

## Application of Buddhist *Paramattha* (Ultimate Realities) in Contemporary Society

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### Abstract

The teachings imparted by the Lord Buddha during his forty-five-year Buddhahood have been collected into three volumes called the Tipitaka (Tripāli for “Three Baskets”).

The initial collection is known as “Sutta Pitaka.” In what is referred to as the ordinary teaching (Vohāra desanā), the Buddha explained his teachings using everyday language.

The authoritative teaching, or Ānā-desanā, is found in the second collection, “Vinaya Pitaka.” Here, the Buddha established guidelines and norms that the monks were to follow.

The ultimate instruction of the Buddha is included in the third compilation, “Abhidhammā Pitaka” (Paramattha desanā). Here, the Buddha discussed paramattha, the ultimate realities of the universe, and Nibbāna, the ultimate goal of Buddhism, using figurative language.

The Abhidhammā school of thought divides reality into two categories: conventional realities (samurai) and ultimate realities (paramattha). Conventional realities pertain to entities such as living beings, including men, women, and animals, as well as inanimate objects like tables, buildings, and trees. On the other hand, ultimate realities are those that are true due to their inherent nature (sabhāva)!

From the perspective of ultimate reality, the objects found in the Abhidhammā are all four: Consciousness (Citta), Mental Factors (Cetasika), Matter (Rūpa), and Nibbāna.

Along with a thorough examination of Paramattha, the Four Ultimate Realities—Citta, Cetasika, Rūpa, and Nibbāna will be applied—to our day-to-day existence.

When we consider the current state of affairs, the moral virtues of (Bharamacariya) loving-kindness (mettā), compassion (karunā), and empathetic delight (Muditā) seem to have dried up and ceased to develop in human consciousness. When even the virtuous are consumed by virtues, it becomes difficult for them to conduct morally upright lifestyles because of the fire (element) produced by living things as a result of this cessation.

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*The fire (element) is the emergence of (lobha) greed, (dosa) hatred, (māna) conceit, (issā) envy, and (macchia) jealousy, which destroys any possibility of empathy or compassion for one another. The drying up of virtues was facilitated by that element of fire. People should make every effort in this life to put out the fire element and try to live surrounded by the cool components of loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic delight, and equanimity.*

*To aid people in forming moral character, this article titled “Application of Buddhist Paramattha (Ultimate Realities) in Contemporary Society” was created.*

**Keywords**

*Ultimate realities, Consciousness, Mental factors, Matter, Nibbāna.*

The Lord Buddha’s teachings during his 45-year Buddhahood have been organized into three volumes known as the *Tipitaka* in *Pāli*, which translates to “Three Baskets.”

The first compilation is referred to as “*Sutta Pitaka*.” The Buddha explained his teachings using common words in what is known as the conventional teaching (*Vohāra desanā*). This collection includes helpful information about insight meditation and tranquillity meditation.

The second collection, “*Vinaya Pitaka*,” is known as the authoritative teaching (*Ānā-desanā*), in which the Buddha set rules and regulations for the monks to abide by.

“*Abhidhammā Pitaka*”, the third compilation, is the Buddha’s final teaching (*Paramattha desanā*). Here, the Buddha used figurative language to discuss *Nibbāna*, the ultimate aim of Buddhism, and *paramattha*, the universe’s ultimate realities.

**Two Kinds of Realities**

The conventional (*samurai*) and the ultimate (*paramattha*) realities are the two categories of reality, according to the *Abhidhammā* philosophy. Conventional realities relate to things like living beings- people, men, women, animals, and inanimate things-houses, tables, trees, etc. In contrast, ultimate realities are things that really exist because of their intrinsic essence (*sabhāva*)! The word “*paramattha*” is derived from `parama`=ultimate, highest, and `attha`=reality. From the perspective of ultimate reality, the objects found in the *Abhidhammā* are all four: Consciousness (*Citta*), Mental Factors (*Cetasika*), Matter (*Rûpa*), and *Nibbāna*.

1. *Citta* is the awareness of an object of perception or its Consciousness. All sentient beings, including microscopic insects such as ants, have Consciousness.
2. *Cetasika* are concomitants of Consciousness; they arise with Consciousness and dissolve with Consciousness. They depend on Consciousness for their existence and have a variety of other influences on Consciousness.

3. *Rûpa* are things that change shape, color, or state due to uncomfortable physical conditions like coldness and hotness. *Abhidhammâ* lists 28 varieties of materiality.
4. “*Nibbâna*” means “eternal bliss and peace.” When the sources of all suffering and the worldly “fires” of greed, anger, and delusion are completely extinguished, eternal peace and happiness are realized.

#### 1. *Citta* (Consciousness)

We are constantly aware of things around us. The term “consciousness” refers to this type of object awareness. In this context, “awareness” does not imply knowledge or wisdom. It denotes the capacity to perceive things through the senses.

Six types of Consciousness, six sense-objects

1. *Rûpârammaòà* - all forms of sight
2. *Saddârammaòà* - sound in all its forms
3. *Gandhârammaòà* - every type of odour
4. *Rasârammaòà* - all flavors
5. *Phothhabbârammaòà* - touch in all its forms
6. *Dhammârammaòà* - the rest of the senses that can be perceived

The awareness of sight manifests when one sees a visible thing. The ability to sound becomes conscious in response to sound. A perfume sample triggers the emergence of smell awareness. A touch causes the Consciousness of contact to emerge. All other detectable senses and those five objects of perception lead to the manifestation of Consciousness of the mind. Therefore, the ability to take in an object is called *citta* (Consciousness).

There are five senses items present, namely sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch, as we sit on a fragrant bed, dine, and take in singers and dancers. The mind does not all absorb these five things at once. We only perceive other objects one at a time after seeing the one we prefer the most. As a result, more than one unit of Consciousness does not manifest at once. Consciousness manifests one at a time.

#### 1.1 Different people have different minds and matter

There are diverse levels of immorality and utter idiocy among many terrible and evil minds. Similar to how there are several degrees of physical elegance, with those gaining the laurels of beauty and charm at the top, there are various levels of physical ugliness, with *peta* and devils at the bottom step of horror. Similarly, there are several levels of unwholesome mental categories, from the most atrocious with blatant ignorance to the wicked, disgusting, and repulsive varieties—these range from ordinary to the noblest souls and intelligentsia.

## **1.2 The Mind Should Be Reformed**

Why isn't it possible to tame their minds, which can soon monitor and repress unwholesome aspects in their untamed mind and grow their wholesome nature to the point of acquiring one's respect? The *nāma* and *rūpa* of future existences will be nice if the internal mind is always sound. Good *nāma* and *rūpa* will reappear as good humans, devas, and Brahmas even after one has left one existence. If a person has a wicked internal mind, he will either be reborn in hell (*Araya*), become a ghost (*Peta*), or become an animal with a hideous mind and body.

The mind won't be sound unless *yoniso manasikāra* exists. *Yoniso manasikāra* is the practice of discerning everything one encounters. An unwholesome mind will not appear due to a proper attitude; instead, a wholesome mind will emerge.

## **1.3 A Good Example of King Milinda Who Disciplined His Mind**

King *Milinda* considered asking the Venerable *Nāgasena* additional questions that would be crucial for *sāsanā*. But he patiently waited for seven days and disciplined his mind to obtain concentration by getting up early, taking a bath, dressing in a yellow outfit, and putting on a headdress to make it look like he had shaved his head. In other words, even though he wasn't a *Bhikkhu*, he dressed the part and spent the entire seven days diligently abiding by the following Eight Precepts:

- i. I'll surrender my regal duties for the next seven days.
- ii. I'll control my urge for raga (greed).
- iii. I'll stop myself from harboring hatred or resentment.
- iv. I'll keep my *moha* (illusion) to myself.
- v. I will avoid arrogance and act humbly and modestly towards my subjects and courtiers.
- vi. I'll exercise extreme caution in how I speak and behave.
- vii. I'll control my sense organs, such as my eyes, ears, etc., so they are free of impure ideas when I see, hear, or otherwise experience sense things.
- viii. I shall spread loving-kindness to every living being.

On the eighth day, he got up early and asked the Venerable *Nāgasena* some probing questions about the profound *Dhamma* in a happy, relaxed, and calm manner. Following King *Milinda's* example, virtuous individuals should regularly practice mind control, even if it is just for one or two days or one morning, to prevent the emergence of consistently wicked thoughts. Evil ideas will lessen with continued use of mental restraint and improve in virtue and nobleness as their faith and knowledge grow. Bad thoughts that happen won't surface for several days.

## 2. *Cetasikas* (Mental Factors)

Mind alone cannot distinguish between good and evil; it can only comprehend objects. The various *cetasikas* (mental factors) cause the mind to become virtuous or sinful.

Fourteen immoral mental factors influence the mind:

1. *Moha* (ignorance)
2. *Ahirika* (moral shamelessness)
3. *Anottappa* (moral fearlessness)
4. *Uddhacca* (distraction and restlessness)
5. *Lobha* (greed)
6. *Di^hi* (wrong perspective)
7. *Mâna* (arrogance)
8. *Dosa* (anger, hatred)
9. *Issâ*(envy)
10. *Macchhariya* (jealousy)
11. *Kukkucca* (confusion)
12. *Thina* (sloth)
13. *Middha* (torpor),
14. *Vicikicchâ* (doubt and skepticism)

Among these immoral mental factors, three rooted *akusala cetasika* will be discussed here.

### 2.1 *Moha* (Ignorance)

There are two types of ignorance (*moha*), called *anusaya moha*, a latent or inherent inclination and *pariyutthâna moha*, Sanskrit for ascending ignorance. Consequently, ignorance, which invariably follows a being's mind, refers to the latent delusion, or *anusaya moha*. The rising-up delusion, or *pariyutthâna moha*, is the ignorance that occasionally arises together with the mind.

#### *Anusaya Moha*

The *Dhamma* that should be learned is kept hidden by an element (*dhâtu*) in the mind continuum of beings, just as there is poison in a tree that bears dangerous fruits. That element is known as the latent delusion, *anusaya moha*. Worldlings (*puthujjana*) cannot comprehend penetratingly the Four Noble Truths, the Law of Dependent Origination (*Paticcasamuppâda*), or the Three Characteristics of Impermanence (*anicca*), Suffering (*dukkha*), and Non-Self (*anatta*), due to the

concealing action of *anusaya moha*. This hidden delusion can only be entirely eradicated when one achieves *Arahatship*.

### ***Pariyutthâna Moha***

When *moha* and the mind both appear, the wicked, unwholesome mind has manifested. Evil effects of today's unwholesome acts that one may experience in the future are unknown due to this *pariyutthâna moha*'s opacifying character. Thus, even the wise and righteous will do immoral activities when *moha* manifests because they cannot see the ills of *moha*. This *moha* is the most awful in the realm of evils, the source of all evil in the world.

### **Not Being Informed isn't real *Moha***

As *moha* is defined as not knowing, some individuals believe that not knowing a subject they have not studied, not knowing locations they have not been to, and not remembering names they are unfamiliar with qualify as *moha*. Such kind of not knowing is merely a lack of knowledge; it is not true *moha* at all. As a result, it is not an unwholesome mental factor.

## **2.2 *Lobha* (Greed)**

*Lobha* is greed for physical pleasure or avarice. However, the desire to achieve *Nibbâna*, acquire *Dhamma*, be knowledgeable, and desire money for charitable giving to the poor is *not Sobha*. They are referred to as desires (*Chanda*),

### **How *Lobha* causes the Four Terrible Abodes**

Even minor avarice can result in the four miserable worlds, just as the smallest particle of a stone sinks in water if not accompanied by good works. As a result, many people attached to their spouse, children, or fortune on their deathbed turned into petals (miserable ghosts).

**If good deeds support *Lobha*, the Four Terrible Worlds won't come to pass.**

People won't be cast into the lower, woeful worlds, even while there is attachment *taõha pema*, for each other if they receive the backing of good deeds. For instance, a stone will float on a boat but sink in water. As a result, there are occasions in *Jâtaka* stories where persons who are not yet free from *taõha pema* become close partners to achieve perfection (*paramÑ*) together.

Once a harmonious relationship has been created, husband and wife do not want to be apart; instead, they desire to perform perfections (*paramÑ*) together and achieve *Nibbâna*. A good woman named Sumittâ and the Bodhisattva *Sumedhâ*, the Buddha-to-be, requested to always be with each other. For eons, they accomplished their *paramÑ* together.

### 2.3 *Dosa* (anger, hatred)

*Dosa* is the name for mental violence or anger. *Dosa*, or hatred, includes all forms of aggression that are physically and mentally damaging, depressing, and lead to inferiority complexes and a fear-based way of life. Fear and aggression are both forms of stress; a person who is furious and violent can also be easily scared. Fear, grief, depression and sorrow are referred to as descending hatred, whereas violence, anger, and grudge are ascending hatred.

The development of wholesome Consciousness is caused by the moral mental factors listed below:

1. *Saddhâ* (belief, assurance)
2. *Sati* (awareness and mindfulness)
3. *HÑri* (moral shame)
4. *Ottappa* (virtuous dread)
5. *Alobha* (generosity, lack of greed)
6. *Adosa* (goodwill, loving-kindness)
7. *Amoha* (Paññâ or wisdom)
8. *Mettâ* (loving-kindness)
9. *Karunâ* (compassion)
10. *Muditâ* (pleasure of sympathy)
11. *Upekkhâ* (equanimity)
12. *Sammâ vâcâ* (proper language)
13. *Sammâkammanta* (doing the right thing)
14. *Sammâ âjÑva* (appropriate livelihood),

Among these immoral mental factors, three rooted *kusala cetasika* will be discussed here.

### 2.4 *Alobha* (generosity, lack of greed)

*Alobha* means not to desire. It is the absence of attachment to things and the antithesis of greed or wants; *lobha* and *aloha* are comparable to fire and water. In contrast to *Sobha*, which has desires, *Alobha* has no desires because its nature is non-greed, generosity, and charity. In daily life, we may also observe the disparate behavior of a greedy person and a content man.

#### A Greedless *Bhikkhu*

A *Bhikkhu* who is not greedy will not be attached to material success. He knows that alms and offertories come from the generosity of donors and well-wishers, so he won't feel proud when he receives them. Even a layperson will feel guilty

about clinging to alms and offertories, let alone a *Bhikkhu*, a Buddha disciple. A moral guy is never selfish but is generous and charitable. In the same way, a *Bhikkhu* who lacks greed does not value material possessions.

### **2.5 Adosa (goodwill, loving-kindness)**

*Adosa* denotes non-hatred or non-anger. Rudeness, hurt, retaliation, violence, and hatred are opposed to it. While *adosa* encourages politeness, *dosa* encourages rudeness. *Adosa* improves one's patience and good temperament. Therefore, an angry person's expression is contemptuous, while the sophisticated's is pleasant and smiling, spotless, bright, and lovely like the silver moon's face—*Adosa*, who is symbolized by nice words and reasonable discourse, triumphs by forgiving. The benefits of *dosa's* nature are numerous.

#### **Loving-kindness of a Cow for Her Calf**

Kusala citta (wholesome Consciousness) can arise even from a cow's love for her calf. Once upon a time, a cow was providing her young calf with natural mettâ breast milk when a hunter lunged with a spear at her. The spear, however, grew flaccid like a palm leaf and did her no harm because of her great mettâ for her calf. True mettâ can grow out of love between family members, friends, husbands and wives, and parents and children. The cow reveals the virtue of loving-kindness.

### **2.6 Amoha (Paññâ or wisdom)**

*Amoha* denotes wisdom, knowledge, and intelligence. The truth is revealed when that mental factor lifts the darkness of ignorance and deception. *Amoha* (knowing) and *moha* (ignorance) are diametrically opposed.

The Buddha's omniscience, knowledge of insight (*Vipassanâ-ñâna*), knowledge of the Path (*Magga-ñâna*), knowledge of Fruition (*Phala-ñâna*), and knowledge of the action (*karma*), results thereof (*vipâka*) knowledge of the texts and the *Dhamma* are all examples of wisdom. Wisdom (*paññâ*) is the term for all these flawless knowing modalities.

#### **A Proclamation**

In the real world, the knowledge of the husband and wife is the only factor determining the family's happiness. Wisdom encourages diligence, leading to the desired outcomes in family management and success. Only the wise will be highly regarded in public gatherings. Even if someone is extremely wealthy, they will not become a leader in society if they are foolish and uneducated.

In the current world, knowledge is the prevailing force. The knowledge of the thinkers and technologists they collaborate with helps the wealthy amass wealth.



From little conflicts to significant wars, intelligence and technological might are usually favored in winning.

### 3. *Rûpa* (Matter)

*Rûpa* means, literally, “that which transforms its nature.” Heat and cold are just two of the many factors that influence change. In really cold weather, your skin breaks and changes color; you become unwell and catch a cold. Your skin becomes irritated and reddens in hot weather, and you risk getting burns, scalds, and sunstroke. Furthermore, you might get bitten by snakes, dogs, bugs, or mosquitoes; some of these bites could be fatal. You could die from thirst or hunger as well.

Although there are 28 classes of *rûpa* in total, only the crucial 19 will be described.

#### The Four Fundamental Elements

1. The earth element, or *pathavÑ dhātu*, is the element of extension and solidity.
2. The water element, or *āpo dhātu*, is the element of fluidity and cohesiveness.
3. Fire element, or *Tejo dhātu*, is the element of heat and cold.
4. Air element, or *Vāyo dhātu*, is a motion-supporting element.

#### The Five *Pasāda Rûpa* (The Five Organs’ Sensitive Parts)

5. The *cakkhupasāda* (sensitive part of the eye)
6. The *sotapasāda* (a delicate area of the ear)
7. The *ghānapasāda* (the sensitive region of the nose)
8. The *Jivhāpasāda* (a delicate area of the tongue)
9. The *Kāyapasāda* (sensitive body area)

#### The Five *Ārammana* (Objects Grasped through Sense-doors)

10. *Rûpārammana* (visible form)
11. *Saddārammana* (sound)
12. *Gandhārammana* (odour)
13. *Rasārammana* (flavor)

*Phothhabbārammana*, the only items of momentary contact are *pathavÑ*, *tejo*, and *vāyo*, so it is not numbered.

14. *Itthi bhāva rûpa* (femininity)
15. *Purisa bhāva rûpa* (masculinity)
16. *Hadaya vatthu rûpa* (Basis of Consciousness)
17. *JÑvita rûpa* (Vitality of Matter)
18. *Ojā rûpa* or *Āhāra* (Essence of Nutrition)
19. *Ākāsa dhātu* (Intra-atomic Space)

Among these crucial 19 *rûpas*, only the four fundamental elements will be discussed here.

### **3.1 The Four Fundamental Elements**

#### ***PathavÑ Dhātu***

The earth element is also known as the solidity element. The earth supports all other things as its base. It is known as *pathavÑ* because of its strength, firmness, and hardness. The *pathavÑ dhātu* predominates in all stuff, including the soil, boulders, stones, and large volumes of metal.

#### ***Āpo Dhātu***

*Āpo dhātu*, the cohesion element, causes the aggregation of minute particles. When *āpo dhātu* is strong, other elements might dissolve and become fluid. The Material dominated by *āpo dhātu* includes water, urine, mucus, sweat, saliva, tears, and more.

#### ***Tejo Dhātu***

The *tejo* element prevents excessive wetness and viscosity of aggregate matter and ensures optimal dryness. In the summer, a healthy person's physique is typically cool. This coldness is *tejo dhātu* as well. Thus, there are two kinds of *tejo*: *unha-tejo* and *sÑta tejo*. *Tejo* is also known by the term *utu* (climate). When the environment and the body are cool, *sÑta tejo* permeates everything. *Unha tejo* behaves similarly when it's hot. If *tejo* in our bodies is moderate, we are healthy; if not, we are ill; and if it is excessive, we are dead.

As a result, people who cannot adjust to the changing *tejo* should take care. They shouldn't travel in sweltering heat or bitter cold and shouldn't consume extremely hot or extremely cold meals. The purpose of *pācaka tejo dhātu* is to aid in the digestion of our food. It comes from the area below the stomach. Strong *pacaka tejo* aids digestion, whilst a weak one prevents appropriate digestion and causes stomach problems. It would help to consume delicate, easily digestible meals to stay healthy.

#### ***Vāyo Dhātu***

Motion is a component of *vāyo dhātu*. It can be observed in the wind's movement and resistance to objects. Other aggregate stuff is pushed or moved by this *dhātu*.

### **3.2 Basic and Secondary Issues**

*PathavÑ*, *Tejo*, *Vāyo*, and *Āpo* are the four essential components, and all other connected matter is secondary, built upon the four fundamental components. When the four *dhātus* are combined, we have large inorganic masses like high mountains and big fires and large biological things like giant Devas and big fishes.

The size of *rûpa*, like the eye, ear, sight, and sound, does not increase. For instance, even though a cake of soap's perfume improves when more smell is added, the cake does not grow in size. Similarly, if you lessen its fragrance, the size doesn't change, but the aroma does.

#### **A Kalapa's Formation**

*Kalâpa* refers to a group in *Pâli*. *Rûpa* (matter) cannot exist by itself. Appropriate units of substance form a collection or aggregate. One *kalâpa* is a phrase that describes a group with shared characteristics that exist and vanishes together. You cannot notice a single *kalâpa* with the naked eye since they are all so tiny. Even the smallest dust particle is made up of several *kalâpas*.

#### **4. Nibbâna**

In *Nibbâna*, there is only *Santisukha*; there is no *vedayita* such a pleasure. *Vedayita sukha*, or enjoyment, wears out and needs to be replenished. The oil of renewing far outweighs the pleasure one derives from it. There would be further labor and worry if one is not yet satisfied with such pleasure.

*Santisukha* is the peaceful bliss experienced in *Nibbâna*. It has nothing to do with pleasures found on earth. The peaceful bliss brought about by the end of *rûpa nâma sankhârâ*. Assume a very wealthy man has a peaceful night's sleep. His servants awaken him after preparing sensuous joys for him. He will undoubtedly chastise his servants for disturbing his restful sleep. He values peaceful slumber more than sensual joys. Some say, "How nice it is to sleep!". If we find sleep, which lacks all pleasant feelings, we can imagine the joy of *Santisukha*, which is the culmination of *rûpa* and *Nâma*.

The *Anagâmis* and *Arahants* are acutely aware of the weight of *Nâma rûpa*; to remove oneself as much as possible from these weighty *Nâma rûpa*, they enter into the absorption of *Nirodha Samâpatti*. *Nâma-citta*, *cetasika*, and some *rûpa* parts stop functioning during this *Samâpatti*, and nothing new appears. Nothing new is created. This brief halt in the *Nâma Rûpa* process is a supreme pleasure to a considerable extent.

*Santisukha*, the happiness of *Nibbâna*, is not one unique *dhâtu* that belongs to all beings. Every being can have his own *Nibbâna*. Each *Ariyâ* individual rejoices in *Phala Samâpatti* and focuses on *Nibbâna*. They love this *Samâpatti* to the hilt. When approaching *parinibbâna*, all *Ariyâ*, every *Thera*, and every *TherÑ* exclaim their deepest joy at having good riddance of *rûpa* and *Nâma*. It is indeed unfortunate that *puthujjanas* should be so dependent on their minds and bodies.

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