

The Compendium Concepts of the Two Truths Based on Theravāda and Vaibhāṣika



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to inform the profound concepts of the two truths utilizing the source from of *Theravāda*, and *Vaibhāṣika* based on *Pāli* and *Sanskrit* literatures of *Abhidhamma* (*skt. Abhidharma*). The technical terms *sammuti-sacca* (*skt. saṃvṛti-satya*), and *paramattha-sacca* (*skt. paramārtha-satya*) are vital words of the Buddha dhamma. This article will be diversifying your concepts of the two truths from those two schools, in order to encourage understanding various theories of the two truths from different doctrines. Therefore, the omniscient essence of this article is to contain great assorted knowledge of two truth at once.

Keywords: Two Truths, Theravāda and Vaibhāṣika

1. Introduction

This introduction will explain the context first, due to “the concepts of the two truths in *Theravāda* and *Vaibhāṣika*” is the profound issue of their theories. That means the two truths are the essential part of the *Abhidhamma* and it is the ultimate teaching of the Buddha. Thus, for good understanding, it is necessary to learn the two truths from any kind of *Abhidhamma*. Then here, these are the fundamental points which are the four kinds of ultimate truths of *Theravāda*, and five kinds of ultimate truths of *Vaibhāṣika*. Therefore, this paper will declare the dissimilar viewpoints of the two truths from *Theravāda* and *Vaibhāṣika*.

2. Seven Books of Abhidhamma

Initially, it is necessary to know about the *Abhidhamma* of *Theravāda* and *Vaibhāṣika* are very important. Hence, here is the brief history of *Abhidhamma* development. Before the first council there was a no different schools among Buddhist monks (*Śrāvakayana*). After the first Buddhist council, the causes of Ven. Yaśas's condemnation of *Vinaya*, the second Buddhist council was held on 100 years after *mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha at *Vaisālī*. Around the 137 years after *mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, five issues caused by Mahadeva, the *Śrāvakayana* was divided into two schools as: *Mahāsāṃghika* and *Sthavira*.

About 236 years of *mahāparinirvāṇa* or during the Asoka period, the *Sthavira*'s monks had discussed on *Abhidhamma*. At that time some monks asserted that existence of all things as the three times (past, present and future) are truly existing. But some monks didn't accept that views and believed that only present time and part of the past (namely the existence of action which has not given forth its result) are truly existence, and future are non-existence.¹ Those who follow the first theory is called *Sarvastivāda* which as *Vaibhāṣika*, and those who follow the second theory called *Vibhajyavāda* as *Theravāda*.²

After the third Buddhist council, the *Sarvastivāda* moved from Magadha to Mathura with Sanskrit Tripitaka and established their Buddhist school. They gradually flourished in *Gandhara*, *Kasmira* and north-west regions. The *Vibhajyavāda* also gradually expended from

¹ Vasubandhu, **Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam**, tr. Leo M. Pruden, (California: Jain Publishing, 2014), p. 808.

² Y. Karunadasa, **The Theravada Abhidhamma**, (Hong Kong: Published Center of Buddhist studies, 2010), p. 281.

Magadha to the West and South India and finally, they established their school in Srilanka with the *Pali Tripitaka*, and progressively it flourished into western places. However, seven books of *Theravāda* are:

1. *Dhammasaṅgani*, ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨභාෂ්‍ය
2. *Vibhaṅga*, බ්‍රාහ්මණීය
3. *Dhātukathā*, ප්‍රත්‍යාර්ථීය
4. *Puggalapaññatti*, ප්‍රත්‍යාර්ථීය
5. *Kathāvatthu*, ප්‍රත්‍යාර්ථීය
6. *Yamaka*, ප්‍රත්‍යාර්ථීය
7. *Paṭṭhān*, ප්‍රත්‍යාර්ථීය

Among these *Abhidhammas*, the *Kathāvatthu* was composed of Mogaliputta Tissa at the third Buddhist council in the 3rd century of BCE. The most important one is remaining *Abhidhamma* also as a commentary of each other. It shows the *Abhidhamma* emerged in deferent places and times. Likewise, the *Vaibhāṣika*'s *Abhidharma* also holds seven categories:³

1. *Jñānāvataṭa*, ප්‍රාග්‍රෑෂ්‍යව්‍යාපෘති
2. *Dharmaskandha*, ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨභාෂ්‍ය
3. *Samgaṭiparyāya*, ප්‍රාග්‍රෑෂ්‍යව්‍යාපෘති
4. *Prajñapti-śāstra*, ප්‍රාග්‍රෑෂ්‍යව්‍යාපෘති
5. *Vijñānakāya*, ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨභාෂ්‍ය
6. *Prakarana*, ප්‍රාග්‍රෑෂ්ඨභාෂ්‍ය
7. *Dhātukāya*⁴, ප්‍රාග්‍රෑෂ්ඨභාෂ්‍ය

Vaibhāṣika said those seven *Abhidharma* were taught by the Buddha at uncertain places. After the Buddha passed away seven Arahants collected the *Abhidharma* and arranged into seven groups.

³ Dr. Sanjib Kumar Das, **Comprehensive Tri-Lingual Dictionary**, (Lhe-Ladakh: Published by Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2014), p. 189.

⁴ Y. Karunadasa, **The Theravada Abhidhamma**, (Hong Kong: Published Center of Buddhist studies, 2010), p. 289.

3. Two Truths of Theravāda

3.1 Conventional Truth

The conventional truth *sammuti-sacca/sammuccā* is according to etymology, the term of *sammuti* is derived from the root word *man* means to think, and when prefixed *sam* it means common consent, general opinion, and convention.⁵ The term *sacca* means real and true.⁶ Thus, a general opinion or convention is true. Tin Mon said that the conventional names and vocabularies which we use in daily life as man, woman, father, mother, and so on are conventional truth because they are conventionally accepted without any intentions.⁷ Thus, that the conventional realities *paññattis* - description, name, idea, notion, and concept, also Conventional Truth.⁸

3.2 Ultimate Truth

The term *paramattha-sacca* is derived from the root words *parama* means ultimate, final, highest, excellent, *attha* means reality,⁹ and *sacca* means real and true, when they fixed together ultimate reality is true (*paramattha-sacca*). On the other hand, the term *paramattha* which means the ultimate, absolute, and the highest.¹⁰ However, 89 or 121 consciousness (*citta*), 52 mental factors (*cetasikas*), 28 Materialities (*rūpa*), *Nibbāna* are ultimate truth because these are existed because of their intrinsic nature. As well as the Doctrine of Dependent Origination, Four Noble Truths, and so forth are Ultimate Truth because those are do not change on account of time and occasion and which always remain true.¹¹

⁵ The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary, (Oxford: Published by The Pali Text Society, 2004), p. 696.

⁶ibid., p. 668.

⁷ Mehm Tin Mon, The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma, (Yangon: Thin Lai Win Press, 2015), p. 24.

⁸ The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary, (Oxford: Published by The Pali Text Society, 2004), p. 390.

⁹ Mehm Tin Mon, The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma, (Yangon: Thin Lai Win Press, 2015), p. 21.

¹⁰ Y. Karunadasa, The Theravada Abhidhamma, (Hong Kong: Published Center of Buddhist studies, 2010), p. 61.

¹¹ Mehm Tin Mon, The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma, (Yangon: Thin Lai Win Press, 2015), p. 25.

Chart of Two Truths

Conventional truth ගුත්ක්ෂණභාෂ්ය			
1, paññattis, vocabularies, පදනම්වලානා			
Ultimate truth ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨභාෂ්ය			
1. <i>citta</i> , consciousness, සිත්ත	2. <i>cetasikas</i> , mental factors, පිශ්චත්‍ය	3. <i>rūpa</i> , materiality, සුළුණ	4. <i>nibbāna</i> , අත්ත

3.2.1 Consciousness

The consciousness has a single characteristic, that is which constitute the knowing or awareness of an object. It divides into many classes when it based on its possible combinational mental factors. There are eighty-nine or one hundred-twenty-one consciousness in ultimate truth.

1. Twelve unwholesome consciousnesses (*akusala citta*),
2. Eighteen rootless consciousnesses (*ahetu citta*),
3. Twenty-four beautiful consciousnesses (*karama sobhana cittas*)
4. Fifteen form realm consciousness (*rupajjhana*),
5. Twelve formless realm consciousness (*arupajjhana*), and
6. Eight supra-consciousnesses (*lokuttara citta*), total of 89 consciousnesses. If eight supra-consciousnesses divided into five *rupajjhana* stages, each of five *rupajjhana* has eight consciousnesses so that will become forty *lokutara cittas*, lastly, $12+18+24+15+12+40=121$ consciousnesses.

3.2.2 Mental factors

An Arises together with *citta*, perishes together with *citta*, takes the same sense object which the *citta* takes, and shares a common physical base with *citta* is called Mental factors.¹² It holds fifty-two classifications:

¹² ibid., p. 61.

Chart of Mental Factors

1. Sabbhacitta-sādhāraṇa cetasikas 7, (essential mental factors, මිශ්ච්‍රීයාදර්ශනුවාධීසිමෘතුවාදා)			
1. Phassa, contact, ත්‍රිණා	2. Vedanā, feeling, ත්‍රිණා	3. Saññā, perception, ත්‍රිණා	4. Cetanā, intention, මේත්‍රාය
5. Ekaggatā, concentration, ත්‍රිණායා	6. Jīvitindriya, life faculty, ත්‍රිණායා	7. Manasikāra, attention, ත්‍රිණා	
2. Pakinṇaka cetasikas 6, (particular mental factors, ද්‍රීජායාධායුෂීසිමෘතුවාදා)			
1. Vitakka, thought conception, ත්‍රිණා	2. Vicāra, discursive thinking, ත්‍රිණා	3. Adhimokkha, decision, ප්‍රාග්‍රැනි	4. Vīriya, effort, ප්‍රේද්‍යුණා
5. Pīti, joy, ත්‍රිණා	6. Chanda, wish, ත්‍රිණා		
3. Akusala cetasikas 14, (immoral mental factor, මිත්තීයාධීසිමෘතුවාදා)			
1. Moha, ignorance, ත්‍රිණාය	2. Ahirika, immoral shame, ප්‍රක්ෂේපාය	3. Anottappa, immoral dread, ත්‍රිණාය	4. Uddhacca, restlessness, ත්‍රිණා
5. Lobha, greed, ත්‍රිණාය	6. Diṭṭhi, wrong view, ත්‍රිණාය	7. Māna, conceit, ත්‍රිණා	8. Dosa, hatred, ත්‍රිණා
9. Issā, jealousy, ප්‍රාග්‍රැනි	10. Macchariya, stinginess, ත්‍රිණා	11. Kukkucca, worry, ත්‍රිණා	12. Thina, sloth, ප්‍රාශ්‍රා
13. Middha, torpor, ත්‍රිණා	14. Vicikicchā, doubt, ප්‍රක්ෂේපා		
4. Sobhana cetasikas 25, (beautiful mental factor, ද්‍රීජායාධායුෂීප්‍රාදා)			
1. Saddhā, faith, ත්‍රිණා	2. Sati, mindfulness, ත්‍රිණා	3. Hirī, moral shame, ප්‍රක්ෂේපා	4. Ottappa, moral dread, ත්‍රිණාය
5. Alobha, non-greed, ත්‍රිණා ප්‍රාග්‍රැනිය	6. Adosa, hatelessness, ත්‍රිණාය	7. Tatramajjhattatā, equanimity, ප්‍රක්ෂේපා	8. Kāya-passaddhi, tranquil mental factors, ප්‍රායෝගිකාධීසිමෘතු
9. Citta-passaddhi, tranquil consciousness, ප්‍රායෝගිකාධීසිමෘතු	10. Kāya-lahutā, lightness of mental factor, ප්‍රායෝගිකාධීසිමෘතු	11. Citta-lahutā, lightness of consciousness, ප්‍රායෝගිකාධීසිමෘතු	12. Kāya-mudutā, elasticity of mental factor, ප්‍රායෝගිකාධීසිමෘතු
13. citta-mudutā, elasticity of mental consciousness, ප්‍රායෝගිකාධීසිමෘතු	14. Kāya-kammaññatā, adaptability of mental factor, ප්‍රායෝගිකාධීසිමෘතු	15. Citta-kammaññatā, adaptability of consciousness, ප්‍රායෝගිකාධීසිමෘතු	16. Kāya-paguññatā, proficiency of mental factor, ප්‍රායෝගිකාධීසිමෘතු
17. Citta-paguññatā, proficiency of consciousness, ප්‍රායෝගිකාධීසිමෘතු	18. Kāyujukatā, uprightness of mental factor, ප්‍රායෝගිකාධීසිමෘතු	19. Cittujukatā, uprightness of consciousness, ප්‍රායෝගිකාධීසිමෘතු	20. Sammā-vāca, right speech, ප්‍රාදානාධීසිමෘතු
21. Sammā-kammanta, right action, ප්‍රාදානාධීසිමෘතු	22. Sammā-ājiva, right livelihood, ප්‍රාදානාධීසිමෘතු	23. Karuṇā, compassion, ත්‍රිණා	24. Muditā, sympathetic joy, ත්‍රිණා ප්‍රක්ෂේපා
25. Paññindriya, wisdom, මේත්‍රාය			Total 7 + 6 + 14 + 25 = 52

3.2.3 Materiality

There are 28 *Rūpas* but the formal definition of *Rūpa* has not been appearing till now, but it is believed that in the ultimate sense *Rūpa* is a formless, shapeless, and massless just as energy.¹³ However, number of the twenty-eight *Rūpas* are as following:

Chart of Materiality

Mahābhūta Rūpa 4, (four great essential elements, ප්‍රධාන ප්‍රක්ෂේප්‍රාණී)	
1. Pathavī, earth, මා	2. Āpo, water, ණ්‍රා
3. Tejo, fire, මී	4. Vāyu, wind, ඩුනා
Upādā Rūpa 24, (derived materialities, ප්‍රංශු ප්‍රක්ෂේප්‍රාණී)	
1. Pasāda rūpa 5, five organs, දේශ්‍යා	2. Gocara rūpa 5, five sense objects, දේශ්‍ය
3. Bhāva rūpa 2, two sex materiality, ඇම්භීත්‍යාර්ථා	4. Hadaya rūpa 1, one heart, ඩීනා
5. Jīvita rūpa 1, one life materiality, ඇංජ්‍යාර්ථා	6. Āhāra rūpa 1, one nutrient, ඇංජ්‍ය
7. Pariccheda rūpa 1, one space, ප්‍රාද්‍යා	8. Viññatti rūpa 2, one intimation, ඇංජ්‍යාර්ථා ආශ්‍රා (ඇංජ්‍යාර්ථා)
9. Vikāra rūpa 2/3, two/three mutible materiality, ප්‍රාද්‍යාර්ථා ප්‍රාද්‍යාර්ථා ප්‍රාද්‍යාර්ථා (දේශ්‍යාර්ථා)	10. Lakkhaṇa rūpa 4, ඇංජ්‍යාර්ථා ප්‍රාද්‍යාර්ථා ප්‍රාද්‍යාර්ථා ප්‍රාද්‍යාර්ථා ප්‍රාද්‍යාර්ථා
Total, 1 Mahābhūta Rūpa + 10 Upādā Rūpa = 11, or 4 Mahābhūta Rūpa + 24 Upādā Rūpa = 28	

3.2.4 Nibbāna

The state of blissful and peaceful are the nature of *Nibbāna*. It is beyond the 31 planes of existence which is out of the world in terms of mind and body. That means the samsara is the nature of five aggregates, and *Nibbāna* is the nature of the absence of the five aggregates. But it is possible to realize the *Nibbāna* through four Paths and their Fruits. There are two kinds of *Nibbāna*: *Kilesa Nibbāna* and *Khandha Nibbāna*. The *Kilesa Nibbāna* is the *Nibbāna* which is only beyond the *kilesas*. And which is absolutely beyond the five aggregates is called *Khandha Nibbāna*.

¹³ ibid., p. 174.

4. Two Truth in *Vaibhāṣika*

4.1 Conventional Truth

The conventional truth *saṃvṛiti-satya* is according to etymology the term *saṃvṛiti* is derived from *vṛi* means to cover, conceal, hide,¹⁴ when fixed with *ti* and *saṃ* that means covering and concealing, and *satya* means truth thus covering or concealing the truth, but in *Abhidharmakośabhbāṣyam* the *saṃvṛitisatya* means relative truth.¹⁵ However, the cognition of an object does not arise when it is destroyed or mentally divided is called conventional truth.¹⁶ For example, a Jug, and water. Therefore, the gross or composite entity is conventional truth.

4.2 Ultimate Truth

The Ultimate truth *paramātha-satya* is the cognition of an object arises when it is destroyed or mentally divided. The fundamentally existent as a subtle aggregate.¹⁷ Therefore, there are five foundations of the knowledge: form basis of appearance, chief mind basis, accompanying basis of mental states, non-concurrent formations basis, and basis of non-compounds.

Chart of Two Truths

Conventional truth	Ultimate truth
1. Styāna (gross) Rūpa	1. Sūkṣma (subtle) Rūpa
2. Styāna Citta	2. Sūkṣma Citta
3. Styāna Cetasikas	3. Sūkṣma Cetasikas
4. Styāna Samskaras	4. Sūkṣma Samskaras
	5. Asamskrita

¹⁴ **Sanskrit English Dictionary**, (New Delhi: AES Publication Pvt. Ltd, 2008), p. 1007.

¹⁵ Vasubandhu, **Abhidharmakośabhbāṣyam**, tr. Leo M. Pruden, (California: Jain Publishing, 2014), p. 910.

¹⁶ ibid., p. 910.

¹⁷ ibid., p. 911.

4.2.1 Form

The *Rūpa* is formable which means objects of the sense's consciousness. It divided into three groups: the sense organs, objects, and *avijñapti*, each of them has also various categories as below:

Chart of Form

Rūpas 11 >	Organs 5	Objects 5	Avijñapti 1
Rūpas 11/55	Organ of sight	Visible matter 20	
	Organ of hearing	Sounds 8	
	Organ of smell	Odors 4	
	Organ of taste	Taste 6	
	Organ of touch	Tangible 11	
Total	5	49	1

4.2.2 Consciousness

According to the *Abhidharmakośabhadhāsyam*, consciousness is the impression relative to each object.¹⁸ It has six classes: Visual consciousness, Auditory consciousness, Olfactory consciousness, Taste consciousness, Touch consciousness, and Mental consciousness.

4.2.3 Mental factors

The thing which is associated with the consciousness by five same equalities is called mental factors. These same qualities are the same support, same object, same aspect, same simultaneous, and same substance. Explicitly, it holds forty-six mental factors:

¹⁸ ibid., p. 74.

Chart of Mental Factors

ສົມບັດທີ່ສະບັບທີ່ <i>Mahdbhumikas</i>		
ຫຼັກສາ feelings	ຍຸເສົາ discrimination	ສົມບັດ intention
ຮີ່າຍ contact	ພື້ນເຕັມ mental engagement	ຍຸດທະນາ aspiration
ມັນຍາ belief	ວິທາ mindfulness	ຕິດຕະຫີກ concentration
ສົມບັດ wisdom		
ດົມບັດທີ່ສະບັບທີ່ <i>Kusalamahabhumikas</i>		
ຍົດຍາ faith	ຍາຍົງຍາ conscientiousness	ມີສັບສົນສາ suppleness
ຍຸດສັກສົນສາ equanimity	ຮັກສົມບັດ shame	ສິ່ງຍົງຍາ embarrassment
ຍັດຕະການເສີດຍາ lacking attachment	ບີ້ຂົງເມືດຍາ lacking hatred	ສີ່ຍັດຕະການ harmless
ຍົດຍາວຸ້າ effort		
ຫຼັກສົມບັດທີ່ສະບັບທີ່ <i>Klesamahabhumikas</i>		
ຍັດຍາ lacking faith	ລົມ້າ laziness	ຫົ້ວ້າຍາ mean-mindedness
ສູງສາ sloth	ກົດ້າ agitation	ຍາຍົງຍາ unconscientiousness
ສິ່ງຍົງຍາວຸ້າ <i>Akusalamahabhumikas</i>		
ຮັກເມືດຍາ shamelessness	ສິ່ງຍົງຍາ non-embarrassment	
ຫຼັກສົມບັດທີ່ສະບັບທີ່ <i>Parittaklesabhumikas</i>		
ຫຼັກສາ anger	ຍົກລາຍາ concealment	ຍົກລາຍາ miserliness
ຍົງຍາ jealousy	ຍົກ້າຍາ spite	ຍົກລາຍາຮັກສາ harmfulness
ຍົກລາຍາ resentment	ຍົກ້າຍາ dissimulation	ຍົກລາຍາ ຊາວເຫຼີກ deceit
ຫຼັກສາ haughtiness		
ໜົກລັກສົມບັດ <i>Aniyata-caittas</i>		
ຫຼັກສາ rough investigation	ຍົດຍາ subtle investigation	ຍົດຍາ reget
ຍົກສາ sleep	ຍົດຍາ hurtful	ຍົກສາ attachment
ຍົດຍາ pride	ຍົດຍາ indecisive mind	
Total 46		

4.2.4 Cittaviprayukta Saṃskaras

The *dharmas* not associated with the mind (*cittaviprayukta Saṃskaras*) are *prāpti*, *aprāpti*, *sabhaṅgāta*, *āsamjñika*, and two absorptions, life, characteristics, *nāmakāya*, etc. However, there are fourteen categories as details in the below chart:

Chart of Cittaviprayukta Saṃskaras

Cittaviprayukta Saṃskaras 14, ඇත්ත්වුන්			
1. Acquisition, ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨයා	2. Non-Acquisition, ඝ්‍යෙෂ්ඨයා	3. Similarity of type, ආයාත්තයා	4. Having no Discrimination, ද්‍රුෂ්ඨයා
5. Absorption without discrimination, ද්‍රුෂ්ඨයා පරිදුෂ්ඨයා	6. Absorption of cessation, පරෝෂයා පිශ්ච්චයා	7. Life facility, ජ්‍යා	8. Birth, ජ්‍යා
9. Aging, ක්‍රා	10. Existence, ප්‍රත්‍යා	11. Impermanence, පිශ්ච්චයා	12. Group of name, පිශ්ච්චයා
13. Group of words, කේෂක්‍රා	14. Group of letters, පිශ්ච්චයා		Total 14

These *dharmas* are not associated with the mind, and not the nature of *rupa* or physical matter. They are included in *samskaraskandha*. Hence, it is called the *cittaviprayukta saṃskaras*, because these are disjoined from the mind due to being non-material, and resemble the mind.¹⁹

4.2.5 Asaṃskrita

Space and the two types of extinctions are unconditioned things (*Asaṃskrita*). Space is that which does not hinder the matter, but quality of space and space element are different.

Pratisamkhyānirodha is the thing which disjunction from the impure dharmas is called *Nirvana*. *Pratisamkhyāna* or *pratisamkhyā* signify a certain pure *prajñā*, the comprehension of the truth. The extinction of which one takes possession by this *prajñā* is called *pratisamkhyānirodha*, and all kinds of *Nirvana* are included into *Pratisamkhyānirodha*.

¹⁹ ibid., p. 206.

Apratisarhkhyanirodha is an absolute hindering of arising. It consists the absolute hindering of the arising in/from future dharmas. Because it is obtained thus it's so-called, not by the comprehension of the truths, but by the insufficiency of the causes of arising.²⁰

5. Conclusion

The conclusion in the outline is that seven books of *Abhidhamma* consist of both schools explained in content (2). *Theravāda*'s concepts, Conventional accepted without any intentions is conventional truth content (3.1). Ultimate truth is existing because of their intrinsic nature content (3.2). Categories of ultimate truth are expressed in their sub-contents. *Vaibhāṣika* concepts, the cognition of an object does not arise when it is destroyed or mentally divided is called conventional truth content (4.1). That the cognition of object arises when it is destroyed or mentally divided is called Ultimate truth content (4.1). Clarification of its classes are mentioned in sub-contents. Therefore, this paper covers necessary information of the concepts of the two truths in *Theravāda* and *Vaibhāṣika*.

²⁰ ibid., p. 59.

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