

Cognitive Process Models Depicted in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*

FANINDRA KUMAR NEUPANE

Lumbini Buddhist University, Central Campus, Lumbini, Nepal

-
- **Article History:** Submitted 25 February, 2025; Reviewed 28 March, 2025; Revised 9 April, 2025 • **Corresponding Author:** Fanindra Kumar Neupane
 - **Email:** fanindra.neupane@lbu.edu.np
-

Abstract

The Dhammasaṅgaṇī, the first book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, offers a foundational analysis of mental and physical phenomena (dhammas), categorizing them into ultimate realities (paramattha dhammas). It analyzes and classifies mental phenomena as consciousness (citta) and associated mental factors (cetasikas) and provides a catalog of those components that form part of the cognitive process (citta-vīthi). The Dhammasaṅgaṇī categorizes the consciousness into ethical (kusala), unethical (akusala), and neutral (avyākata) groups, and each consciousness is shown to be associated with particular mental factors. Presentation of mental factors like contact (phassa), feeling (vedanā), perception (saññā), and volition (cetanā), as well as specific wholesome or unwholesome factors, elaborates how each moment of consciousness is unique and arises with its associated factors. The Dhammasaṅgaṇī also hints at the interdependence of these mental and physical phenomena and emphasizes that consciousness arises dependent on sense bases (āyatana), objects, and other conditions. Thus, the Dhammasaṅgaṇī implies the temporal sequence of the cognitive process (citta-vīthi) as the fleeting nature of mental events, which is a precursor to the detailed analysis of citta-vīthi in later texts. In the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, the theory of cognitive process (citta-vīthi) is found implicit in the Dhammasaṅgaṇī's account of pañcaviññāṇadhātu (kusala-akusala vipāka), manodhātu (kusala-akusala vipāka and kiriya), and manoviññāṇadhātu (kusala-akusala vipāka and kiriya).

Keywords: Cognitive Process, Citta-vīthi, Pañcaviññāṇadhātu, Manodhātu, Manoviññāṇadhātu

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* is a comprehensive and scholastic analysis of the Buddha's teachings found in the *Suttas*. The *Suttas* are collections of scattered teachings delivered in a particular setting to a specific group or person, often using similes and metaphors to convey meaning. While these teachings serve a practical intent (*vohāra desanā*), the *Abhidhamma* restructures them into a methodical and doctrinal framework, attempting to provide a comprehensive statement of the Buddha's teachings exclusively in ultimate terms (Gethin 208). It systematically organizes, defines, and classifies the fundamental principles underlying reality (Bodhi 2).

Abhidhamma extends the *Sutta* teachings by further analyzing empirical existence and delineating their philosophical implications. For example, the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) are systematically classified: *rūpa-dhamma* (material phenomena) is analyzed into twenty-eight constituents, while the three mental aggregates of *vedanā* (sensation), *saññā* (perception), and *saṁkhāra* (mental formations) are arranged into fifty-two mental factors (*cetasikas*). The fifth aggregate, *viññāṇa* (consciousness), is further elaborated into eighty-nine distinct types of consciousness (Karunadasa 7). This detailed analytical approach distinguishes the *Abhidhamma* from the *Sutta Piṭaka* by providing a more exhaustive depiction of the world of conscious experience.

Among the seven books of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* stands as the first and foundational text. It systematically enumerates and classifies ultimate realities (*paramattha dhammas*) through two complementary methods: analysis (*bheda*) and synthesis (*saṁgaha*). The analytical method presents a detailed catalog of phenomena, dissecting the world of experience into its fundamental cognitive and material constituents. On the other hand, the synthetic approach illustrates how these elements interact within a complex web of conditional relationships (Nyanaponika 21). This dual methodology serves as a cornerstone for *Abhidhamma*'s exposition, allowing for a nuanced exploration of reality.

A significant aspect of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* is its detailed examination of mental processes. In the *Sutta* literature, terms such as *citta*, *manas*, and *viññāṇa* are often used interchangeably to denote mind or consciousness as a whole. However, in the *Abhidhamma*, particularly within the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, distinctions are drawn between various cognitive functions and faculties, such as *manodhātu*, *manāyatana*,

manoviññāṇa, and *manoviññāṇadhātu* (Ronkin 38). These distinctions lay the groundwork for the later development of the theory of cognitive process (*citta-vīthi*) in the commentarial tradition. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* plays a crucial role in elucidating the function of *manoviññāṇadhātu* not merely as the sixth sensory faculty but also as a coordinating and synthesizing agent that integrates sensory impressions from the five physical faculties. It describes how mental cognition processes raw sensory data before forming perceptual impressions, highlighting its function as the *patisaraṇa* (resort) for the five physical sense faculties (39).

Modern scholarship suggests that the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, including the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, evolved gradually over time, with substantial development occurring within the first two centuries after the Buddha's *parinibbāna* (Watanabe 46). However, doctrinal matrices (*mātikās*) - the structured lists of key doctrinal terms used in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* - likely existed in some form even before the full compilation of these texts (Gethin 48). From the *Theravāda* perspective, the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, along with the entire *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, is regarded as the Buddha's own exposition, realized during his fourth week of enlightenment as he contemplated the seven *Abhidhamma* books in succession, beginning with the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and culminating in the *Paṭṭhāna* (Tin 16-17).

Thus, study of *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* is important to understand phenomena in Buddhist thought. Since it categorizes phenomenon into the consciousness (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasikas*) and categorizes them into the wholesome (*kusala*), unwholesome (*akusala*), and indeterminate (*abyākata*), it paves ways for understanding the cognitive process and application of this knowledge for the wholesome behavior in life. This paper examines the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, the foundational text of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, focusing on its systematic analysis of cognitive processes (*citta-vīthi*). It explores the divisions of the text, the categorization of consciousness and mental factors, and the implications for understanding cognition in Buddhist philosophy.

1.2 Statement of the Problem and Research Question

The cognitive process model is systematically and comprehensively discussed in the *Pāli* commentary and sub-commentary literature. However, these models primarily expand upon the fundamental concepts articulated in the *Abhidhamma* canonical texts, particularly regarding *viññāṇa*, *dhātu*, *manodhātu*, and *manoviññāṇadhātu*, as depicted in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*. Given this foundation, it is essential to explore the

origins of the cognitive process within the *Abhidhamma* itself.

Research Question:

How is the cognitive process model depicted in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*?

1.3 Research Objectives

To address the research problem outlined above, this study aims to achieve the following objective:

a. To examine and analyze the cognitive process models as depicted in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*.

1.4 Research Methodology

This study aims to investigate the foundational cognitive process models rooted in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and to analyze how the systematic and comprehensive enumeration of the cognitive process (*citta-vīthi*) has evolved from the original teachings presented in the *Abhidhamma* canonical texts, particularly the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*. To achieve this, the research adopts an interpretive paradigm and an inductive reasoning approach. In alignment with these research philosophies, an exploratory research methodology has been employed for data collection and interpretation.

In this work, fundamental information related to the cognitive process from the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* has been collected using a purposive sampling technique to select the required data. These data have been analyzed to address the research question. During the data analysis process, the collected data were examined to identify common patterns, which were then critically analyzed to achieve the research objectives. Qualitative analytical processes have been employed to analyze the collected data. Additionally, critical thinking methods have been applied to explore the patterns of the cognitive process depicted in the data.

2. Findings

2.1 Structure of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, or “Enumeration of Phenomena,” is the first book of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. It serves as the foundation of the entire *Abhidhamma*, beginning with the *mātikā* - a structured list of categories that forms the framework for its teachings (Bodhi 11). According to Rhys Davids, the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* was

compiled in the mid-fourth century B.C. or possibly earlier (Davids XVIII). The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* is structured systematically to enumerate and classify ultimate realities (*paramattha dhammas*). It primarily analyzes mental and material phenomena using an exhaustive tabular format. The text is divided into four major sections and each of these sections serves a crucial function in systematizing and analyzing the fundamental components of reality as understood in the *Abhidhamma*.

These four sections are as follows:

- I. *Cittuppāda-kaṇḍa* – This section provides a detailed enumeration of 121 types of consciousness, *citta* (or 89 classifications in brief) by categorizing them based on their ethical nature - wholesome (*kusala*), unwholesome (*akusala*), resultant (*vipāka*), and functional (*kiriya*). Different types of consciousness arise along with their associated mental factors (*cetasika*). Consciousness is further classified according to different planes of existence (*kāmāvacara*, *rūpāvacara*, *arūpāvacara*, *lokuttara*).
- II. *Rūpa-kaṇḍa* – This section analyzes the 28 types of *rūpa* (material phenomena) in detail. It examines their characteristics, functions, and conditions in relation to the mind.
- III. *Nikkhepa-kaṇḍa* – This section presents an overview and classification of dhammas using *mātikās* (matrices of doctrinal terms). The matrices are categorized into Triplet (*Tika*) and Couplet (*Duka*) classifications, forming the structural basis of the *Abhidhamma* method.
- IV. *Aṭṭhakathā-kaṇḍa* – This section provides a concise summary of the preceding sections, restating the dhammas in a more abbreviated form.
- V. The concept of the cognitive process (*citta-vīthi*) is implicitly addressed within the *Cittuppāda-kaṇḍa*.

2.2 The *Cittuppāda-kaṇḍa* and the Cognitive Process

In the *Cittuppāda-kaṇḍa*, consciousness (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasikas*) are analyzed based on the *kusala-tika-mātikā*, categorizing phenomena into wholesome (*kusala dhamma*), unwholesome (*akusala dhamma*), and neutral (*abyākata dhamma*). The theory of cognitive process is embedded within the *abyākata dhamma*, particularly in the discussion of resultant consciousness (*vipāka cittas*) and functional consciousness (*kiriya cittas*).

The concepts of *pañcaviññāṇadhātu*, *manodhātu*, and *manoviññāṇadhātu* serve as the basis for the developed theory of cognition (Kyi Khin 130). According to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, when a desirable object arises at one of the five sense doors due to past wholesome *kamma*, the five sense-door resultant consciousnesses (*kusalavipāka pañcaviññāṇāni*) manifest:

- I. Eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*)
- II. Ear-consciousness (*sota-viññāṇa*)
- III. Nose-consciousness (*ghāṇa-viññāṇa*)
- IV. Tongue-consciousness (*jivhā-viññāṇa*)
- V. Body-consciousness (*kāya-viññāṇa*)

The first four are accompanied by neutral feelings (*upekkhā-sahagata*), while body-consciousness arises with pleasant feelings (*sukha-sahagata*). This process is described as follows:

“*Katame dhammā abyākatā? Yasmiṃ samaye kāmāvacarassa kusalassa kammaṣṣa katattā upacitattā vipākaṃ akkhuviññāṇaṃ/sotaviññāṇaṃ/ghāṇaviññāṇaṃ/jivhāviññāṇaṃ/kāyaviññāṇaṃ uppannaṃ hoti upekkhāsahagataṃ/sukhasahagataṃ rūpārammaṇaṃ/saddārammaṇaṃ/gandhārammaṇaṃ/rasārammaṇaṃ/phoṭṭhabbārammaṇaṃ*» (Muller, *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* 87-89).

Each of these five resultant consciousnesses (*kusalavipāka pañcaviññāṇāni*) is associated with specific mental factors (*cetasikas*), such as:

- I. Sense-impression (*phassa*)
- II. Feeling (*vedanā*)
- III. Perception (*saññā*)
- IV. Volition (*cetanā*)
- V. One-pointedness of mind (*cittassekaggatā*)
- VI. Mind-faculty (*manindriyaṃ*)
- VII. Indifference-faculty (*upekkhindriyaṃ*)
- VIII. Vitality-faculty (*jīvitindriyaṃ*)

Similarly, unwholesome resultant consciousnesses (*akusalavipāka pañcaviññāṇi*) arise due to previous unwholesome *kamma*. The five classes of unwholesome sense-resultant consciousness mirror their wholesome counterparts, but the body consciousness arises with painful feelings (*dukkha-sahagata*):

“*Akusalassa kammaṣṣa katattā upacitattā vipākaṃ cakkhuviññāṇaṃ/sotaviññāṇaṃ/ghānaviññāṇaṃ/jivhāviññāṇaṃ uppannaṃ hoti upekkhāsahagataṃ...kāyaviññāṇaṃ uppannaṃ hoti dukkhasahagataṃ*” (117-18).

Mental factors accompanying the unwholesome resultant consciousness include:

- I. Sense-impression (*phassa*)
- II. Feeling (*vedanā*)
- III. Perception (*saññā*)
- IV. Volition (*cetanā*)
- V. Mind (*citta*)

Painful feeling (*dukkhaṃ*)

- VI. One-pointedness of mind (*cittassekaggatā*)
- VII. Distress-faculty (*dukkhindriyaṃ*)
- VIII. Vitality-faculty (*jīvitindriyaṃ*)

These five types of wholesome and unwholesome sense-consciousness collectively form the *two sets of fivefold sense-consciousness* (*dvi-pañcaviññāṇa*) (Bodhi 41).

2.3 The Developed Theory of *Citta-Vīthi*

In the advanced *citta-vīthi* model, when a sense object contacts a sense door, a cognitive process (*pañcadvāra-citta-vīthi*) unfolds, interrupting the stream of life-continuum consciousness (*bhavaṅga-citta*). This process includes:

- I. Sense-door adverting consciousness (*pañcadvārāvajjana citta*)
- II. Respective sense consciousness (*pañcaviññāṇa*)
- III. Receiving consciousness (*sampaṭicchana*)

- IV. Investigating consciousness (*santiraṇa*)
- V. Determining consciousness (*voṭṭhabana*)
- VI. Impulsive consciousness (*javana*)
- VII. Retentive consciousness (*tadārammaṇa*) (*Nandamālābhivamsa* 83).

In the mind-door cognitive process (*manodvāra-citta-vīthi*), the *bhavaṅga* stream is disturbed by the arising of:

- I. Mind-door adverting consciousness (*manodvārāvajjana-citta*)
- II. Impulsive consciousness (*javana*)
- III. Retentive consciousness (*tadārammaṇa*) (83).

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* classifies the functions of *pañcadvārāvajjana* and *sampaṭicchana* under *manodhātu*, while *santiraṇa*, *manodvārāvajjana/voṭṭhabana*, *javana*, and *tadārammaṇa* are classified under *manoviññāṇadhātu* (*Gorkom* 164-165). These concepts highlight the element of ideation in the mental process.

2.4 The Role of *Manodhātu* and *Manoviññāṇadhātu* in the Cognitive Process

When the five sense-door consciousnesses (*pañcaviññāṇa*) register a sense impression, the mind element (*manodhātu*) functions as the faculty that apprehends or receives that impression. *Manodhātu* arises as a resultant consciousness (*vipāka citta*), conditioned by the same type of *kamma* (action) that produced the preceding five sense-door consciousnesses (*pañcaviññāṇa*) (*Bodhi* 41).

If a desirable sense object is experienced through a sense-door due to previous wholesome *kamma*, the arising sense-consciousness (*pañcaviññāṇa*) is accompanied by neutral (*upekkhā*) feeling—except for body consciousness (*kāya-viññāṇa*), which is accompanied by pleasure (*sukha*). The mind element (*manodhātu*) that follows also carries a neutral feeling:

“*kāmāvacarassa kusalassa kammassa katattā upacitattā vipākā manodhātu uppannā hoti upekkhāsahagatā*” (*Muller Dhammasaṅgaṇī* 91).

Similarly, when an undesirable sense object is experienced as a result of previous unwholesome *kamma*, the arising sense-consciousness is accompanied by neutral feeling (or painful feeling in the case of body consciousness). The mind element

(*manodhātu*) that follows also retains the neutral feeling:

“*akusalassa kammassa katattā upacitattā vipākā manodhātu uppannā hoti upekkhāsahagatā*” (119).

Beyond its role as resultant consciousness, the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* also identifies a type of *manodhātu* that is neither the cause of any wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*) *kamma* nor a result of past *kamma* (*vipāka*). Instead, it functions as a mere cognitive activity (*kiriya citta*), accompanied by neutral feeling:

“*manodhātu uppannā hoti kiriyā neva kusalā nākusalā na ca kammavipākā upekkhāsahagatā*” (120).

2.5 Development of *Manodhātu* in the Commentarial Tradition

The concept of *manodhātu* was further refined in the commentarial period, particularly in the *Aṭṭhasālinī*, where it was linked to two types of rootless resultant consciousness (*ahetuka vipāka citta*):

- I. Akusala-vipāka-sampañicchana-citta – unwholesome resultant receiving consciousness.
- II. Kusala-vipāka-sampañicchana-citta – wholesome resultant receiving consciousness.

These consciousnesses function as the receiving (*sampañicchana*) stage in the cognitive process, which follows the initial sense-consciousness (*pañcaviññāṇa*):

“*cakkhuviññāṇaṃ dassanakiccaṃ sādheti, vipākamanodhātu sampañicchanakiccaṃ sādheti*” (Muller *Aṭṭhasālinī* 274).

Additionally, the *Aṭṭhasālinī* describes *pañcadvārāvajjana*, a rootless functional consciousness (*kiriya citta*), which directs attention toward the sense object at the five sense doors. This consciousness acts as a “selector,” comparable to a radio tuner, determining which sensory input enters cognition. With its arising, the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga citta*) is temporarily interrupted, initiating the five-sense-door cognitive process (*pañcadvāra-citta-vīthi*):

“*attano attano pana dhammatāya eva ārammaṇena pasādassa ghaṭṭitakālato paṭṭhāya kiriyamanodhātucittaṃ bhavaṅgaṃ āvaṭṭeti*” (274).

2.6 The Role of *Manoviññāṇadhātu* in the Cognitive Process

The cognitive factors not explicitly covered under *pañcaviññāṇadhātu* and *manodhātu* are encompassed by the mind-consciousness element (*manoviññāṇadhātu*), which is categorized in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* as either a *kamma*-resultant (*vipāka*) or a functional (*kiriya*) consciousness.

When a sentient being encounters a desirable sense object as a result of past wholesome *kamma*, a rootless *manoviññāṇadhātu* arises, accompanied by either joy (*somanassa*) or neutral (*upekkhā*) feeling:

“*kāmāvacarassa kusalassa kammaṣṣa katattā upacittā vipākā manoviññāṇadhātu uppannā hoti somanassasahagatā/upekkhāsahagatā*” (Muller *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* 92-95).

The neutral feeling occurs when the object is moderately desirable, while joy arises when the object is highly desirable (Bodhi 42). In contrast, when the object is the result of unwholesome *kamma*, only a neutral-feeling *manoviññāṇadhātu* arises:

“*akusalassa kammaṣṣa katattā upacittā vipākā manoviññāṇadhātu uppannā hoti upekkhāsahagatā*” (Muller *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* 119).

2.7 Further Elaboration in the *Aṭṭhasālinī*

The *Aṭṭhasālinī* expands upon the function of *manoviññāṇadhātu* within the cognitive process. Following the five-sense-door wholesome resultant consciousness (*kusala-vipāka pañcaviññāṇa*) and its reception by the resultant mind element (*sampaṭicchana citta*), the next consciousness in the sequence functions as investigating consciousness (*santīraṇa citta*):

“*sā hi pañcadvāre kusalavipākacakkhuviññāṇāḍīanantaram, vipākamanodhātuyā taṃ ārammaṇaṃ sampaṭicchitvā niruddhāya, tasmīṃ yevārammaṇe santīraṇakiccaṃ sādhayamānā pañcasu dvāresu ṭhatvā vipaccati*” (Muller, *Aṭṭhasālinī* 264).

This explanation interprets the rootless resultant *manoviññāṇadhātu* as the investigating (*santīraṇa*) consciousness that evaluates the sense object before further cognitive processing.

In the *Aṭṭhasālinī*, *manoviññāṇadhātu*, which is accompanied by neutral feeling, is said to perform five key functions:

- I. Conception (*paṭisandhi*) – linking consciousness at rebirth.
- II. Life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*) – maintaining continuity of consciousness.
- III. Investigating (*santīraṇa*) – evaluating a moderately desirable object in the five-sense-door process.
- IV. Registration (*tadārammaṇa*) – retaining a highly intense or vivid object.
- V. Death consciousness (*cuti*) – marking the final moment of an individual's life.

“*pañcasu ṭhānesu vipaccati...Katham? paṭisandhiggahaṇakāle paṭisandhi hutvā vipaccati.. Paṭisandhiyā vītivattāya yāvatāyukaṃ bhavaṅgaṃ hutvā vipaccati.. iṭṭhamajjhatte pañcārammaṇavīthiyā santīraṇaṃ hutvā, balavārammaṇe chasu dvāresu tadārammaṇaṃ hutvā, maraṇakāle cuti hutvāti imesu pañcasu ṭhānesu vipaccatīti*” (Muller, *Aṭṭhasālinī* 265).

During cognition, if a particularly strong or vivid object is encountered at any of the six sense doors, registration consciousness (*tadārammaṇa citta*) follows the impulsive (*javana*) stage:

“*chasu dvāresu pana balavārammaṇe tadārammaṇā hutvā vipaccati... Evamesā yaṃ javanena gahitārammaṇaṃ tasseva gahitattā tadārammaṇaṃ nāma hutvā vipaccati*” (Muller, *Aṭṭhasālinī* 265).

After the completion of *javana* (or *tadārammaṇa*, if applicable), the cognitive process subsides, and the mind returns to the state of life-continuum (*bhavaṅga citta*).

2.8 The Role of *Voṭṭhabbana* and *Manoviññāṇadhātu* in the Cognitive Process

One crucial stage of cognition preceding *javana* (impulsive consciousness) is known as *voṭṭhabbana* (determination) in the five-sense-door cognitive process and *manodvārāvajjana* (mind-door advertent) in the mind-door process. Although this stage is not explicitly mentioned in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*'s explanation of *manoviññāṇadhātu*, the *Aṭṭhasālinī* implies its presence through the phrase *santiraṇādi*, meaning “deciding and the rest” (Davids 132). This suggests that the twofold rootless resultant *manoviññāṇadhātu* described in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* is assigned the function of investigating consciousness (*santīraṇa citta*), which evaluates the sense object received by the mind element (*manodhātu* or *sampaṭicchana citta*). Furthermore, this sense object subsequently manifests as a mind-door object, facilitated by the heart-basis (*hadayavatthu*), serving as the proximate cause of

voṭṭhabbana citta (determining consciousness) before the arising of *javana* in the cognitive process:

duvidhāpi manoviññāṇadhātu ahetukavipākā, chaḷārammaṇavijānanalakkhaṇā, santīraṇādirasā, tathābhāvapaccupaṭṭhānā, hadayavatthupadaṭṭhānāti veditabbā (Muller, *Aṭṭhasālinī* 264).

According to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, kamma-resultant consciousness (*vipāka citta*) may also arise as a rooted (*sahetuka*) consciousness, associated with mental factors such as non-attachment (*alobha*), friendliness (*adosa*), and knowledge (*amoha*). This consciousness can result from wholesome actions in the sensuous sphere (*mahāvipāka citta*), fine-material and immaterial *jhāna* contemplation (*rūpa-arūpa vipāka citta*), and supra-mundane path consciousness (*lokuttara magga citta*). As a result of past meritorious deeds within the sensuous world, eight types of *manoviññāṇadhātu* may arise, characterized by joy (*somanassa-sahagata*) or indifference (*upekkhā-sahagata*), and associated (*ñāṇasampayutta*) or dissociated (*ñāṇavippayutta*) with knowledge, occurring either spontaneously (*asaṃkhārika*) or prompted (*sasaṃkhārika*):

yasmim samaye kāmāvacarassa kusalassa kammaṣṣa katattā upacitattā vipākā manoviññāṇadhātu uppannā hoti somanassasahagatā/ upekkhāsahagatā ñāṇasampayuttā/ ñāṇavippayuttā asaṃkhārena/sasaṃkhārena (96-97).

Similarly, as a result of meritorious actions cultivated in the fine-material sphere, an individual may attain *jhānic* absorption from the first to the fifth level, transcending sensuous desires. Higher levels of formless *jhānic* absorption, ranging from the sixth to the eighth level, include the contemplation of infinite space (*ākāśānañcāyatana*), infinite consciousness (*viññāṇaṇcāyatana*), nothingness (*ākāśaṇcāyatana*), and neither perception nor non-perception (*n’eva saññā nāsaññāyatana*)—all resulting from wholesome *kamma* in the immaterial realm (Davids 136-37).

According to the commentaries, the eight *mahāvipāka* consciousness types operate in four cognitive processes: conception (*paṭisandhi*), life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*), death consciousness (*cuti*), and registration (*tadārammaṇa*):

etāni hi catūsu ṭhānesu vipaccanti – “*paṭisandhiyaṃ, bhavaṅge, cutiyaṃ, tadārammaṇeti*” (Muller, *Aṭṭhasālinī* 266).

By contrast, *rūpa-arūpa vipāka* consciousness functions in three of these cognitive processes, excluding *tadārammaṇa citta*. The supra-mundane *jhānas* of the four paths of holiness also appear as *kamma* results. Initially analyzed in general

terms, these states are later connected with the four paths of progress, where supra-mundane foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) are cultivated through right effort (Nyanaponika 25).

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* describes a rootless mind-consciousness element (*manoviññāṇadhātu*) accompanied by indifference, which is neither wholesome, unwholesome nor a *kamma* result:

manoviññāṇadhātu uppannā hoti kiriyā neva kusalā nākusalā na ca kammavipākā upekkhāsahagatā (Muller, *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* 122).

This consciousness is found in all sentient beings and serves as adverting (*āvajjana*) in the mind-door process and determining (*voṭṭhabbana*) in the five-sense-door process:

uppajjamānaṃ pana pañcadvāre voṭṭhabbanam hoti, manodvāre āvajjanam (Muller, *Aṭṭhasālinī* 295).

Another rootless mind-consciousness element described in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* is functional consciousness accompanied by joy:

manoviññāṇadhātu uppannā hoti kiriyā neva kusalā nākusalā na ca kammavipākā somanassasahagatā (Muller, *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* 120-121).

The *Aṭṭhasālinī* interprets this consciousness as a *javana* function when an *Arhat* laughs at worldly matters.

3. Conclusion

This study has explored the foundational role of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* in the *Abhidhamma* tradition, particularly its classification of consciousness (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasikas*) as they pertain to the cognitive process model (*citta-vīthi*). The text's systematic enumeration of mental and material phenomena provides the basis for later developments in the *Abhidhamma* commentarial tradition, where the cognitive process was further articulated in structured sequences.

Through its analysis, the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* reveals an implicit understanding of cognitive processing, distinguishing various types of consciousness and their ethical classifications—wholesome (*kusala*), unwholesome (*akusala*), and indeterminate (*abyākata*). The emergence of resultant consciousness (*vipāka citta*) in response to sensory stimuli underscores *Abhidhamma*'s intricate model of conditioned mental

activity, forming the groundwork for later theories of cognition.

Furthermore, the study has examined the role of *manodhātu* and *manoviññāṇadhātu* in mediating sensory impressions and synthesizing perceptual experience. These elements are crucial in the transition from raw sensory input to conceptual cognition, reinforcing the notion of a structured, sequential cognitive process.

By analyzing the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*'s contribution to the development of cognitive models, this study sheds light on the early Buddhist understanding of mental processes. The findings suggest that *Abhidhamma*'s approach offers not only a descriptive account of cognition but also an applied framework for cultivating wholesome mental habits. Future research may further explore the practical implications of this model, particularly in relation to contemporary cognitive science and Buddhist psychological applications.

Works Cited

- Bodhi. *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*. BPS Pariyatti Editions, 2000.
- Dauids, C.A.F. Rhys, translator. *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics*. Royal Asiatic Society, 1900.
- . translator. *Sacred Books of Buddhists (Vol. 4)*. Humphrey Milford, 1921.
- Gethin, Rupert. "The Five *Khandhas*: Their Treatment in the *Nikāyas* and Early *Abhidhamma*". *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol.14, no. 1.,1986, pp.35-53.
- Gethin, Rupert. *The Foundation of Buddhism*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Gorkom, Nina Van. *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*. Zolag, 2009.
- Karunadasa, Y.. *The Theravada Abhidhamma: Its Inquiry into the Nature of Conditioned Reality*. University of Hong Kong, 2010.
- Khin, Kushala U Kyi. *The Critical Study of the Process of Consciousness (Vīthi) in the Theravāda Tradition*. 2018. Savitribai Phule Pune University. PhD dissertation. <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in:8443/jspui/handle/10603/302555>.
- Muller, Edward, editor. *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*. Pāli Text Society, 1978.

- Muller, Edward. editor. *The Aṭṭhasālinī*. Pāli Text Society, 1897.
- Nandamālābhivamsa. *Fundamental Abhidhamma (Part I)*. Center for Buddhist Studies, 2005.
- Ronkin, Noa. *Early Buddhist Metaphysics: The Making of a Philosophical Tradition*. Routledge Curzon Taylor & Francis Group, 2005.
- Thera, Nyanaponika. *Abhidhamma Studies: Researches in Buddhist Psychology*. Buddhist Publication Society, 1976.
- Tin, Pe Maung, translator and Rhys Davids, editor. *The Expositor*. Pāli Text Society, 1920.
- Watanabe, Fumimaro. *Philosophy and Its Development in the Nikāyas and Abhidhamma*. Motilal Banarasidass, 1983.

