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Intepretations of the terms *ajjhataṃ* and *bahiddhā* in the *Abhidhamma*

Abstract

The terms *ajjhataṃ* “internally” and *bahiddhā* “externally” are attested repeatedly in the recurring refrain of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, indicating their significance in the practice of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. This paper will discuss the occurrences of these terms within the text as well as in the numerous places in other Canonical sources, particularly in the *Abhidhamma*, and attempt to outline the exegesis of the terms in early Buddhism. The paper will raise questions about the interpretation and application of the three types of the *satipaṭṭhāna* practice — *ajjhataṃ* “internally”, *bahiddhā* “externally” and *ajjhatabhiddhā* “internally and externally” — and suggest alternative readings based on the exploration of links between the presentation of these terms in the *Abhidhamma* (as well as in Indian *Abhidharma* texts available in Chinese translation) which may have influenced the interpretations established in the later Pali commentarial literature which serves as the standard interpretation of the three terms in modern Buddhism.