

## *A STUDY OF JAVANA-CITTA IN ABHIDHAMMA PHILOSOPHY*

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**T**he literal meaning of the term Javana is ‘going quickly’ — javanaṃ ti vegena gamanaṃ. Its technical sense is the ‘direct attitude’. Here, there is the direct attitude of mind towards utilization or rejection of the object. In case the object thus determined is an agreeable one, the mind utilizes it and if it is otherwise, it rejects it. The function of javana is to experience the objects or to relish the objects. This act of ‘javana’ is being performed by fifty five types of consciousness mentioned below-

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55 (Fifty five)

Ācārya Buddhaghosa in his magnum-opus work Visuddhimagga has discussed Javanacitta. While discussing conformity knowledge (anuloma ñāna katha), he says that ‘Then next to the functional (adverting) consciousness that arose displacing the life continuum, the first impulsion consciousness arises making formations as object in the same way, maintaining the continuity of consciousness. This is called the ‘preliminary work.’ Next to that a second impulsion consciousness arises making formations its object in the same way. This is called the ‘access’ next to that a third impulsion consciousness also arises making formations its object in the same way.’ In the Visuddhimagga-Mahatikā, Ācārya Dharmapalathera says that javana and bhavanga are two places.

Further, Ācārya Buddhaghosa says that a person should make an endeavour to guard the sense doors through the arising of mindfulness, i.e. sati-‘satikāvatena piddanattā paṭipajjati. It is actually speaking not guarding the eye-door in literal sense, but it is

the guarding of mind functioning with eye-door. It should be understood that on arrival of an object, there is an appearance of a course of cognition (citta-vithi), which starts from bhavaṅga and ends with tadāmbana. In this process, the guarding of mind functions with sense organs and it is possible at the javana moment. Therefore, it is stated... “javana khaṇe sace dussilayaṇ vā muṭṭhasaccaṇ vā aññanaṇ vā akkhanti vā kossajjaṇ vā upajjati, asamvaro hoti. Evam honto pana so ‘cakkhu indriyo asamvaro’ ti vuccati. Kasmā ? Yasmā tasmi (asamvare) sāti dvāraṇ pi aguttaṇ hoti, bhavaṅga pi, āvajjanādini pi vithicittāni. ... Tasmā javanakkhane uppajjamāno pi cakkhu indriye samvaro’ ti vutto”.

Javana citta may be also seen in the Patthānuddesadīpani. Lady Sayadaw states that “forty-seven kinds of lokiya-javana, comprising the twelve classes of immoral consciousness, the seventeen mundane classes of moral consciousness and the eighteen classes of inoperative consciousness are here termed as the āsevana-paccaya.

The javana is the most important from ethical standpoint, as it is the psychological stage in which good or evil actions are performed. Whether the object presented to the mind is desirable or not, a person can make the javana process good or bad. It should be understood that moral and immoral javanas refer to the active side of the life (Kammabhava). They condition the future existence (upapattibhava). Apart from them, there are the Phala and Kriyā javanas. In the Kriyā javanas, which are experienced only by ‘Buddhas and Arahants, the respective cetanas lack kamma creative power.

The Abhidhamma philosophy explains that the speed of an object is sixteen times less than that of a consciousness. One moment of an object is equal to sixteen thought moments. Thus, the object lasts for seventeen thought moments. But, it is to be remembered here that all objects don’t stay for seventeen thought moments. Only the very distinct (atimahanta) object lasts for seventeen thought moments; others which are ‘distinct (mahanta) last upto the javana stage of consciousness only. Further it is said that in the process of

cognition, every consciousness unit has three aspects or phases. e.g. genesis, duration and decay. But these three aspects are mutually exclusive of each other or cannot occur simultaneously but successively. And, yet a consciousness act comprising three elements is technically regarded as occupying one moment. It is important to note that there can be full knowledge of the object only after the lapse of seventeen moments of conscious activity. The object is supposed to endure for all this span of time.

It is to be understood that an javana act occupies twenty one (7 x 3) moments since one consciousness unit (citta-khana) has three phases-genesis (uppāda), duration (thiti) and decay (bhanga). If we omit the last phase i.e. of decay (bhanga), it must have one moment for coming into existence, seven moments of duration (thiti) and the last moment for its collapse (bhanga). As for the object it must endure for full seventeen moments and then after being apperceived it is affirmed that it disappears. It can be derived from this account that the Theravada Abhidhamma does not believe in the theory of momentary existence.

Regarding the object of apperception (javana) and the previous psychical acts, it is an intriguing problem that the object is supposed to endure intact for the period in which the perceptual process completes its cycle. But it is not quite clear whether the mind, be it a series of an individual act takes only the image of the object or directly apprehends it. Perhaps, the latter alternative is to be accepted in preference to the former. If that be so, Theravada perception is to be understood in terms of presentative theory. Now a question arises that why the object should pass out of existence after the whole psychical process of apperception (javana). This act of consciousness is asserted to endure for seven moments. It is not clear, whether it is the same mental act, or a series of similar process.

Thus, the object survives for the full course of cognition consisting of seventeen thought moments such as: “The fourteen thought-arising, two vibrations of life-continuum and one thought-moment that passed at the inception; at the end of that, the phase of the object has also passed away, it called ‘very great’-“ettāvattā cuddasā

vīthiccittuppādā, dve bhavaṅgacalanāni, pubbevātīta-kamekacittakkhananti katvā sattarasa-cittakkhanāni paripurenti tato paraṇ nirujjhāti ārammanametaṇ atimahantaṇ nāma gocaraṇ.” Nārada Mahāthera says that —“as a rule when an object enters the consciousness through any of the doors, one moment of the life-continuum elapses. This is known as atita bhavaṅga, then the corresponding thought-process runs uninterruptedly for sixteen thought moments. The object thus presented is called as ‘very great’. On the other hand, we observe that “if the object enters the avenue of sense, having passed (a few moments) and is not able to survive till the arising of the retentive thought-moments, which is termed ‘great’-yāva tadārammanuppāda pana appahīntatita kamapāthamāgatam ārammanaṇ mahantaṇ nāma, tattha javanāvasāne bhavaṅgapāto va honti, natthi tadā rammanuppādo. If the object that enters the avenue of sense, having passed (a few moments) and is not able to survive even till the arising of the javanas, is termed as ‘slight’. In that case even the javanas do not arise, but determining consciousness only lasts for two or three moments and then there is subsidence into life-continuum, that object that is about to cease and which enters the avenue of sense, of sense, having passed a few moments and not able to survive till the arising of determining consciousness, is termed ‘very slight’. In the different way the mind-door cognition has two factors regarding the object as clear or obscure. “When a real object enters the avenue of that door, then, at the termination of the variation of the life-continuum of mind-door apprehension and of apperception, the retentive resultant (moments) take place. After that situation, (a real object) subsides into the life-continuum-‘mano-dvāre pana yadi vibhutamālambanaṇ āpāthamāgacchati, tatoparaṇ-bhavāṅgacalanamanodvāravajjana javanāvasane tadālambanapākāni pavattanti, tato paraṇ bhvaṅgapāto’. However, “When the object is obscure, then the subsidence occurs at the termination of apperception, no retention takes place-‘abhibhūte ālambane javanāvasane bhavaṅgapātova hoti, natthi tadālambanuppādo. In addition to the theoretical aims that have

been indicated, Narada Mahathera has given a good example for regarding the mind-door cognition. He said that-“When, for instance a person looks at the radiant moon on a cloudless night, he gets a faint glimpse of the surrounding stars as well. He focuses his attention to the moon, but he cannot avoid the sight of stars around. The moon is regarded as a great object, while the stars are regarded as minor objects. Both moon and stars are perceived by the mind at different moments. According to Abhidhamma, it is not correct to say that stars are perceived by the sub-consciousness and the moon by the consciousness. Here, we would notice that in this course of cognition arising through the mind-door. There are three kinds of thought-moments i.e., “mind door cognition (mano-dvāravajjana), impulsion (javana) and registering consciousness (tadālamhana) and ten thought-moments in all, i.e. mind-door cognition takes one stage, impulsion (javana) takes the seven stages and the registering consciousness takes two-vitthi cittāni tīneva cittuppādā daseritā vitthārena panetthekacattālisa vibhāvaye.”

In the Abhidhammatthasangaho, there is the description of ecstatic impulsive thought-procedure (appanājavana-vāra citta vīthi). This procedure consists of the four factors as preparation (parikamma), approximation (upacara), adaptation (anuloma) and sublimation (gotrabhu). Narada Mahathera has stated that-

“The initial thought moment of the appanā-javana process is termed ‘parikamma’ because it is a preparation for the desire for higher consciousness whether sublime (mahaggata) or supramundane (lokuttara). This is followed by another thought-moment known as ‘upacāra’ because it arises in proximity to the higher consciousness. Ordinarily these two thought moments, arise at the beginning of the ‘appanā-javana-process, but if the person is morally advanced only ‘upacāra’ moment arises without the initial ‘parikamma’ moment. The third moment is known as ‘anuloma’ because it arises in harmony with the preceding thought moments and the following ‘gotrabhū’ thought moment. The ‘gotrabhū’, literally, means that which overcomes the sense-sphere lineage or

that which develops the sublime or exalted lineage. Immediately after that this gotrabhū-thought moment ‘arises the ‘appanā-jhāna’ thought moment. Absolute one-pointedness of the mind is gained at this advanced stage of mental development.

The stress upon the four functions and the dominance of its structures derives the subjective orientation, which is possible to reach up to the twenty-six kinds of form and formless consciousness (mahaggata) and the supramundane consciousness (lokuttara). We can see this definition under the ecstatic thought process arisen for four or five successive moments, which is sure to intrude ourselves again and again, in the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaho. From this text we observe that “after they (the ecstatic thought- process) cease to arise at the fourth moment or the fifth moment in the realm of form-sphere, or formless-sphere to supramundane realm, which fits the case of the ecstatic process with the appropriate effort-“yathā-kammaṇ uppajjitvā-niruddhānantarameva yathārataṇ catutthaṇ pañcamaṇ vā chabbīsati mahaggata-lokuttara javanesu yathābhinihāravasena yaś kiñce javanaṇ appanāvithi-motarati.”

Abhidhammatthasaṅgaho further throws light on the law of javana (javana-niyama). Amongst the javanas, in a minor javana – process, the sense sphere javanas run only for seven or six times. But in the case of feeble activity at the time of death, and so on, they do so just five times. However, they say that the Blessed one has four or five reviewing consciousness when activity is swift, such as at the time of the miracle of powers. But the higher impulses, for the beginner when first fixing and the impulses of higher knowledge always, impel only once; after that there is lapse into the existence-continuum. The arising of the four paths endures only for one thought moment. Thereafter two or three Fruit thought moments arise accordingly. Then comes subsidence into life-continuum. At the time of supreme cessation (Nirodha samāpatti), the fourth arūpa-javana runs twice and then contacts Cessation. When emerging (from this ecstasy) either Anāgāmī Fruit- consciousness or Arahatta Fruit consciousness arises accordingly. When it ceases there is subsidence into the continuum.

Thus, from the foregoing accounts, we have seen that how Javanacitta plays an important role in the apperception of the object through appāna javana vāra citta vīthi and javana niyama.