

brahmavihāras as a liberation of the mind in the form of a boundless radiation. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* explains that due to such development beings appear as non-repulsive, *appaṭikula*, hence one has reached the liberation of being resolved upon the beautiful (*Ps.* II, 39). The *Atthasālinī*, however, understands the third deliverance to refer to *jhāna* attainment through a colour device that is thoroughly purified, *suvisuddha* (*DhsA.* 191). This gloss is noteworthy as it shows the degree to which the explanations in the *Atthasālinī* are influenced by the idea of *kasiṇa* meditation, so much so that the *Atthasālinī* 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 *brahmavihāras* 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 *Mahāvibhāṣā* and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, 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 AKIÑCAÑÑĀYATANA). 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 NEVASAÑÑĀNĀSAÑÑĀYATANA).

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 SAÑÑĀVEDAYITANIRODHA).

Anālayo

References

- 1 Similar descriptions can be found in the Chinese Āgamas (e.g. in the *Dīrgha Āgama*, T. I, 52b13, or in the *Madhyama Āgama*, T. I, 582a17), and in the *Mahāvīyutpatti* § 70 / 1511-1518.
- 2 *T.* stands for the Taishō edition.

VIMUTTĀYATANA 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 I

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-*

paṭisaṃvedino dhamma-paṭisaṃvedino pāmojjaṃ jāyati, pamuditassa pīti jāyati, pīṭimanassa kāyo passambhati, passaddhakāyo sukhaṃ vedeti, sukkhino cittaṃ samādhīyati (D. III, 241; D. III, 279; A. III, 21). Judging from this description, it seems that, due to the direct grasp of the teachings arrived at by way of any of these five *vimuttāyatana*s, three qualities are brought into being that are also part of the listings of the factors of awakening, namely joy, *pīti*, tranquility, eṇṇ *passaddhi*, and concentration, *samādhi*. In the description of the consecutive development of the seven factors of awakening given in the *Anāpānasati Sutta*, these three are preceded by mindfulness and investigation-of-*dhammas* (M. III, 85). If the parallelism between the awakening factors and the present description holds, then the process that leads up to and corresponds to the direct grasp of the teachings through any of these five *vimuttāyatana* would involve the development of mindfulness and of investigation-of-*dhammas*.

The basic dynamics of development that ensues based on any of the five spheres of liberation is the same, thus what differentiates them into five is the way this development is triggered. The *Peṭakopadesa* clarifies that in the case of the first *vimuttāyatana* the trigger is [the understanding that arises from] hearing the teachings, in the case of second and third *vimuttāyatana* the decisive factor is consolidation [of one's understanding of the teachings] by way of speech (teaching or reciting), the fourth involves careful mental consideration when one reflects about the *Dhamma*; and the fifth, actual meditation, leads to penetrating [the teachings] well with right view.²

Descriptions of these five spheres of liberation in the *Dīrgha Āgama* preserved in Chinese agree closely with the Pāli version, except for the sequence of presentation, as here recitation comes as the second and teaching others as the third.³ The *Dīrgha Āgama* presentation also differs in so far as it has an additional introductory statement, according to which these five spheres of liberation lead to liberation if one is energetic without remiss, delights in seclusion, and has developed mindfulness as well as a mind that is one-pointed (toṇṇ *T. I, 51c3* and *T. I, 53c15*). This stipulation makes it clear that to reach liberation requires more than just hearing the *Dhamma*, or else reciting it or reflecting about it. The point to be kept in mind here is that the five *vimuttāyatana* refer to the occasions when mature practice may culminate in a break-through

to liberating insight, they are not descriptions of the course of training that leads up to such a breakthrough. Previous training in virtue, concentration and wisdom would be required in order for the mind to reach that level of maturity where the occasions afforded by any of the five *vimuttāyatana* can indeed issue in liberation.

In agreement with the Pāli account, the *Dīrgha Āgama* presentations indicate that, through grasping the teachings on any of these five occasions, joy, tranquility and concentration arise. The *Dīrgha Āgama* descriptions continue after the stage of concentration by describing that with a mind concentrated in this way one sees things as they truly are (*T. I, 51c9* and *T. I, 53c20*). This stipulation echoes a recurrent description in the Pāli discourses, according to which concentration leads to a vision of things as they truly are, which then forms the basis for attaining liberation (see also YATHĀBHJTAÑĀDASSANA).

How seeing things as they truly are then leads on to actual liberation can be gathered from the descriptions of the five spheres of liberation given in the *Saṅgītiparyāya* and the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*. According to their account, disenchantment and dispassion arise based on such a vision of things as they truly are, and it is through such disenchantment and dispassion that liberation takes place.⁴ The *Saṅgītiparyāya* further explains that the vision of things as they truly are is concerned with the four noble truths, a vision that then leads to disenchantment in regard to the five aggregates of clinging. Through the ensuing dispassion, the three roots of evil – greed, hatred and delusion – will be overcome and liberation will be attained (*T. XXVI, 425b1*).

Anālayo

References

- 1 More literally: "having well grasped some sign of concentration, having well given attention to it, having well held it [in one's mind], having well penetrated it with wisdom", *aññatarāṃ samādhinimittaṃ suggaḥṇāṃ hoti sumanasikataṃ supadhāritaṃ suppaṭividdhaṃ paññāya*. According to the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* in Wogihara: *Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* by Yaśomitra, Tokyo 1971: 55,1, here the *samādhinimitta* stands

for the vision of a corpse in decay, *vinīlakaṃ vā vipūyakaṃ vā vyādham ātakaṃ vā vipaṭumakaṃ vā vilohitakaṃ vā vikhāditakaṃ vā vikṣiptakaṃ vā asthi vā asthisamkalikā vā*. Though a similar understanding of the implication of the expression *samādhinimitta* can be found at *D. III, 226* and *A. II, 17*, the original intention of the description of the fifth sphere of liberation would probably not have been restricted to contemplating a corpse, but may well be understood to comprise other types of *samādhinimitta* that can be apprehended during meditation practice.

- 2 'Sotānugatā dhammā'ti paṭhamaṃ vimuttāyatanaṃ, 'vacasā paricita'ti dutiyaṃ tatiyaṃ vimuttāyatanaṃ, 'manasā anupekkhitā'ti catutthaṃ vimuttāyatanaṃ, 'diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhā'ti pañcamaṃ vimuttāyatanaṃ (Pet. 233).
- 3 The same sequential difference recurs in the *Saṅgītiparyāya, T.* (=Taishō ed.) XXVI, 424a17, and in the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, Wogihara op. cit. 54,14.
- 4 *T. XXVI, 424a11* and Wogihara op. cit. 54,5: *tasyārthapratisaṅvedino dharmapratisaṅvedinaś cotpadyate prāmodyaṃ, pramuditasya prītir jāyate, prītimanasaḥ kāyaḥ praśrabhyate, praśrabdhakāyaḥ sukhaṃ vedayate, sukhitasya cittaṃ samādhīyate, samāhitacitto yathābhūtaṃ prajānāti yathābhūtaṃ paśyati, yathābhūtaṃ prajānan yathābhūtaṃ paśyan nirvidyate, nirviṅṇo virajyate, virakto vimucyate.* Pāsādika: "Zu den Zitaten in Yaśomitra's *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*", *Ananda: Papers on Buddhism and Indology*, Colombo 1990: 26 highlights the importance of this additional passage, as it clarifies how the five spheres lead to liberation.

VIMUTTI, "liberation", (Skt. *vimukti*) covers both final liberation through the destruction of all unwholesomeness as well as types of liberation that fall short of being the ultimate goal in early Buddhism. The discourses express the idea of a gradation of types of liberation by distinguishing *vimokkha*, a term often used as a close equivalent to *vimutti*, into three types: worldly, *sāmisā*, unworldly, *nirāmisā*, and more unworldly than unworldly, *nirāmisā nirāmisatara* (*S. IV, 237*). Here the worldly type stands for experiences of liberation or deliverance related to the four *jhānas*. Its unworldly counterpart covers attainment of the

immaterial spheres, while the type of *vimokkha* that is more unworldly than unworldly is retrospective knowledge of the successful deliverance of the mind from lust, anger and delusion.¹

Liberation of the Mind

Instances of the first of these three levels of liberation would be the divine abodes (See also BRAHMAVIHĀRA), whose boundless radiation into all directions constitutes a "liberation of the mind", *cetovimutti*. The standard description of such a liberation of the mind indicates that the *brahmavihāras* liberate from hostility and ill-will, as they are described to be *avera* and *avyāpajha* (e.g. *M. I, 38*). This is envisaged for each of the four *brahmavihāras*, in the sense that each of the four transcends, in its own particular way, the limitations imposed by these two unwholesome mental qualities.²

Of the four *brahmavihāras* it is in particular liberation of the mind through *mettā* that is most prominently the escape, *nissaraṇa*, from ill-will, *vyāpāda*, liberating the mind from its influence to such an extent that it is impossible to say of someone who has developed *mettā* as a *cetovimutti* that ill-will still invades the mind and remains (*D. III, 248*; see also *A. I, 201*, which contrasts *mettā* as a *cetovimutti* to *dosa*). Liberation of the mind through compassion, *karuṇā*, performs the same function in regard to vexation, *vihesā*, liberation of the mind through sympathetic joy, *muditā* in regard to discontent (*arati*); and liberation of the mind through equanimity, *upekkhā*, in regard to lust (*rāga*). Due to such different nuances in the effect and implicitly also in the actual experience of liberation of the mind through any of the four *brahmavihāras*, each can be reckoned as a type of *cetovimutti* in its own right, hence we get *mettā cetovimutti*, *karuṇā cetovimutti*, *muditā cetovimutti* and *upekkhā cetovimutti* (*D. III, 248*).

The experience of these types of *cetovimutti* is moreover a liberation from any confines, as the mind radiates each *brahmavihāra* into all possible directions, above and below, until the experience becomes truly great and unbounded, *mahāggata* and *appamāṇa*, and it seems in particular for this reason that the expression *appamāṇā cetovimutti* is used for them, "boundless liberation of the mind" (*M. III, 146*). An imagery provided in some discourses to illustrate this all-pervasive nature of *appamāṇā cetovimutti* describes a

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