



# **Title: The 84000 Dhammakhandha of Buddhism in Service of Human Enlightenment**

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## **Abstract**

84000 Dhammakhandha is a very well recognized figure in almost all sects of Buddhism throughout the world. This figure has been referred to, in the Theragatha, Mahayana, Sarvastivada and also in various Buddhist meditation practices. 84,000 Dhammakhandha and the construction of 84,000 Stupa / Viharam has been very seriously patronized during the reign of Asoka as the complete teaching of the Buddha. This Asoka's most famous legendary act, changed him from Asoka to Dhammasoka. The aim of this paper is to explore the 84000 Dhammakhandha of Buddhism in service of Human Enlightenment Suddhadhamma.

*Keywords:* 84000 Dhammakhandha, Suddhadhamma, Stupa

## Introduction

The Buddhist world is aware of the phrase ‘84000 Dhammakhandha’ (Dhamma teachings) which is the traditional Theravada description of the complete Buddha’s Teaching. There have been several authentic references in the ancient texts that King Asoka constructed 84000 stupas throughout his entire kingdom. However, there have not been any validation and confirmation of these references till date which lead to the certain type of distrust in the figure 84000 to the extent that it has been regarded as the magical mythological figure in Buddhism. The author has taken this topic for the scrutiny and systematic analysis in the present article.

## Records of Dhammakhandha in Pali Canon

Pali Tipitaka was introduced in Srilanka by Mahindra in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BCE<sup>1</sup>. In the Tipitaka, we can find only two places where the reference of figure 84000 appears. First reference appears in the Theragatha text that belongs to the Sutta Pitaka, of the Tipitaka which is as follows:

In Sutta Pitaka, Khuddaka Nikaya, Theragatha: Gatha-1027<sup>2</sup>, there appears the statement of the Ven. Ananda in the form of following Gatha:

*“Dvasîti Buddhato Ganham Dye Sahassâni Bhikkhuto  
Caturâsitisahassâni Ye Me Dhamma Pavatinno”*

“82,000 (Teachings) from the Buddha I have received; 2,000 more from his disciples; Now 84,000 teachings are familiar to me.”

-Ven. Ananda, in Theragatha 17.3 (vv. 1024-29)

If we look at the above original Pali text, only these numbers are mentioned in it, together with ‘Dhamma’ meaning ‘teachings’ in this context. The word ‘Dhammakhandha’ (Dhamma aggregates) does not appear at all.

The second mention of the 84000 comes in the Atthakatha<sup>1</sup> (Explanation) which covers the commentaries on the Pali Canon. ‘84000 Dhamma’ which is the traditional Theraveda description of the complete Buddha’s teachings is explained in the commentaries

in the following way. There are 21,000 trees in the Dhamma Vinaya, Sutta there are 21,000 trees in the Dhamma, and the Abhidhamma there are 42,000 trees Dhamma. The explanation about the 84000 divisions of the Buddha's teaching have been given in the three alternate divisions of the Buddha's words, translated from the Commentary to the Dīgha Nikāya, Sumanagalavilāsinī by Ānandajoti Bhikkhu<sup>3</sup>.

*Sarvastivada Dharmaskandha*: Dharma-skandha-sastra is one of the seven Sarvastivada Abhidhamma Buddhist scriptures<sup>4</sup> where Dharmaskandha means 'collection of dhamma'. It begins with a matrka as a summary of the topics, showing its antiquity, as these were supposedly only assigned by the Buddha himself. It presents 21 subjects, the first 15 of which concern the practice of the spiritual path, and the realization of its fruits. The 16<sup>th</sup> deals with various issues.

Subjects 17 to 20 deal with the enumeration of the ayatana, dhatu and khandha as encompassing 'all dharma' and the 21<sup>st</sup> associates with dependent origination. Dhammakhandha texts of the Sarvastivadin Abhidharma's focus and concern is on the stages of the Arhat's progress.

*84000 Hooks in Zen Buddhism*: Zen Buddhism relates the 84000 Dhammakhandha of the Theravada tradition and relates it with the consciousness. Each and every teaching served as a reminder to cut a certain hook to that artificial consciousness that belonged to the false self (Anatta). There are of course many other sects in Buddhism that through the millennia have approached the dilemma of the mind of 84,000 hooks<sup>5</sup>.

*Iterations in Buddhist meditation*: The Pali Canon includes references to many different types of meditation. Sarah Shaw collects many of these texts in her book, Buddhist Meditation and associate it with 84,000 iterations<sup>6</sup>.

## **King Asoka and the 84000 Dhammakhandha**

Our oldest authority, the Maha-parinibbana Sutta, states that after the cremation of the Buddha's body at Kusinara, the remains were divided into eight portions among the, the King of Magadha, the Licchavis of Vesali, the Sakyas of Kapilavastu, the Bulis of Allakappa, the Koliyas of Ramagama, the Brahmin of Vethadip, the Mallas of Pava and the Mallas of Kusinara. Drona, the brahmin who made the division, received the vessel in which the body had been cremated while the Moriyas of Pippalivana, the last late claimant for a share of the relics, received the ashes of the funeral pyre. All these ten relics receivers promised to put up a cairn or stupa over their portion, and to establish a festival in its honour<sup>7</sup>.

King Aśoka, the third monarch of the Mauryan dynasty in the third century B.C., was the first ruler of a unified India and one of the greatest political figures of all time. Remorseful after his bloody campaign and conquest of Kalinga, Asoka embraced Buddhism. After he embraced the teachings of the Buddha, he transformed his polity from one of military conquest to one of Dhammavijaya - victory by righteousness and truth. By providing royal patronage for the propagation of Buddhism both within and beyond his empire, he helped promote the metamorphosis of Buddhism into a world religion that spread peacefully across the face of Asia<sup>8</sup>.

When the Third Buddhist Council was held 235 years after Parinibbana of the Buddha, King Asoka asked Ven. Moggaliputta Tissa, Head of the Sangha about the numerical extent of the Buddha's teachings to which the Mahathera answered that it consists of 84000 Dhammakhandha (Aggregates of Dhamma). In veneration to the Buddha's teachings, King Asoka ordered his ministers to build 84,000 monasteries and stupas all over his empire. The Mahathera obtained the Buddha's relics from the stupa of Rajagaha and other places to let the Emperor enshrine them in the stupas that he had built.

There had been number of stories associated with King Asoka in Asokavadana (Narrative of Asoka), contained in the Divyavadana (Divine Narrative), translated into English by John S. Strong, that describes the birth and reign of the Asoka<sup>9-10</sup>. The Ashokavadana narrates how Asoka redistributed Buddha's relics across 84,000 stupas, with the distribution of the relics and construction of the stupas. This was to become Asoka's most famous legendary act, to change his name from Asoka to Dhammasoka.

## **84000 Dhammakhandha: Myth or Reality**

Bhikkhu Gavesako<sup>11</sup> points out that the explanation given in the commentaries (Atthakatha) in this way, cannot be historically true. In the whole Tipitaka, we do not come across any reference where the Buddha himself mentioned about 84000 Dhamma or Dhammakhandha.

Some Mahayana believers approve 84000 door of dharma as a valid term in Mahayana texts. However they fail to reveal the corresponding relativity in its practicality.

Many researchers in Buddhism query about the number 84000 as 84000 doors, 84000 holy beings, the 84000 Buddha etc. Some critics query, did the term 84000 is only applicable to the principal Dharma? The critics argue that these statements are not based on the real perceivable and calculable dhamma. They also object about the validity of the stories to which the charismatic number 84000 is attached.

## Approaches to explore 84000 Dhammakhandha

As there is no systematic and convincing analysis found in the Canon or in the Mahayana, the author would like to do the screening of the probable approaches that would have been adopted by the Buddha, his other contemporaries and also by the modern analytical methodology to arrive at the solutions to this problem.

*Buddha's Four-fold classification approach:* Buddha classified questions into four types of approaches depending on the response-strategy they deserved: There are these four ways of answering questions. There are questions that should be answered categorically. There are questions that should be answered analytically. There are questions that should be answered with cross-questioning. There are questions that should be put aside. These are the four ways of answering questions<sup>12</sup>.

In the light of the above fourfold classification, how shall we justify the 84000 Dhammakhandha as it has now been a very controversial question to be dealt with? Should this question deserve a categorical or an analytical answer? Should it deserve to be cross-questioned before being answered, or shall be put aside? The questions to which the Buddha gave categorical answers were the questions more specific to the context, of universal significance and which has a more limited specific range. He adopted the analytical or cross questioning strategies which were primarily methods of classifications which his contemporaries found hardest to understand. An analytical answer in this situation is one that recognizes those mistaken assumptions and so reframes the issue appropriately before giving a categorical answer. Buddha cited cross questioning as an effective means for clarifying obscure points and resolving doubts. Buddha advised devoting time and ones full powers of observations to passing judgment, thus taking care to be judicious rather than judgmental. However, the use of such strategy would yield some surprises, for such approach to questions of this sort challenge a number of currently widespread views about the Dhamma.

According to authors analysis there can't be categorical answer to the question of the 84000 Dhammakhandha or it can't be put aside. The method of the analytical approach supported partly by the cross questioning strategies would be more helpful to explore the answer to this question. This process helps to develop the analysis of qualities in an individual as a factor of awakening (*Dhamma-vicaya Sambojjhanga*).

*Platonic approach:* Bhikku Thanissaro<sup>12</sup> frequently compared the Buddha's approach to asking and responding to questions with Socrates' approach as recorded in the Platonic

dialogue. It has been noted by some historians that the Buddha and Socrates were near contemporaries in the Axial age and that they as seminal figures representing the spirit of enquiry in that age they shared the common agenda. The Socrates strategy of cross questioning often ends up with an inconclusive results. Thus the process of the Socrates strategy is often less about reaching a goal.

*Hegel's Phenomenology approach of Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis:* Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, a renowned German Philosopher is a prominent figure within the continental tradition of philosophy for his development of a distinctive articulation of 'Absolute Idealism'. Let us look towards this problem through the modern perspective of universally recognized Western philosophy<sup>13</sup>. If we try to resolve the issue of the 84000 Dhammakhandha with the Hegel's Phenomenology, we may put our thesis and antithesis as follows:

*Thesis:* "The 84000 Dhammakhandha of Buddhism accounts to the total number discourses of the Buddha"

*Antithesis:* "The 84000 Dhammakhandha of Buddhism does not account to the total number discourses of the Buddha".

For the thesis, there is the record of the written words of Ananda in Theragatha and the reference of Attakatha. However, the antithesis has the stronger reasons to disapprove the thesis as the Canon does not justifiably account to the figure for the 84000 Dhammakhandha.

If one has to resolve this conflict between the thesis and antithesis we should propose the synthesis by reconciling their common truths, and forming a new proposition.

*Synthesis:* Throughout the Canon, we find that the Buddha had been very critical in his analytical and statistical expressions. There must have been a critical counting of the 84000 Dhamma or Dhammakhadha by the Blessed One, the Buddha and by some Arhat Bhikkus during his time and even latter. Of course, there would have been difficulty in counting the Dhammakhandha one by one in a stretch of a time to the total of 84000 for that matter. However, for such calculations, there must be something, somewhere in the Canon that evolved the figure 84000. Yes! There must be some base. It is this search that caused the exploration of the Tipitaka discourse by discourse and verse by verse by the researchers of Buddhism. Having been taken this as a topic of this article, the author has also analyzed the content of Tipitaka. It occurs to him, Yes! We can evolve a synthesis: "There must be something else in Buddha's teachings that accounts to the 84000 Dhammakhandha of Buddhism".

## **Khandha, Dhamma and Dhammakhandha- Meaning in Buddhist Philosophy**

When total teachings of the Buddha has been considered as the 84000 Dhamma known in the Pali canon, there have been a lot of misunderstanding in deriving the exact meaning of the terms used in the canon like Khandha, Dhamma and Dhammakhandha. It is very much necessary at this point to explore the variety of the meanings associated with these terminologies as per the compilers of the Canon. *Khandha*: The *Khandha* a Pali word that appears extensively in the Canon, where state Rhys Davids<sup>14</sup> it means “bulk of the body, aggregate, heap, material collected into bulk” in one context, In other context it may be “the elements or substrata of sensory existence, sensorial aggregates which condition the appearance of life in any form”.

The khandha or five aggregates Rupa (Form), Vedana (Sensation), Sanna (Perception), Sankhara (Volition) and Vinnana (Consciousness), for that matter shows three marks (Tilakkhana) as its characteristic, Anicca (Impermanence), Dukkha (Suffering) and Anatta (Unsubstantiality).

Dhamma: The ‘*Dhamma*’ means the state which remains or changes according to the cause of each Dhamma. It refers to everything that we perceive and do not perceive, including living beings and non-living beings, both concrete and abstract. Wholesome and unwholesome actions are included in the Dhamma.

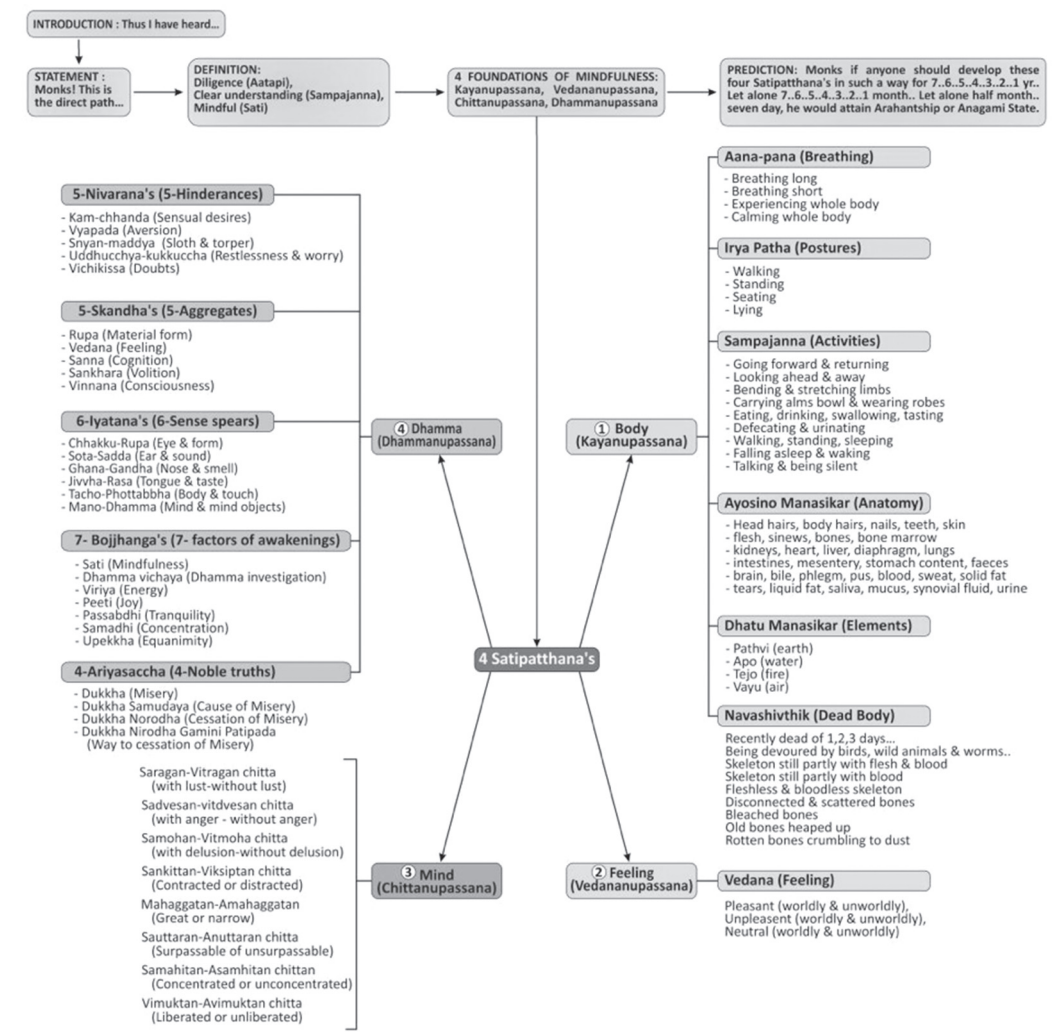
Dhammakhandha: We have looked in to the meaning of the Khandha and the Dhamma with respect to the worldly usage and the Buddhist philosophy. Now it is necessary to prowl in to the depth of the concept of the Dhammakhandha which was prominently presented in the legend of Asoka. It is very much true that till the period of Asoka, the Mahayana concept of Bodhisatta ideal was well absorbed in the Buddhist philosophy upholding their separate concept with a deviation from the main Theravada ideology. However, at this stage, it would be difficult to relate the concept of Dhammakhandha either to Theravada and Mahayana schools. The voyage of 84000 Dhamma from the era of the Buddha to the 84000 Dhammakhandha in the era of Asoka would have been the period of much analytical tests to establish and absorb the Mahayana approach in the society.

## Mahasatipatthana Sutta - Ekayano Maggo

Digha Nikaya's Maha-satipatthana Sutta<sup>15</sup>: DN-22, the Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness, is generally regarded as the canonical Buddhist text with the fullest instructions on the system of meditation unique to the Buddha's own dispensation. The main objective of the analysis of Mahasatipatthana sutta<sup>16</sup> here is to elaborate the importance of every aspect of this Sutta in relation to its association with the 84000 dhammakhandha of Buddhism. What the Buddha shows in the Sutta is the tremendous, but generally hidden, power inherent in this simple mental function, a power that can unfold all the mind's potentials culminating in final deliverance from suffering.

Mentioning its importance in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha called it as the *Ekāyano Maggo* - the only way for the purification of beings, for overcoming sorrow, for extinguishing suffering, for walking on the path of truth and for realising *Nibbāna* (Liberation). In this sutta, the Buddha presented a practical method for developing self-knowledge by mean of *Kāyānupassanā* (observation of the body), *Vedanānupassana* (observation of sensations), *Cittānupassanā* (observation of the mind), and *Dhammānupassanā* (observation of the mind contents) as illustrated in Fig. 1.1.





**Fig. 1.1 : The comprehensive structure of the Mahasatipatthana Sutta**

## Triad of Diligence-Clear comprehension-Mindfulness

Throughout the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, the triad of the '*ātāpī sampajāno satimā*' appears at the end of the every section and subsection. This triad means the 'Diligence-Clear Comprehension-Mindfulness'. At every point, the Buddha reminds the monks to be diligent, to have clear comprehension and to be mindful, so that the real nature of *anicca-dukkha-anatta* of the body, sensation, mind and mind objects could be perceived. Now we shall see the role of this triad Diligence-Clear comprehension-Mindfulness in achieving the goal of extinction of suffering and realization of Nibbana.

## Four Foundation of Mindfulness

We have seen that the Mahasatipatthana Sutta establishes four foundations of mindfulness i.e. Kayanuppassana, Vedananupassana, Chittanupassana and Dhammanupassana. These four parts which are ascribed to body, sensation, feeling and mind content are known as the four foundations for the development of the mindfulness. Each of the above foundation has the divisions and subdivisions as per their appearance in the order of their sequence in the Mahasatipatthana sutta. Now let us perform the Dhamma Vichayan (Critical analysis) as to how the various divisions and subdivisions of the four foundations of mindfulness can put to the test of the Khandha (Aggregates) and Dhamma (Mind content).

**Kayanupassana:** Kayanupassana consists of the six parts known as ‘Pabba’. These constitutes Aana-pana (Breathing), Iryapatha (Postures), Sampajanna (Activities), Ayoniso Manasikara (Body), Dhatu Manasikara (Elements) and Navashivthik (Dead body). The seeker engaged in meditation can see these processes during meditation without the foundation of the khandha or Dhamma. Therefore none of these above six parts of kayanupassana can be referred to as khandha or Dhamma as they are the usual life processes of the living body which goes on unceasingly from the birth to the death. It can also be said that these activities do or don’t require the base of mindfulness and the meditator, who first use the Ana-pana as the first step for the awareness and for development of mindfulness leaves it for penetrating the higher realms of the Satipatthana meditation.

**Vedananupassana:** Vedananupassana is of three types and the sensations (bodily or mental) that one experiences can be pleasant unpleasant or neither unpleasant - nor pleasant in its characteristics. Each of these three sensations can be further seen as either sensual of the householder life or non-sensual of renunciate life. None of the above three Vedananupassana (feeling) can be referred to as khandha or Dhamma as they are the expressions of mind-body duo that can be perceived by the seeker even in the absence of mindfulness.

**Chittanupassana:** If you know your mind then you can use it as an instrument to look at your kaya (body) and vedana (feelings). The kaya and vedana that you know with your mind, prepares the ground for the more sharper and piercing mind to perform the much more subtle psychoanalysis of your feelings to know its tilakkana through Chittanupassana. It consists of the eight types of consciousness in the Chitta (Mind) which are Sa-ragan (with passion) or Vit-ragan (without passion), Sa-deshan (with hate) or Vit-deshan (without hate), Sa-mohan (with delusion) or Vit-mohan (without delusion), Sankhittan (collected) or Vikhitan (scattered), Mahaggatan (great) or Amahaggatan (not great), Sauttaran (surpassable)

or Anuttaran (unsurpassable), Samahitan (concentrated) or Asamahitan (not concentrated) and Vimuktan (liberated) or Avimuktan Chitta (the mind is not liberated). None of the above eight Chittanupassana (Consciousness) can be referred to as khandha or dhamma as they are the usual expressions of the Mind-Body Duo that can be perceived by the seeker even in the absence of mindfulness. If one becomes skillful with Cittanupassana then the mind is ready for the contemplation on the realm of Dhammanupassana.

**Dhammanupassana:** The fourth foundation of Mindfulness is Dhammanupassana which means mindfulness of Dhamma. In Dhammanupassana, the Buddha explained all the possible Dhamma that can be perceived by the human mind that makes the base of mind contents. Here Dhamma includes five major categories of psycho-physical processes. The Panch-nivarana (five hindrances) constitutes its first segment. These five hindrances are Kamacchanda (Sensory desires), Vyapada (Ill will), Thina-Middha (Sloth and torpor), Uddhacca-Kukkucca (Restlessness and remorse) and Vicikiccha (Doubt). The second segment of khandha includes the Rupa (form), Vedana (feeling), Sanna (cognition), Sankhara (volition) and Vinnana (consciousness). In fact, this segment of upadan khandha covers all the worldly physical and mental activities and are the five psycho-physical aggregates, which are the basis for self-grasping. The third segment of Dhammanupassana is Saḷāyatana (Six sense bases) that is, the sense organs and their objects. These six sense bases are external as well as internal to form total 12 sense bases of perception. The first five sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body) are derivatives of form. The sixth sense organ (mind) is part of consciousness. The first five sense objects (visible forms, sound, smell, taste, touch) are also derivatives of form. The sixth sense object (mental object) includes feeling, perception and mental formations. The six sense bases makes the total 18 dhatus with their specific consciousness (vinnana) and subjects (sense objects).

The six external sense bases and the six internal sense bases, constitutes 60 External and 60 Internal Loke to the total of 120 Loke. In Satipattana sutta, the Buddha introduced the word 'Loke' as the live experience of the world of the mind and matter in the realms of the six sense bases. All the senses had to pass through this sensory process of 10 Loke or world (of mind and matter) levels of iyatana (Sense bases), vinnana (consciousness), sense object, sampassha (contact), vedana (feeling), sanna (cognition), sanchetana or Sankhara (volition), tannha (craving), vitakko (thought conception) and vichara (rolling thoughts), so as to generate the mind content of affection or aversion in the mind. This whole action and reaction may take place in a flash of second due to which many of the intermediate happenings becomes unrecognizable during the process of the perception.

The fourth segment of the Dhammanupassana is Saptajhanga (Seven factors of Enlightenment). The term *Bojjhanga* denotes the factors for insight, wisdom. The seven Bojjhanga are *Sati* (Mindfulness), *Dhammavicaya* (Keen investigation of the dhamma), *Viriya* (Energy), *Piti* (Rapture or happiness), *Passaddhi* (Calmness), *Samadhi* (Concentration) and *Upekkha* (Equanimity). The Buddha says, 'Just as, monks, in a peaked house all rafters whatsoever go together to the peak, slope to the peak, join in the peak, and of them all the peak is reckoned chief: even so, monks, the monk who cultivates and makes much of the seven factors of wisdom, slopes to Nibbana, inclines to Nibbana, tends to Nibbana.'

It is only with developed insights that these factors come into existence. It means when one experiences the arising and passing away of all mental and material phenomena (*udaya-vyaya jhāna*) through right mindfulness, these seven factors arise. Whenever these factors leading to realization of appearance and disappearance, various bojjanga factor will arise, and thus, the first stage, second, third and fourth stage of enlightenment may be attained.

The fifth and last segment of the Dhammanupassana is Sacca, the four Noble truths' (*ariya-sacca*) that provides the briefest synthesis of the entire teachings of Buddhism. They are: The first Noble truth, Dukkha (Suffering) teaches that all forms of existence whatsoever are unsatisfactory and subject to suffering. The second Noble truth, Dukkha samudaya (Origin of suffering) teaches that the suffering, is produced by Tanha (craving). Third Noble truth, Dukkha Nirodha (Extinction of suffering) teaches that extinction of craving necessarily results in extinction (*nirodha*) of rebirth and suffering, i.e. Nibbana. The fourth Noble truth Dukkha Nirodha-gamini patipada (Path leading to the extinction of suffering) which is also referred to as the Eightfold Path (*Ariya Atthangiko Maggo*) indicates the means by which this extinction of suffering is attained. The Eightfold path consists of *Sammā-ditthi* (Right view), *Sammā-sankappa* (Right thought), *Sammā-vācā* (Right speech), *Sammā-kammanta* (Right action), *Sammā-ajīva* (Right livelihood), *Sammā-vāyāma* (Right effort), *Sammā-sati* (Right mindfulness) and *Sammā-samādhi* (Right concentration). Its first two right thought and right speech constitute *Paññā* (Wisdom). Other three i.e. right speech, right action and right livelihood constitutes *Sīla* (Morality) while the last three i.e. right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration constitutes *Samādhi* (Concentration). The truth of suffering is to be compared with a disease, the truth of the origin of suffering with the cause of the disease, the truth of extinction of suffering with the cure of the disease, the truth of the path with the medicine. In the Buddha's first sermon, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, it is said that the first Noble truth (Suffering) is to be fully understood; the second

Nobel truth (Craving) to be abandoned; the third Nobel truth (Nibbāna) to be realized and the fourth Nobel truth to be cultivated<sup>17</sup>.

It is this Dhammanupassana that attaches the four segments of the Dhamma (Panch-nivarana dhamma, Sadayatana dhamma, Sapta bojjhanga dhamma and Sacca dhamma with the Khandha and constitute the whole process of perception of all the worldly psycho-physical experiences in the form of 84000 dhammakhandha that can be perceived in this very body and mind.

The traditional spiritual teachers of India, before the Buddha, in his day and afterwards, expressed the view that craving causes suffering and that to remove suffering one must abstain from the objects of craving. This belief led to various practices of penance and extreme abstinence from external stimuli. In order to develop detachment, the Buddha took a different approach. Having learned to examine the depths of his own mind, he realized that between the external object and the mental reflex of craving is a missing link *Vedanā* (Feeling/sensation). Whenever we encounter an object through the five physical senses or the mind, a sensation arises; and based on the sensation, *tannhā* (craving) arises. If the sensation is pleasant we crave to prolong it, if it is unpleasant we crave to be rid of it. It is in the chain of Dependent origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*) that the Buddha expressed his profound discovery<sup>17</sup>:

*...Saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso Phassa-paccayā vedanā Vedanā-paccayā taṇhā. Tanha paccaya Upadan Upadan paccaya Bhava...*

*...Dependent on the six sense-spheres, contact arises, dependent on contact, sensation arises, dependent on sensation, craving arises...*

The immediate cause for the arising of craving and, consequently, of suffering is not something outside of us but rather the sensations that occur within us. Therefore, just as the understanding of *vedanā* is absolutely essential to understand the interaction between mind and matter within ourselves, the same understanding of sensation is essential to understand the interaction of the outside world with the individual.

If this exploration of truth were to be attempted by contemplation or intellectualization, we could easily ignore the importance of *vedanā* (Sensation). However, the crux of the Buddha's teaching is the necessity of understanding the truth not merely at the intellectual level, but by direct experience. For this reason in Mahasatipatthana Sutta<sup>16</sup> *Vedana* is defined as follows:

*...Yā vedeti ti vedanā, sā vediyati lakkhaṇā, anubhavanarasā...*

*..that which feels the object is sensation; its characteristic is to feel, it is the essential taste of experience..*

However, merely to feel the sensations within is not enough to remove our delusions. The another aggregate come to the help of *vedana* to further recognize and understand the feeling is *Sanna* (perception). It is at the point of *Sanna*, the Buddha has uprooted the rebirth not to find footing anywhere. One can have all the types of feelings and the perceivers does not have the control and the selectivity that he or she should have only the pleasant or unpleasant types of sensations. *Vedana* faculty of *Khandha* pass on the sensation immediately to the closest *khandha* of the *Sanna* for the recognition and clear awareness. It is at this point the diligent mind observe internally, externally, both internally and externally. It observe the phenomenon of arising, the phenomenon of passing away, with the phenomenon of arising and passing away in the mind. It establishes the clear awareness that ‘This is sensation!’ It recognizes with clear understanding that this sensation/phenomena is *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anatta* (Selflessness) and is the mere *Uppado* (Arising) and *Vyaya* (Passing away), outcome of the conditioned origination. It is the mere transitional product of the cause and effect. Thus the mind develops its awareness to such an extent that there is mere understanding along with mere awareness. It is *Sanna* that give an individual, the ability to recognize each and every sensual perception with the understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, *uppado-vyayo dhamma*. Hence from here onward it do not allow the mind to develop due attachment or aversion against the perception and the ongoing process of the formation of the *sankhara* and the *kamma* stops. In this way the mind dwells detached, without clinging towards the perception. As the awareness of impermanence, suffering and selflessness of all the conditioned originated *dhamma*/phenomena establishes in the mind, the gushing river of craving starts drying up due to the unavailability of the fuel of *abhiijha-domassan* (craving and aversion). This initiates the process of purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and grief, for the extinction of suffering and the realization of *nibbāna*.

## Calculation of 84000 Dhammakhandha

Having obtained some important clues about the Dhammakhandha from the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, we will now try to calculate all the Dhammakhandha by putting the chain of Khandha (5) - Iyatana (120) - Nivarana (5) - Bojjhanga (7) - Sacca (4) aggregates together as shown in Table 1.1 and in the form of basket connectivity in Fig.2.

**Table 1. Sequence of Khandha, Iyatana, Nivarana, Bojjhanga and Sacca**

Khandha (5)	Iyatana Loke (6×2×10=120)	Nivarana (5)	Bojjhanga (7)	Sacca (4)
Rupa	Iyatana (eg. Cakkhu Loke)	Kamechando	Sati	Dukkha
Vedana	Cakkhu-Vinnanam Loke	Vyapado	Dhamma-vicaya	Dukkha Samudaya
Sanna	Rupa Loke	Thin-Middha	Viriya	Dukkha Nirodha
Sankhara	Cakkhu-Rupa Samphasso Loke	Uddhacca-Kukkucca	Piti	Dukkha Nirodha Gamini Patipada
Vinnana	Rupa-Vedana Loke	Vicikiccha	Passaddhi	-
-	Rupa-Sanna Loke	-	Samadhi	-
-	Rupa-Sancetana Loke	-	-	-
-	Rupa-Tanha Loke	-	-	-
-	Rupa-Vitakka Loke	-	-	-
-	Rupa-Vicaro	-	-	-

Representation of the connectivity of 84000 Dhammakhandha can also be shown in square connectivity pattern of Khandha-Iyatana-Nivarana-Bojjhanga-Sacca separately instead of putting them in the basket connectivity pattern as illustrated in Fig. 1.3.



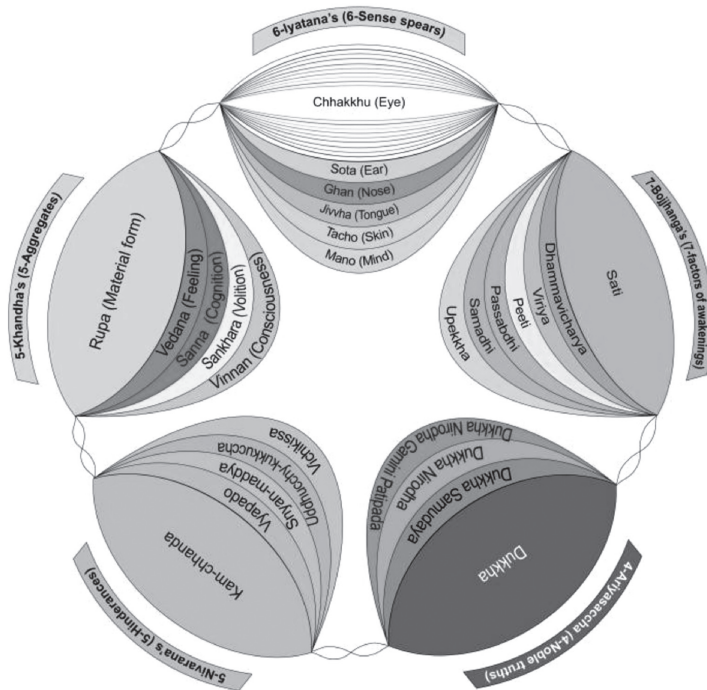


Fig. 1.2 : Basket Connectivity of the 84000 Dhammakhandha

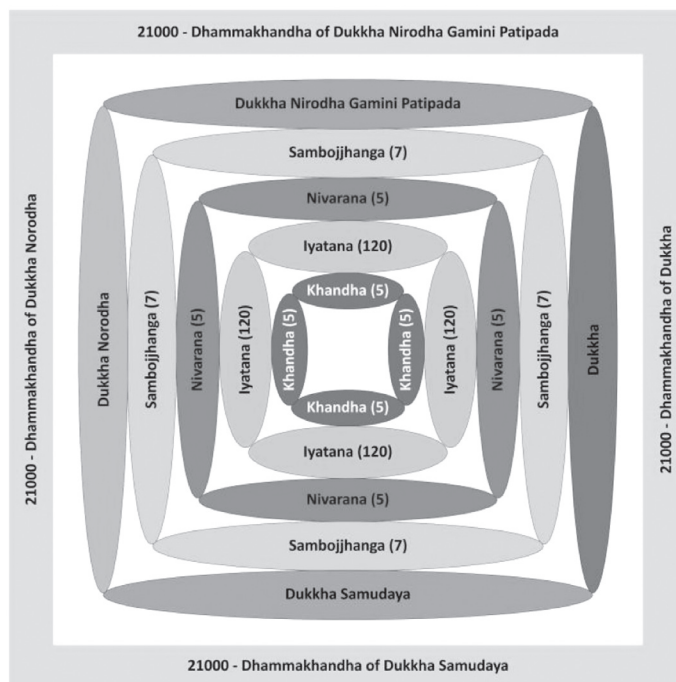


Fig. 1.3 : The Square Connectivity of the 84000 Dhammakhandha

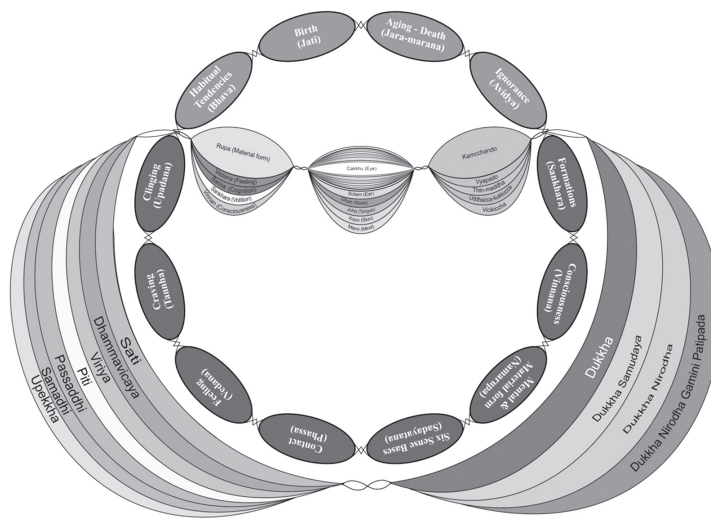


$$\begin{aligned} Khanda [5] \times Iyatana Loke [60+60=120] \times Nivarana [5] &= [5] \times [5] \times [120] \\ &= 3,000 Dukkakhanda \end{aligned}$$

These 3000 Dukkakhanda relates and propagate the Dukkachakka. Sixth-century Buddhist scholar T'ien-t'ai developed a meditative practice to enable people to perceive 3000 realms of the entire phenomenal world (Jpn. *Ichinen sanzen*)<sup>18</sup>. These 3000 realms seems to above 3000 Dukkakhanda that constitute entire phenomenal world and can be perceived in a single moment of life. Only when the Bojjhanga and Saccha, the markers of the enlightenment, connect to the above triplet of Dukkakhanda, further constitute the 84000 dhammakhandha, the pillars of the enlightenment. This calculation of the 84000 dhammakhandha can be done as follows.

$$\begin{aligned} Khanda [5] \times Iyatana [60+60=120] \times Nivarana [5] \times Bojjhanga (7) \times Sacca (4) \\ = [5] \times [5] \times [120] \times [7] \times [4] = 84,000 Dhammakhandha \end{aligned}$$

The Four Noble Truths are the expression of the principle of dependent origination known as *Paticca Samuppada*. It is the discourse on the process of birth and death can also be linked with the 84000 dhammakhandha in the present life situations as illustrated in Fig. The twelve Nidana links or causes of the wheel of life are *Avijja* (Ignorance) - *Sankhara* (Activities) - *Viññana* (Rebirth-consciousness) - *Nama-rupa* (Mind and body) – *Salayatana* (Six sense bases) – *Phassa* (Contact) - *Vedana* (Feeling) - *Tanha* (Craving) - *Upadana* (Grasping) - *Bhava* (Kamma) - *Jati* (Future birth) - Birth - Old age and *Jara-marana* (Death). On account of cause, effect comes and when the cause ceases, the effect also cease to exist in its reverse order<sup>19</sup>. Everything except Nibbana are the consequence of *Pratītyasamutpāda*, asserts Buddhism.



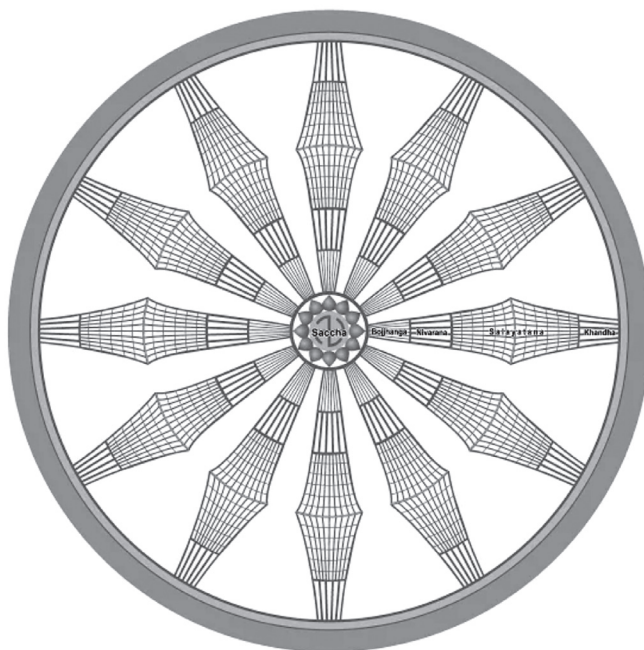
**Fig. 1.4 : Connectivity of 84000 Dhammakhandha with Paticca samuppada**

## Applications of the 84000 Dhammakhandha

The wheel of Cessation of Suffering i.e. Dhammakhandha Chakka (Fig.1.5) explains herewith all the 84000 Dhammakhandha in a single spoke of this wheel which has been shown to remain in a flux of change and Anicca (Impermanence), Dukkha (Suffering), Anatta (Unsubstantiality) and Utpad-Vyaya (Arising and falling) on the 12 Nidanas of the Paticcasamutpada (Dependant origination). This wheel has the moment anti-clock wise to take a seeker of Nibbana from starting point of Aviddhya (Ignorance) to the end point of Dukkha nirodha (Cessation of suffering) As mentioned above, a single spoke of this wheel speaks of all the 84000 Dhammakhandha inter-connected together like the bougies of the train. From its periphery it starts with the Upadan khanda (5-Aggregates) amalgamated with the Ayatana (12 Sense speares). The place of these 12 sense spears have been just in the middle of the spoke where the six internal and six external sense spears further divides in 10 Loke (World of mind and matter) for each sense spear. The world 'Loke' which comes repeatedly in the Satipattahana sutta is the pleural of the term

'Lok' which is commonly used in most of the Indian languages for denoting the world or worldly things associated with mind and matter. The part of the sense spears is then has the further connection with the Pancha-Nivarana (5- Hinderances) of *Kamcchando* (Sensual desire), *Vyapado* (Ill-will), *Thin-middha* (Sloth and torpor), *Uddhacca-kukkucca* (Restlessness and remorse) and *Vicikiccha* (Sceptical doubt).

It is only when the Bojjhanga (Seven factors of awakening) starts arising in the mind of a meditator and the seeker falls in a Sotta (Stream) of the Dhamma (Sottapanna), wheel of suffering first comes to a standstill and then takes the anticlockwise turn against the flow of the stream of suffering from the Sansara to Nibbana, from the birth to no birth condition. The seeker fallen in the stream of Dhamma awakens the further faculties by observing the higher ultimate realities of the life through the four Noble Truths of Dukkha, Dukkha samudaya, Dukkha nirodha and Dukkha nirodha gamini patipada. Hence the central core part of the wheel of Dhammakhandha through which its axle rotates it, is positioned with the four noble truths of suffering as illustrated in Fig. 1.5. The wheel of dhammakhandha shows the cover of the 12 Nidana of the Paticca Samuppada (Dependant origination) over the four noble truths in the center that directs the wheel to anticlockwise direction from the mundane to super mundane way of life. The Bojjhanga (Factors of enlightenment) joins the spoke of the wheel to initiate and accelerate the process of cessation of suffering.



**Fig. 1.5: Wheel of Cessation of Suffering (Dhammakhandha Chakka)**

Once the wheel gains the momentum, a seeker goes on progressing through the various stages of the eight Ariya Puggala (the 4 supermundane and the 4 supermundane fruitions (*Phala*) of the paths from the common worldlings (*Puthujjana*) of the unworthy

one (anariya) to Sottapanna - Sotapatti phala – Sakkatagami - Sakkatagami phala – Anagami - Anagami phala - Arhat and Arhata phala, where the complete extinction of the suffering takes place to release the seeker from the Sansara to Nibbana as illustrated in Fig. 1.6.

The Buddha has concluded Mahasatipatthana Sutta with the prediction that the practice of these four foundations will bring one of two results: Arahantship in this life, or state of Non-Returner. The results are predicted to come from the maximum period of 7 years, to the minimum period of a week.

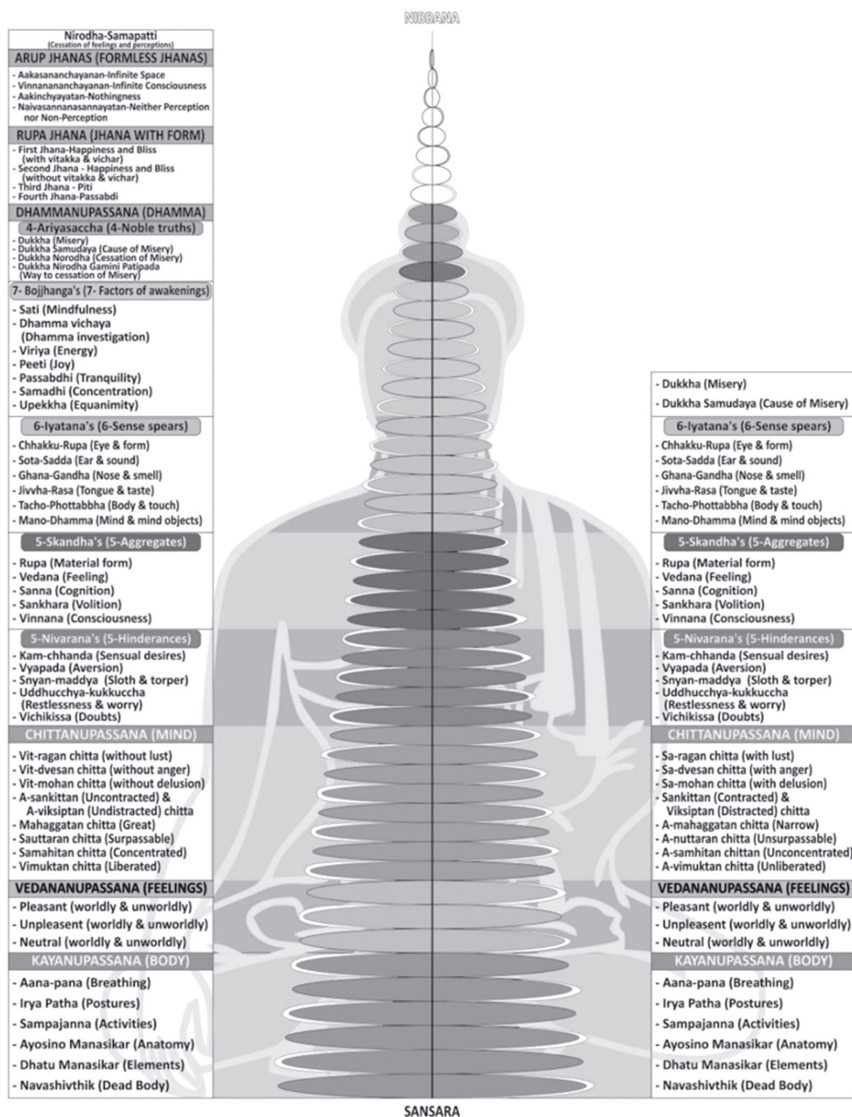


Fig. 1.6: Mahasatipatthana Sutta: The path from Sansara to Nibbana

## Conclusion

The 84000 Dhammakhandha had been very seriously patronized during the reign of Asoka as the complete teaching of the Buddha. If we carefully observe the sequence of these Dhammakhandha, we would definitely be convinced that these 84000 Dhammakhandha constitute everything that is associated with the objective of the human life to become free from all the suffering which is the highest achievable goal of human endeavor in the gradual progress on the path of truth to reach at the epitome of spiritual evolution.

The author wish to talk his heart by putting his thought process forefront to his readers. Though he has a clear idea in his mind to put forth his revelation and analysis of The 84000 Dhammakhandha of Buddhism, he was a bit reluctant to do so thinking that it would be an act of hurting the sentiments of the Buddhist people by taking such issue for the scrutiny and analysis. While entering in the depth of the realization of the Satipatthana, it was more and more convincing for him that the clustering of the Khandha and the various Dhamma makes the Dhammakhandha or Dhamma aggregates which are expressed on the body and mind. It was not just talk the talk, but walks the walk in true sense.

Tipitaka references, Asoka and the 84000 Dhammakhandha, till the Calculation, Analysis and Applications of Dhammakhandha, makes a step by step exploration of the question undertaken to resolve. The common thread that the author finds in all the major sects of the Buddhism is that all of them affirm the magic figure 84000 in the form of dhamma, dhammakhandha or the dhamma hooks. The author wished to expand and delineate the view of all these historical records with more satisfactory analysis.

The matter shall now be seen through the four important records that we came across in the review. i.e Theravada record of Theragatha and Attakatha, Sarvastivada record of Dhammakhandha and Arahats' progress, Mahayana record of the 84000 hooks and the 84000 iterations in Buddhist Meditation.

Ven. Ananda's statement in Theragatha, would be perfectly true to have total 84000 discourses of the Buddha. However, the Theravada records put to rigorous scrutiny and analysis by many Buddhists thinkers and writers, could not resolve the issue with full proof. It is also a matter of debate, whether all the discourses of the Buddha given in his preachings for 45 long years have really been recorded in its completeness or there had come across number of additions and deletions in them during the period of time. It is also an issue whether the total discourses of the Buddha could be referred to as Dhammakhandha.

Mahayana in Zen Buddhism described the 84000, as a mind of 84000 sharp hooks, walking through a very tight corridor of the individual person's present consciousness field. This explanation seems to go hand in hand with the progressive realization of Satipatthana meditator. Having now aware of the 84000 Dhammakhandha of Buddhism through the scrutiny and analysis of Mahasatipatthana Sutta, one can rightly fit the 84000 Dhammakhandha as the sharp hooks passing through the field of consciousness. So the Zen Buddhism's way of looking towards the figure 84000 as the mind of 84000 sharp hooks seems to be plausible and progressive for the realization of the goal of enlightenment. It does not demand the knowledge of the whole canon for the achievement of the goal.

The clear reference of the Dhammakhandha, 'Aggregate of Dhamma' in the Sarvastivadin Abhidharma shows the concern of the Dhammakhandha with the stages of the Arahant's progress. Unshakable deliverance of the mind is the highest goal in the Buddha's doctrine. Here, deliverance means the freeing of the mind from all limitations, fetters, and bonds that tie it to the wheel of suffering, to the circle of rebirth. Mahasatipatthana as explained by the Buddha as the 'Only Path' (Ekayano Maggo) for the realization of the cessation of suffering and the step wise progress of the meditator, till the attainment of the incorporable enlightenment in true sense represent the Sarvastivadin doctrine of dhammakhandha.

The 84000 iterations which has been referred to in the meditation practice can be righteously and perfectly correlated to the 84000 Dhammakhandha. These are the dhamma aggregates of the Khandha-Iyatana-Nivarana-Bojjhanga-Sacca chain, through which the mind passes and recognize the three marks of anicca, dukkha and anatta. Hence the association of the 84000 iterations of the dhamma-aggregates through a meditator of the Satipatthana seems to be remarkably true to its capacity. In fact, the Satipatthana meditator at the advanced stage of meditation, may develop the clear comprehension of the 84000 iterations of the dhamma aggregates in his mind.

The above four references are associated mainly with the meditation practice. If we refer the Tharagatha and Therigatha statements of the enlightened Ven. monks and Ven. nuns in the form of verses, we would come across ample examples of the realization of the Nibbana, more through the meditative practices and much less through the knowledge of entire Tipitaka. Even the story of Ven. Ananda who could attain enlightenment at the night before the first Council, does not necessitate the prerequisite of the knowledge of complete Tipitaka in the form of its 84000 Dhamma for the attainment of the enlightenment. However, this analytical study very strongly affirms the 84000 Dhammakhandha as a bridge in Theravada, Mahayana, Sarvastivada and the various meditative practices of Buddhism.

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