*, “Enumeration of Phenomena,” deals with analysis and is a treatise on the two basic teachings of not self (*anatta*) and the conditionality of all existence.
2. *Vibhanga*, “Book of Treatises,” consists of 18 treatises or vibhanga on central themes (e.g., the skandhas, the Noble Truths, the foundations of mindfulness, etc.).
3. *Dhatu-Katha*, “Discussion with reference to the Elements,” is a book of Q and A.
4. *Puggala-Pannatti*, “Description of Individuals,” is out of place in this collection. Consider the first question taken from the *Points of Controversy* (see next): Is there, in the absolute sense, any personality (*puggala*) to be found?
5. *Katha-Vatthu*, “Points of Controversy,” consists of 487 unsettled questions.
6. *Yamaka*, “The Book of Pairs.” Deals with questions of identity, subordination, coordination. Like a thesaurus, this book of reference has been called the “ten valleys of dry bones.” It is a work of applied logic.
7. *Patthana*, “The Book of Origination.” Gigantic and most important, it is a book of synthesis. It deals with conditionality and the dependent nature of the manifold corporeal and mental phenomena of existence which, known by their conventional names are: “I,” “person,” “world,” etc. It gives a detailed account of dependent arising (*pratityasamutpada*)—though here not laid out in 12 links but as 24 modes of conditionality that govern all phenomenal existence.

The 24 conditions are:

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| 1. Root condition | 9. Decisive-support cond. | 17. Jhana condition |
| 2. Object condition | 10. Pre-nascence condition | 18. Path condition |
| 3. Predominance condition | 11. Post-nascence condition | 19. Association condition |
| 4. Proximity condition | 12. Frequency condition | 20. Dissociation condition |
| 5. Contiguity condition | 13. Karma condition | 21. Presence condition |
| 6. Co-nascence condition | 14. Karma-result condition | 22. Absence condition |
| 7. Mutuality condition | 15. Nutriment condition | 23. Disappearance condition |
| 8. Support condition | 16. Faculty condition | 24. Non-disappearance condition |