Theory of Dhamma

- Dhamma theory is the theory that explains whole of the empirical existence.
- Dhamma theory is based on the acceptance that empirical existence consists of number of elements called ultimate realities. (*paramatha dhammas*)
- Entire Abhidhamma is established on the *dhammas*, so in that sense they are the cornerstone of Abhidhamma.
- Dhamma theory is not a hypothetical system and it is the outcome of meditation and it is again set as a guidance for meditative contemplation and insight: Seeing the world as not entities or selves but as bare phenomena arising and perishing on conditions.
The earliest version of the Dhamma theory can be found in such classifications as

Khandha (Aggregates)
Āyatana (Faculties)
Dhātu (Elements)

The Purpose of Khandha analysis is to deny ego within empirical individuality (Non of the aggregates belongs to me etc)

The purpose of Āyatana classification is to show individuality is a reciprocal interaction between internal sense organs and external sense objects.

The purpose of Dhātu classification is to show the conditionality of consciousness.
Need of Exhaustive Classification

- Nama and rupa are further analysable in relation to the aggregate which has five components.
- Aggregate is a khanadha (a heap or group) signify further components possible to be added and the next classification of six dhatus has divided rupa into five - earth, water, heat, air and space.
- The consciousness of the classification of six elements is classified into four in the aggregate classification.
- The twelve ayatana classification is analyzed into 18 based on the variations of the consciousness.
- 18 dhatu classification is not the final because the concomitants found in the aggregate classification and of nama of nama-rupa classification such as feeling (vedana), perception (sanna), volition (cetane), contact (phassa) and attention (manasikara) are not given a place in 18 dhatu classification.
- More over, all these classification could not systematically explain some of the material and psychological processes.
Standard Classifications of Real Existents

- Rupa as 28
- Feeling, perception, formations as a Collection of 52 concomitants
- Consciousness as 89 components
- Nibbana- one nibbanic elements
Dhamma in the discourses mean ‘everything’ in a general sense; In the Abhidhamma however it has the technical meaning: the basic realities into which everything can be resolved.

Avoidance of ontological minimalism and transgressing of principle of parsimony: components should not be multiplied unnecessarily.
The Role of Analysis and Synthesis

The existence of Dhammas was justified by the analysis and synthesis
Nama-rupa-Pariccheda says “Analysis (bheda) and synthesis (sangaha) are praised by the wise
liberation from Sāsana comes from the method of analysis and synthesis.

_Bheda-saṅgaha vidūhi vaṇṇitam- bheda-saṅgaha vimutti sāsane_  
_Bheda-saṅgaha nayatta-muttamaṃ- bheda-saṅgaha-mukhaṃ pakāsitaṃ (The Nāmarūpa-parichchedā)_

The problem of the existence is understood as inability to resolve the compact (ghana- 
viniḥbhoga) into components (anvaya)

“Appahīna-diṭṭhi asamūhata sakkāya-diṭṭhikā ghana-viniḥbhogam kātum asakkontā samudāyam 
viya avayavaṃ lokenti, sañjānāti ceva maññati ca) (Commentary to the Šāmīyutta)
Because of the Analysis

- Dhammas are not discreet elements but are inter-connected and inter-dependent nodes in a complex web of relationship.
- Dhammas do not represent a substancialism, pluralism or nihilism

Visuddhimagga says “Whatever distinguishable characteristics there is among dhammas that have come into oneness as dhammas, it is but proper to hold it out as a separate entity, because it results in the clear understanding of the meaning.

- The commentary to the Itivuttaka says that Ignoring the causal relationship of dhammas emphasizing on the principle of plurality (nanatta-naya) is leading extremist view (atidhavanti) of annihilation (uccheda).
The sub-commentary to the Dighanikaya says the wrong holding of the principle of plurality (nānatta-naya-micchā-gahāṇa) is due to the undue emphasis of strict sense of separateness (accanta-bheda).

So dhamma theory avoids over-stressing the principle of unity (ekatta-naya) and the absolute non-distinctness (accanta-abheda-gahāṇa)

This theory is not against the early Buddhist view of ‘middle doctrine’- Early Buddhism denies:

- everything exists absolutely (sabbam atthi)
- nothing absolutely exists (sabbam natthi)
- reducibility of the phenomena to a common ground of substance (sabbam ekattam)
- resolvability of everything to discreet elements (sabbam puthuttam)

There is no distinct factors as support and the supported (adhāra-adheya-bhāva). Any dhamma does not possess another as its quality or is not the substance of another. Without any connection with another on the basis of support and the supported and substance and quality one dhamma becomes a condition for the arising of another (paccaya-paccayuppanna) in the system of conditioned genesis)
Dhamma and Sabhāva (Own Nature)

- Sabhāva is the own nature that is what makes one dhamma different from another given dhamma.
- Each dhamma was understood to have a separate function and this separate function was understood as Sabhāva.
- The own nature of some of the Dhammas were given.
Other definitions

- Sabhāvasāmaññalakkhaṇaṁ dhāretīti dhammo- Dhammas are so called because it bears own characteristics and common characteristics (Abhidhammāvatāra-purāṇatīkā)
- Attano sabhavam dhārentīti dhammad- Dhammas are so called because they bear own nature (Mahaniddesa-atthakatha)
- Dhariyanti attano paccayehi dhamma (Visuddhimaggatika)(Dhammas are so called because they are causally conditioned by their causes and condition)
- Yathāpaccayam pavattamattam etam sabhavadhammo (Own nature is the mere existence according to causes and conditions)
- Own nature was never regarded as the substance core; so dhamma was again the presence of emptiness (sabhāvattho nāma suññattho)
- Without having been they come into being (ahutvā sambhonti); having come into being they disappear (hutvā paṭīventi).
Dhammas

- Dhammas are separate in so far as they are distinguishable and they are in unity to that extent they are inseparable.

- Theory rejects- Nothing arises fortuitously (*adhiccasamuppanna-vāda*); nothing arises with a single cause (*ekakāraṇa-vāda*), Nothing arises as a single effect (*ekassa dhammassa uppatti paṭisedhitā*), there is no distinction as support and being supported (*ādhāra ādheya-bhāva*) except relative existence (*sapaccayatā*)
Defining *dhammas* (Describing own nature)

• Three types of definitions and taking the non-attributive definition to be authentic. Other two definitions are just for better understanding (*sukhagahanattā*).

  *(Citta-cetasikānaṃ bhāvasadhanameva nippariyayato labbhati-Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī)*

**Agency denoted definition-**
*Citta* means that which thinks (*Cintetiti cittam*)

**Instrumentally- denoted definition-**
*Citta* means that with which accompanying *dhammas* think. (*Sampayuttadhamma etena cintetīti cittam*)

Vicāra means that with which mind sustains over the object(*Arammane tena cittam vicaretīti vicāro*)

**Non attributive definition-**
thinking itself is consciousness (*Cintanamattameva cittam*)