

Theravada Exegetes on the Impulsion Stage (javanavāra)

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The impulsion stage (javanavāra) occurs in between the determining stage (votthapanavāra) and the registration stage (tadārammaṇavāra) of the cognitive process (cittavīthi). It runs for seven thought-moments (cittakkhaṇa) in general. It is in this stage, one feels the taste of the sense object (javanasseva pana ārammaṇarasānubhavaṇaṃ) that has impinged on the sensitivity of a sense organ. Hence, this stage is compared to a man, who is tasting a mango fruit. The Sumaṅgalavilāsīnī and the Sammohavinodanī, commenting on impulsion (javana), state that “looking ahead and looking aside because of lust, hatred, and delusion governed by thought 'This is a woman, this is a man'” (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1989, p. 117) does not occur in the first moment of impulsion, in the second moment of impulsion, or even in the seventh moment of impulsion. However, the Elder Tipiṭaka Cūlābhaya, as recorded in the Sammohavinodanī, was of the opinion that impulsion (javana) lusts for the agreeable and hates the same agreeable, and lusts for the disagreeable and hates the same disagreeable because of the perversion of perception (saññāvipallāsa). What a comparison of the cited exegetical accounts shows is that they do not agree with each another. This disagreement has led the modern scholars to state that the Abhidhamma scholars in ancient Sri Lanka debated on issue of the "affective-cognitive aspect of javana." (Sarachchandra, E.R., 2009, p. 56) This scholarly view on the disagreement under examination give rise to two important questions. One of them is that why Abhidhamma scholars do not agree with each other when they elucidate the 'affective-cognitive' aspect of the impulsion stage (javanavāra), and the other, to what extent they differ from one another. Therefore, the present paper examine these two questions focusing its attention on the exegetical accounts related to the impulsion stage (javanavāra) of the cognitive process (cittavīthi).

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