

An Insight into the Psychology of Abhidharmakosh

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to describe the background of mind in terms of Buddhist and western perspective. Mind has been an interesting topic for ages. There are many researches that have contributed in this field and were successful to equip the world with new and old ideas. The researchers have researched on a Buddhist scripture Abhidharma kosh that deals with mind at the subtlest level. Mind has been divided in to three, as per western school of thought but this book explains mind with 51 mental factors. This article elaborates on different facets of minds as is written in Abhidharma kosh. The aim of the researchers is to bring out the psychological perspective of the Buddhist scripture, Abhidharma kosh in terms of Buddhist psychology. Old scriptures have been the source to the modern pool of study. Hence the researchers have brought the golden words of Abhidharma kosh in the light of the world. This article compares the Freudian, Jungian, Piaget's theory of conscious with Abhidharma kosh.

Keywords: *Conscious, Mind, Sub Conscious, Mental Factors, Psychology.*

Mind has been the striking topic for study since the starting of human civilization. Different philosophies have explained mind from multiple perspectives. Today the most widely accepted theory on mind has been introduced by western thinkers that is supported by Neuroscience. But numbers of scriptures from ancestral time have been the source of knowledge, regarding the mind and its different processes. Vedanta and Buddhist scriptures have enumerated this topic for centuries, but obscured due to the language constraint. Nowadays people are trying hard to search a new way to acquire knowledge with the help of other sources. The authors have also encountered with a book, whose content is the science of consciousness. The book is known as Abhidharmakosha. The study of this text has extensively dealt with, in India and Tibet over centuries. The intention of the researchers is to make comparative study of consciousness of Abhidharmakosha and western psychology. Abhidharmakosha is a well-known scripture in Buddhist psychology. The meaning of

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Received: June 16, 2017; Revision Received: July 30, 2017; Accepted: August 15, 2017

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Abhidharmakosha is a treasure of knowledge in which mind and mental elements are described in detail. It is also known as the book for higher knowledge. In Buddhist philosophy we find three baskets of knowledge-*Sutra*, *Abhidharma* and *Vinaya-Pitaka*. There are several lucid commentaries composed by great Indian scholars from ancient monastic university of Nalanda on the science of consciousness.

Mind

Mind seems to be a complex entity that comprises of many layers e.g. gross, subtle and subtlest level. In other words it can be divided into conscious, subconscious and unconscious as far as western school is concerned. Conscious from Buddhist stand point is mind and subconscious mind and these are simultaneous phenomenon, no different from each other at the gross level. But there is a boundary that distinguishes conscious mind from subconscious mind. This is as per *abhidharmakosha* whereas the present psychological perspective believes in only three types of mind which are consciousness, sub consciousness and unconsciousness. Buddhist scripture has gone to the subtle level to explain the interaction of senses with different consciousness. In Buddhist scripture there are two kinds of conscious and these conscious comprises of 51 mental factors. This is a general perspective but the doctrine and the number of mental factors differs in different schools.

To understand this, one needs to know the five omnipresent mental factors, five determining mental factors, eleven virtuous mental factors, six root afflictions mental factors, twenty secondary afflictions mental factors and four changeable mental factors. While all the mental factors can be concomitant with consciousness, it does not follow that all of them accompany all instances of consciousness. To dispel this [misconception, the root text states,] “Among these, five are universal, five are limited to a particular object, eleven are virtues, six are [root] mental afflictions, the remaining ones are secondary mental afflictions, and [the final] four” of regret and so on “can also vary.” Among [all] these [mental factors], the first five—Feeling, discrimination / Discernment, mental impulse / Intention, tangible object / Contact, intention / attention—are universal. These five entities are called “universal” because they accompany all states of consciousness. Thus, they can be concomitant with the virtuous minds of the three realms, with pure states of mind, with no virtuous minds of the form realm, as well as with afflicted and neutral minds of the three realms.

All instances of mind necessarily include the convergence of three elements. The convergence of three elements is a property that is necessarily connected with contact. Therefore, contact is a universal mental factor. The mind could not engage any object if it were not “bent” [i.e., turned] in some direction; hence, attention is also a universal mental factor. Feeling and conception are also universal factors, because no mind can function without experiencing something or in the absence of the grasping of a sign. Since volition is activity of the mind, it too must accompany all instances of mind. Therefore, these [five entities] are universal mental factors.

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[The root text] states that “five are limited to a particular object”. They are limited to a particular object because they only occur in relation to certain objects and not toward all objects. The [five] are aspiration, conviction, recollection, concentration, and wisdom. [The root text] states that “eleven are virtues.” These are [the eleven] that begin with faith and end with avoidance of harm. They are virtues either because they are antidotes to lack of faith and like or because they occur in concomitance with any of the roots of virtue. The minds with which they are concomitant are also virtuous. [The root text] states that “six are [root] mental afflictions.” They are desire, hatred, pride, ignorance, views, and doubt. They are mental afflictions because they cause the mind to become agitated. [The root text] states that “the remaining ones are secondary mental afflictions.” These are [the twenty mental factors] ranging from anger to lack of vigilance. [The root text] states that the [last] four [mental factors] of regret and so on “can also vary.” Although [the root text] makes the unqualified statement that “the remaining ones are secondary mental afflictions,” this refers only to the group of twenty that ends with lack of vigilance. They are called “secondary mental afflictions” because they are related to the mental afflictions, they cause the mind to become disturbed, and they closely resemble the mental afflictions. “The four of regret and the rest” means regret, sleep, deliberation, and reflection. To say that they “can also vary” means that they are not only secondary mental afflictions; they can also be virtuous or [morally] indeterminate.

The sum total of these mental factors is fifty-one.

Five Omnipresent Mental Factors

Abhidharmakosh revolves around the five omnipresent mental factors of mind which are

1. Feeling
2. Discrimination / Discernment
3. Mental impulse / Intention
4. Tangible object / Contact
5. Intention / Attention

Five Determining Mental Factors

1. Aspiration
2. Determination / Belief / conviction
3. Memory / Mindfulness / recollection
4. Concentration
5. Wisdom

Eleven Virtuous Mental Factors

1. Faith
2. Shame / self- respect (sense of shame)
3. Embarrassment (consideration for others)
4. Non-attachment (detachment)
5. Non-hatred

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6. Non-ignorance (non-bewilderment)
7. Enthusiastic effort
8. Mental suppleness (flexibility)
9. Conscientiousness
10. Equanimity
11. Non-harmfulness (non-violence)

The Six Root Mental Afflictions (6- ROOT KLESHAS)

1. Attachment / desire
2. Anger / hatred
3. Self-importance / pride
4. Ignorance
5. Doubt (afflicted indecision)
6. Wrong views (afflicted views)

20 Secondary Kleshas (Secondary Disturbing Mental Factors)

1. Anger / Aggressiveness (wrath)
2. Resentment
3. Concealment
4. Spite
5. Jealousy / envy
6. Miserlyness / avarice
7. Deceit / pretension
8. Dissimulation / denial (dishonesty)
9. Haughtiness
10. Harmfulness / cruelty
11. Shamelessness
12. Non-embarrassment
13. Faithlessness
14. Laziness
15. Non-conscientiousness
16. Forgetfulness
17. Non-introspection / inattentiveness
18. Dullness / mental laxity / lethargy
19. Excitement / mental excitement
20. Distraction

Four Changeable Mental Factors

1. Sleep
2. Regret
3. Investigation / gross-investigation
4. Analysis / subtle-investigation

Compound factors concomitant with mind

There are forty compound factors concomitant with mind. These are feeling, discernment, volition, aspiration, touch, intelligence, mindfulness, mental attentiveness, inclination, meditative, stabilization, faith, conscientiousness, tranquility, equanimity, shamefulness, decency, non-attachment, non-hatred, nonviolence, perseverance, ignorance, non-conscientiousness, laziness, faithlessness, dullness, agitation, shamelessness, indecency, anger, grudge, fraud, jealous, outrage, concealment, miserliness, deceit, haughtiness, intense violence, investigation and analytical discernment.

Compound factors non concomitant with mind

These are attainment, non-attainment, equal lot, non-discernment, meditative absorption, Life, assemblage of names, birth and aging. These factors are not related to mind because their nature is the nature of mind. Non compound factors are responsible for analytical cessation and non-analytical cessation. There are three uncompounded factors of phenomenon and these are space, analytical cessation and non-analytical cessation.

According to *abhidharmakosha* conscious and subconscious originates simultaneously and have no individual identity at any point. Everything is born with its own special quality and that is called dharma. According to the doctrine feeling, conscious, discernment, wish, intelligence, mindfulness, mental attention, inclination, meditative stabilization are called as maha-bhumik or the greatest subconscious. It is the mind that constitutes the awareness of every consciousness simultaneously.

Conscious mind is divided into two type's kushal and akushal chitta or conscious.

Kushal conscious

Kushal conscious is classified by following traits which are faith, consciousness, tranquility, equanimity, shamefulness, decency, non-hatred, non-violence and perseverance.

Kushal conscious leads to three subconscious which are

1. Mahabhomik: It is a subconscious and is categorized into 10 types.
2. Kushal mahabhoomik: It is the subconscious and is categorized into 10 types.
3. Subconscious that depends on thought process in the situation is of two types.

Akushal conscious

Akushal conscious is classified by six traits laziness, faithlessness, dullness, agitation, aloofness and non-conscientiousness. It includes following subconscious.

1. Maha-bhomik: It is the subconscious and categorized into 10 types
2. Klesh maha-bhuik: It is the subconscious which is characterized by sin and is of six types.
3. Akushal maha-bhumik: It is the subconscious which is characterized by bad karmas. It is of two types.
4. Two types of subconscious are dependent on thought and mental processing.

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**Now one thing to be noted is that view of real entity and view of holding extreme end are not akushal conscious.

Both subconscious and conscious have five subtle qualities shelter, object of mediation, shape, time, subtle nature.

Cause

The conscious and subconscious and their aggregates needs to have a reason to manifest. The interaction between the internal and external entity leads to manifestation. Hence there must be certain cause and condition required by the object and subject to produce the effect. This reason is known as hetu or cause.

There are six kinds of causes

1. Karak-hetu: it is the reason for existence for example eye and roop is the karanhetu for conscious of sight.
2. Sahbhuhetu: It is the coexistent cause for example all the secondary characters are under sahbhuhetu.
3. Sabhaga-hetu: It is the parallel cause.
4. Sarvatraga-hetu: It is the universal cause.
5. Vipak-hetu: It is the retributive cause.

It is to be noted that every hetu is responsible for the result. Abhidharma kosh defines that a cause can lead to result only in the present and utilizes its result only in the present. Hence it can be said that a dharma grasp its result when it becomes its seed.

Condition

Conscious, subconscious, cause are not enough to produce the effect. Rather conditions are very much necessary for the same in any situation. Hence conditions are classified into four categories.

1. Cause as condition (hetu pratyaya): It has five elements which are earth, water, air, fire, sky
2. Equal and immediate antecedent (samanantar pratyaya): It is all the conditions that originate from conscious and subconscious except the end constitutes samanantar pratyaya.
3. An object as condition (alamban pratyaya): Every element can be the object for meditation and hence pratyaya.
4. Predominating influence as condition (adhipatya pratyaya): Cause of existence is called adhipatya pratyaya.

DISCUSSION

Buddhism and Freudian theory

Buddhism has placed conscious and subconscious at a very high level. The mind theory given by Sigmund Freud explains the mind theory of Buddhist philosophy superficially. Abhidharma mind theory is in-depth and intricate study of mind at the subtlest level. Freud based

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his theory on pleasure seeking principle and Abhidharma has also placed importance to the gratification of id for which every individual is in the search of happiness. Buddhist perspective says that desires are the root cause of suffering and ultimate happiness can be achieved by rooting out the desires. Freud has also mentioned and accepted the fact that id should be replaced by ego to achieve the state of ultimate happiness. Sigmund Freud classified id into three types

1. The conscious:
2. The preconscious
3. The unconscious: major motivating force behind human behavior.

Jungian law of synchronicity and abhidharma kosh

Synchronicity is a principle which, Jung felt, gave conclusive evidence for his concepts of archetypes and the collective unconscious. It describes a governing dynamic which underlies the whole of human experience and history — social, emotional, psychological, and spiritual. The emergence of the synchronistic paradigm was a significant move away from Cartesian dualism towards an underlying philosophy of double-aspect theory. It is very close to the Buddhist theory of cause and effect and what we have discussed as hetu and pratyaya.

My life is a story of the self-realization of the unconscious." --C.G. Jung

Behaviourism

Western philosophy considers that behaviourism is based on learning and past experience, as the past experiences leave an impression on the mind at different level based on the intensity likewise abhidharma kosh emphasizes on the past life impression and the past impression, as well on the conscious and sub conscious mind that gets stored in the store house of the subconscious. Hence these two theories run parallel to each other. Buddha gave his teachings eons ago and science is still working hard to prove the same thing.

Theory of cognition

Abhidharma kosh considers that cognition is inherently intentional. For instance, in the Treasury of Higher Knowledge or abhidharma kosh (AKBh ad I, 1ab), Acharya Vasubandhu explains two types of activity which are volition and intentional activity. The activity consists of three different stages at the subtle level which is bodily, verbal and mental. Hence anything that happens is not because of cognition rather there must be an object, subject cause and condition to make things happen. Jean Piaget theory of cognition also explain it but in a different manner. He says that cognitive development is the reorganization of the mental processes in suitable cause and conditions. He has placed high importance on assimilation and accommodation.

CONCLUSION

Abhidharma kosh gives a very fine explanation of the working of mind in an algorithmic way. The theory of mind explained by western philosophy is a step back from ancient philosophies. Although it is very difficult to use the exact word for Sanskrit words in English, for example the word for manas or vighyan are not same but the closest word is mindful or

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conscious hence these words seemingly better when used while translation. But there is a difference at the subtle level. Abhidharma kosh gives a profound commentary on the nature of subtle mind and its subdivisions in the form of various other conscious and subconscious at more subtle level. Everything is guided by a reason and catered by conditions. Hence if we do not want something to happen, then we need to curb either the cause or condition responsible for the same. The authors have done an indepth study of one single chapter on chitt/ conscious of ABHIDHARMA KOSH. The project of psychoanalysis of Abhidharma kosh is under process.

Acknowledgments

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interests: The author declared no conflict of interests.

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How to cite this article: Chamoli D, Negi L S & Kumar R (2017). An Insight into the Psychology of Abhidharmakosh. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Vol. 4, (4), DIP:18.01.045/20170404, DOI:10.25215/0404.045