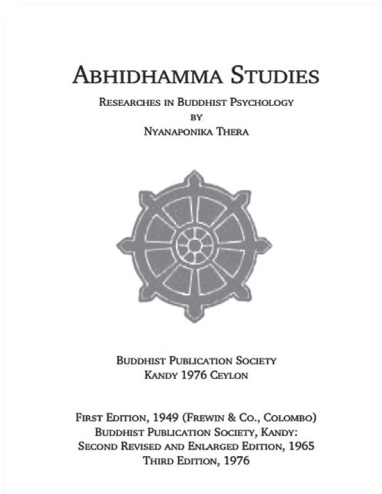


## ABHIDHAMMA STUDIES RESEARCH IN BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY



Seth Evans



by

Nyanaponika Thera  
Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society,  
1985.  
ISBN-978-955-24-0298-2  
178 pages,  
\$9.95.

Abhidhamma Studies by Ven. Nyanaponika Thera is a venturesome take on the Dhammasangani and the Atthasālinī, the first book of the Abhidhamma Piṭika and its commentary.

Chapter one gives a brief history of the Abhidhamma and its importance in Buddhist tradition. This is a good introduction as it also clarifies its purpose and addresses terminology. The best part of this chapter is where Nyanaponika Thera addresses the importance of meditation when studying the Abhidhamma as the perspective gained through concentration leads to the experiential insight

that the Abhidhamma is attempting to describe.

Chapters two, three and four go into the actual classification and explanation of the contents of the Dhammasaṅgāhī. The descriptions are clear and concise keeping to the essence of the original Piṭaka. Nyanaponika Thera then goes on to enumerate and expand on several lists found in the Dhamma including the Bala, Indriya, Jhāna, Magga and more.

The fifth chapter, The Problem of Time, is a discourse on time according to the Abhidhamma method. Here, Nyanaponika Thera utilizes some western philosophy to convey his thoughts, particularly that of the analytics. A quote from the Dhammasaṅgāhī is used, “at that time there are Sense-Impressions” (164) to show a representation of:

“... the limitation of consciousness by time. Its description too is only possible by reference to time, namely, to the temporary simultaneity of the single factors. But on the other hand, these mental factors, in other words the internal relations, for their part, determine the time by furnishing the measure of the time-unit, which consists only in the duration of that temporary combination of factors” (164).

Ven. Nyanaponika Thera correlates this revelation that the momentary experience is time itself rather than time being an objective quality of reality that experiences rest upon with a quote from Bertrand Russell:

“We cannot give what may be called absolute dates, but only dates determined by event. We cannot point to a time itself, but only to some event occurring at that time” (165).

Ven. Nyanaponika Thera gives a detailed account of how the Dhammasaṅgāhī and the Aṭṭhasālinī deal with time going through the various meanings of samaya, “chronological time”, that are used in the text:

Concurrence  
Condition  
Moment  
Aggregation

Ven. Nyanaponika Thera does a wonderful job in showing that these different meanings imply that time, as used in the Abhidhamma, did not mean the more conventional sense that we think of today.

Abhidhamma Studies: Research in Buddhist Psychology is a gallant piece of Buddhist Philosophy that should be read by anyone who is serious about the subject. Though it would be difficult to understand the subtleties of this book without prior knowledge of Buddhist Philosophy, it would serve as not only a great aid with the Abhidhamma, but as a standalone book to learn the theory of the Dhamma.

This is not an easy read by any means, and it requires scrupulous attention to understand. It will not be comprehended in one reading. That being said, Ven. Nyanaponika Thera does an excellent job of expressing very difficult subject matter in a concise and coherent way. This book offers one of the best gateways for readers to learn and grasp deep and profound teachings of the Buddha that are not usually explained in Western settings.