Utility of Linguistic Designations (*paññatti*) in Dhamma Communication: An analytical study with respect to the Theravada

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Abstract

The concept of *paññatti* discussed in the Theravada Abhidhamma can be identified as an attempt to explain the relationship between language and reality. In the sutta literature, the value of *niruttipaṭisambhidhā* is given emphasis as a method of figuring out the issue of the relationship between language and reality in the Dhamma Communication. It directs a person to understand the difference between *vijjamāna paññatti* and *avijjamāna paññatti*. A person equipped with the knowledge of particulars has the potentiality of conceptualizing the experienced particulars subsuming them under universals. This research examines the utility of *paññatti* as a means of understanding the role of universals taking into consideration the various philosophical solutions so far proposed such as realism, nominalism and conceptualism. The research analyzes the utility of *paññatti* in communicating individual experience at the universal level and the functional value of the concept of *paññatti* in understanding the objective world and spiritual phenomena. The concept of *paññatti* and its features are analyzed referring to relevant secondary sources on the particular subject. The research depends mainly on library survey and textual analysis. Dictionaries and encyclopedias were also referred when a detailed account on terminology and subject matter was essential. Linguistic designations are used in Abhidhammic philosophy to explain the ontological and epistemological issues related to the communication of Dhamma. The word functions as a vocal signifier. This vocal signifier possesses the ability of reiterating particular individual experiences at the universal level. This reiteration is connected within the power of conceptualizing and understanding.

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