

A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma

The Abhidhammatha Sangaha
of Ācariya Anuruddha

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A definite relation nevertheless exists between the spheres of consciousness and the planes of existence: a particular sphere of consciousness comprises those types of consciousness which are typical of the corresponding plane of existence and which *frequent* that plane by tending to arise most often there. Consciousness of a particular sphere is not tied to the corresponding plane, but may arise in other planes of existence as well; for instance, fine-material and immaterial-sphere *cittas* can arise in the sensuous plane, and sense-sphere *cittas* can arise in the fine-material and immaterial planes. But still a connection is found, in that a sphere of consciousness is *typical* for the plane that shares its name. Moreover, the kammically active *cittas* of any particular sphere, the *cittas* that generate kamma, tend to produce rebirth into the corresponding plane of existence, and if they succeed in gaining the opportunity to generate rebirth, they will do so only in that plane, not in any other plane. Hence the tie between the spheres of consciousness and the corresponding planes of existence is extremely close.

Sense-sphere consciousness (*kāmaṅvacaracitta*): The word *kāma* means both subjective sensuality, i.e. craving for sense pleasures, and objective sensuousness, i.e. the five external sense-objects—visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles. The *kāma* is the sensuous plane of existence, which comprises eleven realms—the four woeful states, the human realm, and the six sensuous heavens. Sense-sphere consciousness includes all those *cittas* that have their proper domain in the sensuous plane of existence, though they may arise in other planes as well.

Fine-material-sphere consciousness (*rūpāvacaracitta*): The fine-material sphere is the plane of consciousness corresponding to the fine-material plane of existence (*rūpabhūmi*), or the plane of consciousness pertaining to the states of meditative absorption called the *rūpajjhānas*. Any consciousness which mostly moves about in this realm is understood to belong to the fine-material sphere. The *rūpajjhānas* are so called because they are usually attained in meditation by concentrating on a material object (*rūpa*), which may be a device such as the earth-kasina, etc. (see IX, §6) or the parts of one's own body, etc. Such an object becomes the basis on which the *jhānas* are developed. The exalted states of consciousness attained on the basis of such objects are called *rūpāvacaracitta*, consciousness of the fine-material sphere.

Immaterial-sphere consciousness (*arūpāvacaracitta*): The immaterial sphere is the plane of consciousness corresponding to the immaterial plane of existence (*arūpabhūmi*), or the plane of consciousness pertaining to the immaterial absorptions—the *arūpajjhānas*. Any consciousness which mostly moves about in this realm is understood to

belong to the immaterial sphere. When one meditates to attain the formless meditative states beyond the *rūpajjhānas*, one must discard all objects connected with material form and focus upon some non-material object, such as the infinity of space, etc. The exalted states of consciousness attained on the basis of such objects are called *arūpāvacaracitta*, consciousness of the immaterial sphere.

Supramundane consciousness (*lokuttaracitta*): The word *lokuttara*, supramundane, is derived from *loka* = world, and *uttara* = beyond, transcendent to. The concept of "world" is threefold: the world of living beings (*sattaloka*), the physical universe (*okāsaloaka*), and the world of formations (*sankhārāloaka*), that is, the totality of conditioned phenomena, physical and mental. The notion of world relevant here is the world of formations, that is, all mundane phenomena included within the five aggregates of clinging. That which transcends the world of conditioned things is the unconditioned element, Nibbāna, and the types of consciousness that directly accomplish the realization of Nibbāna are called *lokuttaracitta*, supramundane consciousness. The other three types are called, in distinction, *lokiyacitta*, mundane consciousness.

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We thus see that consciousness can be classified by way of plane into four broad divisions: sense-sphere consciousness, fine-material-sphere consciousness, immaterial-sphere consciousness, and supramundane consciousness. Consciousness can also be classified on the basis of other principles besides plane. One principle of classification that plays an important role in the Abhidhamma philosophy is kind or nature (*īdā*).

With respect to its nature, consciousness divides into four classes: unwholesome, wholesome, resultant, and functional. Unwholesome consciousness (*akusālacitta*) is consciousness accompanied by one or another of the three unwholesome roots—greed, hatred, and delusion. Such consciousness is called unwholesome because it is mentally unhealthy, morally blameworthy, and productive of painful results. Wholesome consciousness (*kusālacitta*) is consciousness accompanied by the wholesome roots—non-greed or generosity, non-hatred or loving-kindness, and non-delusion or wisdom. Such consciousness is mentally healthy, morally blameless, and productive of pleasant results.

Both wholesome and unwholesome consciousness constitute *kamma*, volitional action. Those *cittas* or states of consciousness that arise through the ripening of kamma are called resultants (*vipāka*). These constitute a third class of *citta* distinct from the former two, a class that comprises both the results of wholesome kamma and the results of unwholesome kamma. It should be understood that both kamma and its results are