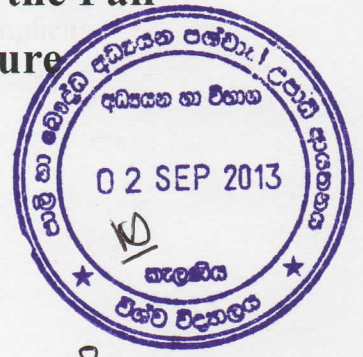


**A Comparative Study of the Psychological Process
of Sense Experience with Reference to the Pāli
Discourses and Exegetical Literature**



*Recommended
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Abstract

Sense experience plays the most crucial role in human life and it was for the sake of understanding it in the proper sense that Buddhism was founded. However, the special focus of this research will be given to the theory of psychological process of sense experience both in the early and later Buddhism. To understand the development of this theory properly, the evolutionary and comparative approaches have been employed consistently throughout the research.

The main questions that this research tries to answer are “Why did Buddhism need to formulate a new theory of psychological process of sense experience distinct from the prevailing theories?” “If the early theory of psychological process of sense experience had been proven its validity and effectiveness in understanding human predicament, why should later Buddhist scholiasts need to develop a new theory?” “What are the benefits and usefulness of the new theory of psychological process of sense experience at the theoretical as well as practical level?” In order to answer these questions satisfactorily, the library research has been utilized in order to collect data, which is further analyzed, compared and contrasted, so that it leads to the final result to be expected.

Highly speculative views and ritual ceremonies were considered to become ultimate means in order to satisfy intellectual and emotional needs of the people, but Buddhism considered them as unsatisfactory and insufficient means to liberate oneself from the bondage of the underlying tendencies (*anusaya*). Underlying tendencies are deep-rooted and they arise as outburst (*pariyuṭṭhāna*) at the cognitive level and manifest into bodily and verbal actions (*vītikāma*) whenever it is possible. Therefore, to eradicate these underlying tendencies, one should understand fully the process of sense experience, starting from the meeting of sense faculty, sense data and sense-consciousness into a deeper psychological process ending in creation of bondage which is not only creating various social problem but also prolongs *samsāric* journey. With the advent of Buddhist scholasticism, a new theory of the psychological process of sense experience (*cittavīthi*) which is started from the vibration of the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*) and ends at the registration (*tadārāmmaṇa*), was introduced.

After a critical analysis, it can be concluded that the introduction of a new theory was not meant to betray the early theory but rather it was meant to solve various problems such as continuity of consciousness, psycho-ethical problems, *Nirodhasamāpatti*, epistemological problem and so on.

Keywords: *cittavīthi*, *anusaya*, *bhavaṅga*, *papañca*, sense experience