

# Mind and its Process in the Thought Moment

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## Introduction

In terms of “cognition”, it undeniably springs from mind and its process owing that mind gets various functions depending on its activities functioning as its process under its stream flowing along with the process; it is so-called “mental process” which is the process leading the perception or the thought moment. Anyways, mind is said to get the complicated functions; so, it hardly understands its function whether the function in general or the function of perceptual process. In terms of thought moment, mind does not solely get the function but the object instigates mind turning to an active mode and functioning in perceiving the object later. By this, Buddhism explains not only mind but mental process functioning with the organ-impacted object in cooperative ways so as to clarify the way that mind gets the function in thought moment evidently. Thus, it is necessary making sense of the definition, the nature of mind and mental process first, then, the cognitive process later, if mind in thought moment is to be understood explicitly.

## The Definition of “Mind”

There are various terms related to the terms “Mind” such as *viññāṇa* (consciousness), *citta* (mind, consciousness), and *mano* (mind); they are literally one in meaning.<sup>2</sup> However, each of them is certainly different in the sphere of function when they are interconnected in the perceptual process. As of Mind, it combines with the following aspects – that is, sensations, perceptions, volitional activities, and consciousness.<sup>3</sup> However, when its meaning is concerned, it is given us various essential meanings, viz. thought, heart, consciousness, conception,

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<sup>2</sup> Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification)*, tr. Bhikkhū Ñāṇamoli (Columbo: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010), p. 453.

<sup>3</sup> Phramaha Somphong Unyo, *The Concept of Perception: A Comparative Studies of Theravada Buddhism and Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology*, (PhD diss., University of Madras, 2014), p. 8.

opinion, imagination, mood, emotion, spirit, idea, and attitude.<sup>4</sup> By this, in terms of perception, mind is definitely said to be the subject or knower whose function is to know the perceived object.

### **The Nature of Mind**

Mind has its own nature which reveals meaningfully its behaviors. According to Buddhism, mind dominates all states whether good or bad that makes an influence to mental process whether negative or positive way depending on which state of mind people are reacting, as saying in *Dhammapada*, one of those Buddhist Commentaries, as follows:

Mind is the forerunner of (all evil) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with wicked mind, because of that, suffering follows one, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the drought-ox.

Mind is the forerunner of (all good) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with pure mind, because of that, happiness follows one, even as one's shadow that never leaves.<sup>5</sup>

Buddhism gives the other essential nature of mind as its behavior that is the flickering and fickle mind which is hard to guard and control as mentioned in *Dhammapada*:

The flickering, fickle mind, difficult to guard, difficult to control – the wise person straightens it as a Fletcher straightens an arrow.

Like a fish that is drawn from its watery abode and thrown upon land, even so does this mind flutter. Hence should the realm of the passions be shunned.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Phramaha Soomphong Unyo, *The Concept of Perception*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Narada Thera, (tr.), *The Dhammapada* (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993), pp. 1, 5.

<sup>6</sup> *The Dhammapada*, p. 35.

Besides, Buddhism points out the essential behavior of mind in creative manner that is that mind is assemble to the artistic and his masterpiece accomplished by operation of mind.<sup>7</sup>

With all of these natures of mind, Buddhism wants to make it clear that mind is able to produce an effect in action whether negative or positive action effectively; moreover, it is significantly able to design and draft the project creatively and valuably.

### **Mind and Mental Process in Thought Moment**

Naturally, mind is in two modes; one is passive and other is active. In so far as mind is not impinged by any object, it is in the passive mode which is so-called “the stream of being (*bhavaṅga-sota*)”;<sup>8</sup> it is the passive level of mind which might be called “past unconsciousness (*atītabhavaṅga*)”.<sup>9</sup> This stream of being always goes on occurring endlessly in a period of dreamless sleep, etc., like the current of a river. Soon, any of sense-objects impinges on any of sense-organs, the stream of being is interrupted and set into vibration – which is called ‘vibrating unconsciousness (*bhavanga calana*)’. Suddenly, the vibration has reached its climax, the stream of being is arrested – which is called ‘arrest-unconsciousness (*bhavangaupaccheda*) and the being changes its potential state into the state of activity. Here is called the stage of unconscious moment which is the initial stage of the thought moment.

When the last stream of being has been arrested, mind is adverted to an object through any of sense-doors. To put it more precisely, there must be mind adverting five sense-objects through five sense-organs (*pañca-dvārāvajjana-*

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<sup>7</sup> *The Expositor (Atthasālinī)*, tr. Pe Maung Tin (London: Pali Text Society, 1921), p. 85.

<sup>8</sup> Govinda, *The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1991), p. 132.

<sup>9</sup> Ediriwira Sarachchandra, *Buddhist Psychology of Perception* (Dehiwala: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 1994), p. 46.

*citta*);<sup>10</sup> for example, when a visible object impinges on sense-organ of eyes; then, there has to be mind adverting to the visible object through sense-organ of eyes – eye-door-adverting-mind (*cakkhu dvārāvajjana-citta*). Here is the stage of five-door-adverting-mind (*pañca-dvārāvajjana-citta*). By this stage, subject merely turns to the object because of arousing its intension after the stream of being has set in vibration and is arrested; thus, it does not know more about the object.

When mind has already adverted any of sense-objects through any of sense-organs, five-consciousness occurs as a consequence, viz. eye-consciousness, the function of which is to see (*dassana*); ear-consciousness, the function of which is to hear (*savana*); nose-consciousness, the function of which is to smell (*ghāyana*); tongue-consciousness, the function of which is to taste (*sāyana*); and body-consciousness, the function of which is to experience the tangible object (*phusana*) respectively.<sup>11</sup> Here is the stage of five-consciousness (*pañca viññāṇa*).

Having experienced the object by one of five-consciousness, mind gets the function further in the receiving stage which is called “receiving mind (*sampaṭicchana-citta*)”; for example, when the object has been already seen by eye-consciousness, the same object is received by the later mind; that is, receiving mind (*sampaṭicchana-citta*). This moment of mind is said to be the moment of reception of the object so seen.<sup>12</sup> Here is the stage of receiving mind (*sampaṭicchana-citta*).

Having received the object, mind gets the function further by investigating the received object; it is so-called “the investigating mind (*santīraṇa citta*)”. In fact, the investigating mind is said to be the momentary examination of the

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<sup>10</sup> Nina van Gorkom, *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*, (London: Zolage, 2008), p. 127.

<sup>11</sup> Phramaha Somphong Unyo, *The concept of Perception: A Comparative Studies of Theravada Buddhism and Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>12</sup> Nārada Mahā Thera, ed., *A Manual of Abhidhamma*, (Kuala Lumpur: the Buddhist Missionary Society, 1979), p. 49.

received object in other ways.<sup>13</sup> Here is the stage of investigating mind (*santīraṇa citta*).

After investigating the object so received, mind gets the function further by determining the investigated object. Mind in this moment is called “determining-mind (*votthapana-citta*). During this moment of thought, the investigated object is arranged for constituting it into a definite object thereby differentiation, limitation, discrimination, and definition of it respectively. This is done for the purpose of separating the investigated object from the surroundings for the apperception in next step.<sup>14</sup> Here is the stage of determining-mind (*votthapana-citta*).

Next mind in the thought moment is impulsion mind (*javana*); it is mind functioning of running through the object.<sup>15</sup> When mind has already reached the moment of impulsion, it is said to be the culmination of the whole progress; the full perception or knowledge of the object.<sup>16</sup> Here is the stage of impulsion mind (*javana citta*).

Here comes to the final moment of mind in thought moment; that is, the moment of mind getting the function of registration or retention of the object (*tadā lambana-citta*).<sup>17</sup> After getting registration of the object completely, again, mind is subsided to the stream of being (*bhavaṅga-sota*).

Mind in each thought moment from the stream of being (*bhavaṅga-sota*) to the moment of registration of the object (*tadā lambana-citta*) consists of ten kinds getting the constant function in seventeen-thought-moment in totals; each moment has three phases, viz. the arising or genesis phase (*uppāda*), static or development

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<sup>13</sup> Nārada Mahā Thera, *A Manual of Abhidhamma*, p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> Shwe Zan Aung, *Compendium of Philosophy*, ed. and rev. Rhys Davids (London: Oxford University Press, 1910), p.29.

<sup>15</sup> Gorkom, *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*, p. 138.

<sup>16</sup> Govinda, *The Psychological Attitude*, p. 135.

<sup>17</sup> Gorkom, *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*, p. 146.

phase (*thiti*), and the phase of cessation or dissolution (*bhaṅga*).<sup>18</sup> Apart from functioning thereby succession from previous thought moment of mind to the next ones constantly, mind of each moment gets the same object in the thought moment also.

## Conclusion

Buddhism has considerably revealed that mind getting the function in thought moment consists of ten kinds; namely, the stream of being (*bhavaṅga-sota*) with two minds, i.e., vibrating unconsciousness (*bhavaṅga calana*) and the arrest-unconsciousness (*bhavaṅgaupaccheda*); five-door-adverting-mind (*pañca-dvārāvajjana-citta*); five-consciousness ((*pañca viññāṇa*); receiving mind (*sampaṭicchana-citta*); investigating mind (*santīraṇa citta*); determining-mind (*voṭṭhapana-citta*); impulsion mind (*javana citta*).; registration or retention mind (*tadālamhana-citta*). Each of these minds in thought moments gets function in different moments; they are conclusively seventeen moments. More significantly, according to Buddhism, each moment of minds in thought moment occurs with three phases, i.e., the arising phase (*uppāda*), static phase (*thiti*), and the phase of cessation (*bhaṅga*). Having completed occurring with three phases, each of them gets succession to others constantly without interruption.

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<sup>18</sup> Nārada Mahā Thera, *A Manual of Abhidhamma Being*, p. 240.

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