



Ministry of Culture
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INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST CONFEDERATION (IBC)

&

SCHOOL OF BUDDHIST STUDIES & CIVILIZATION
GAUTAM BUDDHA UNIVERSITY



Jointly organize

INTERNATIONAL ABHIDHAMMA DAY
Śharada Pūrṇimā Celebration

&

TWO DAYS INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

on

THE RELEVANCE OF ABHIDHAMMA IN UNDERSTANDING
BUDDHIST THOUGHT: TEXT, TRADITION, AND
CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

on 6th & 7th October, 2025.

Venue: On 6th Oct. Abhidhamma Day at GBU Main Auditorium
On 7th Oct. International Seminar at GBU International Convention centre
Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, UP, India

Registration QR



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International Abhidhamma Day Celebrations & Two Days International Seminar

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International Abhidhamma Day Celebrations & Two Days International Seminar

CALL PAPERS

On International Abhidhamma Day Celebrations & Two-Day International Seminar On

“The Relevance of Abhidhamma in Understanding Buddhist Thought: Text, Tradition, and Contemporary Perspectives”

International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) in collaboration with Gautam Buddha University (GBU), Greater Noida is celebrating the International Abhidhamma Day on the full moon day of Śharada Pūrṇimā on 6th & 7th October, 2025.

The wisdom of Buddha Dhamma has been preserved for centuries in the Tipiṭaka, the “Three Baskets.” Each of the three has its own character. The Vinaya Piṭaka lays out the rules that guide the daily life of monks and nuns. The Sutta Piṭaka carries the living words of the Buddha, spoken in sermons, parables, and conversations. The Abhidhamma Piṭaka, however, is something else entirely. It does not tell stories, nor does it prescribe conduct. Instead, it takes reality apart moment by moment, thought by thought, searching for the patterns that lie beneath. For this reason, it came to be known as the “higher teaching” (*paramatthadesanā*), a way of pointing past everyday speech to truths that are harder to see.

Buddhist tradition holds that seven years after his enlightenment, the Buddha ascended to the Tāvatiṃsa heaven (Heaven of the Thirty-Three Gods) to teach the Abhidhamma (higher doctrine) to his mother, Queen Māyā, who had died soon after his birth and been reborn in that realm. This act was seen as a fulfillment of the Buddha’s obligation to repay his debt of gratitude to his mother by giving her the highest spiritual teaching. After the rains retreat and completion of the Abhidhamma teaching, the Buddha descended to earth at the city of Sankisa (Sankassa). According to legend, his descent was witnessed by humans and gods alike, symbolizing the merging of divine and earthly realms. In the Buddhist tradition, the Abhidhamma is preserved as the third section of the canon. It is made





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up of seven works, including the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, *Vibhaṅga*, *Dhātukathā*, *Puggalapaññatti*, *Kathāvatthu*, *Yamaka* and *Paṭṭhāna*. Together, they describe existence in terms of four realities: *citta* (consciousness), *cetasika* (mental factors), *rūpa* (material phenomena), and *nibbāna* (the unconditioned). Other schools produced their own Abhidhamma texts as well. The most influential was Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośa, a work that shaped Buddhist thought across Central and East Asia.

The origin of Abhidhamma remains a subject of ongoing debate. While some traditions assert that it was taught directly by the Buddha, many scholars contend it developed over generations through systematic analysis and discussion within early Buddhist communities. Whichever perspective is adopted, its importance is clear: Abhidhamma gave Buddha Dhamma a distinctive intellectual character, setting it apart from philosophical schools such as Nyāya, Sāṃkhya, and Vedānta. Beyond philosophical theory, Abhidhamma functions as a practical guide informing ethical choices, structuring meditation practice, and providing a framework for understanding impermanence, suffering, and the absence of self. What distinguishes the Abhidhamma is its ongoing relevance; the detailed analysis of consciousness and mental states it offers frequently aligns with core questions in modern psychology and neuroscience. In fact, Abhidhamma was formulating inquiries about perception, subjective experience, and cognition long before these became central to contemporary scientific research. Far from being an addendum to Buddhist scripture, the Abhidhamma remains a cornerstone of the tradition. It serves as a vital meeting point of philosophy and practical discipline, offering insights and methods that continue to inform and address the realities faced by present-day practitioners and thinkers.

Sub-Themes

1. Doctrinal and Philosophical Foundations

At the core of the Abhidhamma is the doctrine of ultimate realities (*paramatthadhammas*). Everyday terms like “person” or “self” are seen as conventional, while the Abhidhamma instead analyzes experience into four realities: *citta*, *cetasika*, *rūpa*, and *nibbāna*.

Citta is the consciousness, bare moment of awareness.

Cetasikas—mental factors or psychic factors.

Rūpa refers to the material aggregate or physical domain governed by natural laws.

Nibbāna is unique: the cessation of suffering and the unconditioned goal of the path.

What makes the **Abhidhamma** stand out is its close attention to the mind. Instead of speculating about hidden substances or abstract principles, it looks at experience as it really unfolds—moment by





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moment. Because of this, many today see it as an early form of Buddhist psychology. The texts speak often of **citta**, the brief flash of awareness that arises and disappears in an instant. These moments are many and varied—sometimes counted as 89, sometimes 121—and they are grouped in different ways: by quality, by sphere of existence, by the part they play in knowing. Yet no *citta* stands alone. Each is shaped by **cetasikas**, the mental factors like feeling, intention, or attention, which color every moment of life. Watching how these states appear and vanish, practitioners come to see change, conditionality, and the absence of permanence. The Abhidhamma also points to how the mind can be trained. **Mindfulness (sati)** keeps awareness steady; **concentration (samādhi)** gathers it into focus. When these two work together, the mind becomes balanced and clear, and this clarity makes room for **insight (vipassanā)** to arise. The difference is that the Abhidhamma places all this within a wider framework of ethics and liberation, where the aim is not only to cope with life but to transcend suffering altogether. This is why its ideas continue to matter. **Mindfulness-based therapies** in psychology, widely used to ease stress and steady the emotions, draw directly on this way of seeing attention. Cognitive researchers note the similarity between the Buddhist picture of the mind and current models of consciousness as a flow of events.

2. Abhidhamma in Interdisciplinary Perspectives

The **Abhidhamma** shows that perception and thought unfold in split seconds, almost like flashes. The Abhidhamma describes consciousness in much the same way: each moment of *citta* rises and fades quickly, followed by the next. Alongside it are the mental factors (*cetasikas*)—feeling, attention, intention—that shape experience. What science often measures in brain patterns, the Abhidhamma approaches from the inside, reminding us that lived experience cannot be reduced to mechanics alone. Some parallels also appear in the study of **artificial intelligence**. The Abhidhamma explains the flow of thought (*citta-vīthi*) in steps: contact, recognition, intention, and response. Machines process information in a similar sequence, even if they lack awareness. The comparison raises questions: if both people and machines run on conditions, where do we locate agency, responsibility, or identity? The Abhidhamma also speaks clearly about **ethics**. At its heart is intention (*cetanā*). A kind motive leads to good; an angry or greedy one leads to harm. This simple truth finds new relevance in debates today—in medicine, technology, and AI design—where responsibility and compassion must guide decision-making.

3. Comparative and Cross-Cultural Studies

While the Theravāda preserved its system in Pāli, other Buddhist traditions developed their own ways of analyzing reality, sometimes agreeing, sometimes taking very different paths. In the **Theravāda**





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approach, ultimate truth is explained through four categories: *citta* (consciousness), *cetasikas* (mental factors), *rūpa* (material qualities or form), and *nibbāna* (the unconditioned). The style is highly analytical, almost psychological, with careful attention to momentary states and the conditional links between them. The **Sarvāstivādins** went in another direction. They argued that dharmas exist across past, present, and future (*sarvamasti*), giving their philosophy a stronger ontological tone. This system was later organized and critiqued in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*, a work that shaped Buddhist thought across much of Asia. The **Yogācāra** school shifted the focus yet again. Drawing on earlier Abhidharma methods but reshaping them, Yogācāra taught that reality is nothing but consciousness (*vijñaptimātra*). Their idea of a "storehouse consciousness" (*ālaya-vijñāna*) explained how karmic seeds continue across lifetimes, offering a more holistic vision of mental life. These varied perspectives created fertile ground for **Mahāyāna philosophy**. Thinkers like **Nāgārjuna** challenged the very assumptions of Abhidharma and unfolded the radical doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Yogācāra, meanwhile, reworked Abhidharma psychology into bold new models of awareness. What began as technical classification became the springboard for some of Buddha Dhamma's most creative ideas.

4. Abhidhamma in Contemporary Relevance

What the Abhidhamma once described—attention, intention, and emotion—now shapes programs in schools, hospitals, and workplaces. These practices help people steady the mind, ease stress, and act with more balance. Within Buddhist circles, the same insights still guide *vipassanā*, insight meditation reminding practitioners that awareness and ethics walk hand in hand. The Abhidhamma's emphasis on intention brings striking contemporary relevance to fields such as medicine, education, and technology, especially in debates around artificial intelligence. The Abhidhamma asserts that the ethical quality of any action rests in its underlying intention; this principle translates into practical guidance for both professional and personal conduct. The Abhidhamma's stress on "rooted" wholesome intentions (*hetū, muḍā*) directly informs frameworks that prize responsibility and compassion in decision-making.

Sub-Themes:

1. Doctrinal and Philosophical Foundations
2. Abhidhamma in Interdisciplinary Perspectives
3. Comparative and Cross-Cultural Studies
4. Abhidhamma in Contemporary Relevance

In this connection, we invite abstracts from Academicians, Research scholars, Buddhist practitioners, freelance scholars and budding researchers/students, who are working or intended to work in the field of Buddhist Studies/Buddhism and other Ancient Indian Traditions, on the above theme and related





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areas, are advised to submit an electronic copy of his/her abstract(s)/Full Papers on or before 30, September 2025 and Full Papers (Max. 4500- 5000 words limit). Abstracts (maximum word length 500) can be sent in MS word format to email: abhidhammaday2025@gmail.com Schedule of the conference for paper presentation will be communicated by October 1, 2025.

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR - RELATED ENQUIRY

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