The *Vimavivotinodani* is not yet available in the Roman script. It has been edited (by Ven. Beretudawe Dhammaratissa), printed and published in Sinhala script in 1935.

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**Vimokkha**, "deliverance", (Skt. *vimokṣa*), is a term that at times occurs on a par with *vimutti*, "liberation". In a more specific sense, however, *vimokkha* stands for the eight types of deliverances, and it is this more specific sense that will be the theme of the present article, while other occurrences of the term *vimokkha* will be covered under the heading of *Vimutti*.

The eight types of *vimokkha* are eight levels of "deliverance" that involve progressive degrees of mastery in the realm of concentration meditation in particular, with only the last one bearing a direct relation to the development of insight. Though the final goal of deliverance or liberation requires going beyond any attainment in the sphere of tranquillity, early Buddhism nevertheless recognizes and treats in considerable detail levels of *vimokkha* that fall short of being the final goal. Thus the eight deliverances form part of listings of the essentials of the Buddha's teaching provided in the *Sāṅgīti Sutta* and the *Dasuttara Sutta* (D. III, 262 and D. III, 288), the latter specifying that these deliverances should be realized, *sachikārabāḥ*.

The *Sāḷyatananivihāra Sutta* compares the Buddha's ability to teach these eight deliverances to the ability of the trainer of an elephant, a horse, or an ox, who only teach their animals how to proceed in one of the four directions, whereas the Buddha's disciples learn how to proceed towards altogether eight directions, viz. the eight *vimokkhas* (M. III, 222). In fact, a listing of various practices that lead to overcoming defilements includes the eight deliverances (A. IV, 349); and according to the *Mahāsaddhālāvī Sutta* many disciples of the Buddha had reached direct knowledge through attaining these eight deliverances (M. II, 12).

Hence one who develops the eight deliverances even for a short fraction of time can be reckoned to be doing the teacher's bidding and eats the country's alms food not in vain (A. I, 40). The ability to attain them is the distinctive mark of an *arāhant* liberated both ways, *ubhāvatābhūga-vimutti*, who is able to attain the eight deliverances in forward and backward order (D. II, 71; see in more detail *Vimutti*).

These eight deliverances comprise (e.g. D. II, 112 or A. IV, 306):

1. to see material forms while being possessed of material form, *rūpārūpāni passati*;
2. to see forms externally while being percipient of no materiality internally, *ajjhattāri arūpānaṃ atthi bahaṭṭārūpānaṃ passati*;
3. to be resolved upon the beautiful, *subhatvēva adhimutto hoti*;
4. to attain the sphere of boundless space;
5. to attain the sphere of boundless consciousness;
6. to attain the sphere of nothingness;
7. to attain the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception;
8. to attain the cessation of perceptions and feelings.

According to an explanation given in the *Patisambhidāmagga*, the first deliverance involves developing the perception of a colour like blue, yellow, red, or white. This colour, or more precisely the 'sign' of this colour, the *nimitta*, is at first to be given attention internally on oneself, *ajjhata paccatta*. Once this has been well developed the same colour sign is to be given attention externally, *bahaṭṭā*; leading to a perception of materiality in terms of the respective colour internally as well as externally (Ps. II, 38). The *Aṭhasāliṅkī* further specifies that to perceive a colour internally here refers to developing a *jhāna* based on taking a colour of some part of one's own body as the object (DhsA. 190). Thus to develop perception of the colour blue the hair, bile or the pupil of the eye should be used; for yellow the fat, the skin or the yellow spot of the eyes; for red the flesh, the blood, the tongue, the palms of the hand and feet or the red of the eyes; and for white the bones, the teeth, the nails, or the white of the eye. Next, according to the *Aṭhasāliṅkī*'s explanation, the *jhānic* vision of these colours should be developed externally by way of a *kasīpa* meditation object. The second of the eight deliverances would then represent the case of someone who does not develop the internal vision of colours described under the first *vimokkha*, but directly proceeds to develop the vision of these colours with the help of an external device.
The interpretation offered in the Atthasālīni is not altogether convincing. It is not easy to imagine how someone might use the white colour of his or her own bones as a meditation object, unless the meditator had just gone through a type of accident that renders the bones visible, but then such a condition would make it difficult to develop the vision of the white bones into a deeper level of concentration. The same would to a lesser extent also apply to looking at one's own flesh or blood in order to develop a perception of redness. For a monk or a nun to be able to look directly at the hair of their own head, kesa, would also not be an easy task, as due to regular shaving their hair would not be long enough to be seen directly. It is also not clear how such hair or even bile could be perceived as blue; how the dark skin of an Indian could be perceived as yellow or else, in the case of the palms, as red; or how one would be able to see colours in the pupil of one's own eye. All these visions would only be possible if one were to resort to an external aid such as a mirror, in which case, however, the use of another external object of the respective colour would be more straightforward. Moreover, by resorting to a mirror the distinction drawn in the Atthasālīni between internal and external visions would be lost. Thus the Atthasālīni's explanation of the first and second vimokkha seems contrived, being perhaps modelled on the eight spheres of transcendence, abhibhāyatana, several of which do involve external visions of forms whose colour is blue, yellow, red or white (e.g. D. III, 260; see also ABHIBHĀ YATANA).

An alternative explanation of the first two vimokkhas can be found in the Mahāvibhāṣā and the Mahāprajāpāramitāśāstra (T. XXVII, 437c29 and T. XXV, 215a14). These works agree with the Paṭisambhidāmagga and the Atthasālīni that the first vimokkha takes parts of one's body as its object, such as hair, bones, flesh, etc. They differ in as much as these objects are not to be seen directly, but rather to be contemplated in a recollective manner from the perspective of the unattractiveness and impure nature of these different parts of one's own body.

Once the first vimokkha has been developed in this way, the same mode of contemplation is then to be undertaken in relation to the bodies of others, which, when carried out successfully, constitutes the second vimokkha. The Mahāprajāpāramitāśāstra indicates that to progress in this way from the first to the second vimokkha is to proceed from having reached some degree of freedom from concept and attachment in relation to one's own appearance to developing a similar degree of freedom from attraction and lust towards the bodies of others (T. XXV, 215a16).

The undertaking of such recollective contemplation of the anatomical parts of the body is described in detail in the Satipatthāna Sutta (M I, 57), according to which one should review, paccavekkhāti, the whole body from the soles of the feet to the top of the head in terms of the various types of impurity found inside such as hair, flesh, bone etc. Similar to the progression from the first to the second vimokkha, the satipatthāna instructions also proceed from contemplating one's own body, ajjhātta, to contemplation of the bodies of others, bahīdāhā. In both cases, one need not actually see these different parts, which in the case of bones etc., would require supernatural powers or surgery, but to mentally review the constitution of the physical body to the extent to which one is familiar with it. In order to facilitate such familiarity, the Visuddhimagga offers a minute description of the various anatomical parts to be reviewed in this manner (Vism. 248-265).

A discourse in the Aṅguttara Nikāya specifies that to review the anatomical constitution of the body in the way described in the Satipatthāna Sutta leads to the perception of unattractiveness, asubha-saṭṭhā (A. V, 109). The Mahāvibhāṣā then explains that, once the perception of unattractiveness, asubha-saṭṭhā has been developed in this way, to counterbalance excessive disgust and negativity the third vimokkha comes into its place, which develops perception of what is beautiful, subha (T. XXVII 437c28).

Though on reading the bare instructions given in the discourses one could perhaps not come to the conclusion that the first two vimokkhas require contemplation of asubha, the idea that they refer to some form of kasiya meditation would also not naturally come to a reader who is not familiar with the explanations given in the Atthasālīni. When compared with the latter, the suggestions given in the Mahāvibhāṣā and the Mahāprajāpāramitāśāstra appear more straightforward and practically feasible; and they also yield a meaningful dynamics of development for the first three vimokkhas.

To be resolved upon the beautiful, the third of the eight deliverances, requires according to the Paṭisambhidāmagga the development of the four
bhrumavihāras as a liberation of the mind in the form of a boundless space. The Paṭisambhidāmagga explains that due to such development beings appear as non-repulsive, appartikula, hence one has reached the liberation of being resolved upon the beautiful (Ps. II, 39). The Aṭṭhasālini; however, understands the third deliverance to refer to jhāna attainment through a colour device that is thoroughly purified, swisuddha (DhsA. 191). This gloss is noteworthy as it shows the degree to which the explanations in the Aṭṭhasālini are influenced by the idea of kasiṇa meditation, so much so that the Aṭṭhasālini would even venture to go against the otherwise highly respected exposition given in the Paṭisambhidāmagga.

A discourse in the Saṃyutta Nikāya relates only mettā to the subha vimokkha (S. V, 119), whereas the other three bhrumavihāras lead to the subsequent types of vimokkha, namely those related to the first three immaterial spheres. The Pāṭika Sutta clarifies that at the time of having attained subha vimokkha, one will not perceive phenomena as ugly, but rather as 'beautiful' (D. III, 34). The commentary then explains that this passage refers to an attainment that is based on a colour device, vaṇṇa-kasiṇa (DA. III, 830), thereby again opting for an explanation that involves kasiṇa meditation, against the indications provided by the Saṃyutta Nikāya discourse.

From the perspective of the explanation of the first two vimokkhas given in the Mahāvihāra and the Mahāprajāpātimuniśāstra, however, the practice of mettā would be fitting the series well, since the development of loving kindness would indeed effectively counterbalance any negativity that might have arisen through excessive contemplation of the repulsive nature of one's own body or that of others. The contrast provided in the Pāṭika Sutta between perceiving phenomena as ugly or as beautiful could also be related to this topic, in the sense of highlighting that with the third vimokkha the perceptions of asubha that had been developed earlier are now definitely left behind.

Whatever may be the final word on the implications of the first three deliverances, the remaining set is quite straightforward. Deliverances four to seven involve the attainment of the four immaterial spheres. In practical terms, based on the mental stability of the fourth jhāna any perception related to materiality or diversity is to be overcome in order to attain the sphere of boundless space (See also Ākāsānañcāyatana). Next the experience of space is attended to from the perspective of the consciousness that experiences the sphere of boundless space, which then leads to attaining the sphere of boundless consciousness (See also Viññānañcāyatana). Giving attention to the cessation aspect of the experience of boundless consciousness leads to attaining the sphere of nothingness (see also Akīnañcāyatana). Further practice leads to subduing perceptions until a state is reached which can neither be reckoned as percipient nor as non-percipient, this being entry into the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (see also Nevāsañcāsanāñcāyatana).

With the final of the eight deliverances, the sense of true liberation from a Buddhist perspective comes into fore, as the cessation of perception and feeling requires the development of insight up to the level of non-return or arahant-hood (Vism. 702; see also A. III, 194 and SanñaVedaYiñaniruddha).

References

1 Similar descriptions can be found in the Chinese Āgamas (e.g. in the Dirgha Āgama, t. I, 52b13, or in the Mahāyana Āgama, t. I, 582a17), and in the Mahāvyutpatti § 70 / 1511-1518.

2 T. stands for the Taishō edition.

VIAMUTTĀYATANA is a "sphere of liberation", an expression that stands representative for what forms an occasion for the break-through to liberating insight. There are altogether five such occasions, which are:

1) when hearing the Dhamma
2) when teaching the Dhamma to others
3) when reciting the Dhamma
4) when reflecting about the Dhamma
5) during meditation

On each of these five occasions, what happens according to the canonical description is that one comes to have a direct grasp of the teachings in spirit and letter, due to which delight and joy arise, which in turn lead to tranquility and concentration, tassa attha-

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