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, appatikula, hence one has reached the liberation of being resolved upon the beautiful (Ps. II, 39). The Atthasālini, however, understands the third deliverance to refer to jhāna attainment through a colour device that is thoroughly purified, swissuddha (DhsA. 191). This gloss is noteworthy as it shows the degree to which the explanations in the Atthasālini are influenced by the idea of kasiṇa meditation, so much so that the Atthasālini would even venture to go against the otherwise highly respected exposition given in the Paṭisambhidāmagga.

A discourse in the Samyutta 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, vaṭṭa-kasiṇa (DhA. III, 830), thereby again opting for an explanation that involves kasiṇa meditation, against the indications provided by the Samyutta Nikāya discourse.

From the perspective of the explanation of the first two vimokkhas given in the Mahāvihāra and the Mahāprajñāpaññāmitāśāstra, 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 Nevasaññañcāsaññañcāyatana).

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 Saññaivedayitanirodha).

Anālayo

References

1 Similar descriptions can be found in the Chinese Āgamas (e.g. in the Dīgha Āgama, T. I, 52b13, or in the Madhyama Āgama, T. I, 582a17), and in the Mahāyutpatti § 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

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-

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, three qualities are brought into being that are also part of the listings of the factors of awakening, namely joy, pūti, tranquility, ēllā passaddhi, and concentration, samādi. In the description of the consecutive development of the seven factors of awakening given in the Ānāpānasati 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 Pāṭalopadesa clarifies that in the case of the first vimuttāyatana the trigger is [the understanding that arises] 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.

Descriptions of these five spheres of liberation in the Dīgha Nikāya 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. The Dīgha Nikāya 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 inclusion, and has developed mindfulness as well as a mind that is one-pointed (to 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 break-through. 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 Dīgha Nikāya presentations indicate that, through grasping the teachings on any of these five occasions, joy, tranquility and concentration arise. The Dīgha Nikāya 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 Yathābhījaṭaṇadassana).

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 Saṅgīṭāparīyāva and the Abhidharmakośavyākhyā. According to their account, disenchanted and dispassion arise based on such a vision of things as they truly are, and it is through such disenchanted and dispassion that liberation takes place. The Saṅgīṭāparīyāva further explains that the vision of things as they truly are is concerned with the four noble truths, a vision that then leads to disenchanted 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).

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”, a bhavataram samādhinimittaṃ suggaṇhānaṃ hoti sumanasikataṃ supadhīrtiṃ supaṭīviddhaṃ patiṇāhaṃ. According to the Abhidharmakośavyākhyā in Waghara: Śuṣṭhānābhidharmakośavyākhyā by Yasomitra, Tokyo 1971: 55.1, here the samādhinimitta stands.
VIMUTTI, "liberation", (Skt. *vimūtī*) 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, *sāmīsa*, unworldly, *nirāmīsa*, and more unworldly than unworldly, *nirāmīta nirāmītasāra* (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 inmaterial 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 BRAHMĀVHĀRA), 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 *brahmāvihāras* liberate from hostility and ill-will, as they are described to be *avera* and *avayaṇājīva* (e.g. M. I, 38). This is envisaged for each of the four *brahmāvihāras*, 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 *brahmāvihāras* it is in particular liberation of the mind through *mettā* that is most prominently the escape, *nissaraṇa*, from ill-will, *vyāpādā*, 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, *vihēśa*, liberation of the mind through sympathetic joy, *mudā* 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 *brahmāvihāras*, each can be reckoned as a type of *cetovimutti* in its own right, hence we get *mettā cetovimutti*, *karuṇā cetovimutti*, *mudā 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 *brahmāvihāra* into all possible directions, above and below, until the experience becomes truly great and unbounded, *mahāgātā* and *appamāṇa*, and it seems in particular for this reason that the expression *appamāṇa 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 *appamāṇa cetovimutti* describes a