for the vision of a corpse in decay, vinīkāyaṃ vā
vipīyakaṃ vā vyādhamakaṃ vā vip añakamakaṃ vā
vīlohitakaṃ vā vīkāditaṃ vā vīśiptakaṃ vā
asthi vā asthitamakā 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 dharmāti pathamaṃ vimuttayatanam,
vacasa paricitāti dutiyaṃ tatthānca
vimuttayatanam, manasā anpekkheti catuththam
vimuttayatanam, diṭṭhiyā supಪuṭviddhāti paṇī
ca manam vimuttayatanam.' (Pet. 233).

3 The same sequential difference recurs in the
Saṅghīṭpatyāya, T. (=Taishō ed.) XXVI, 424a17,
and in the Abhidharmaśāsya-vyākhyā, Wogihara op.
cit. 54,14.

4 T. XXVI, 424a11 and Wogihara op. cit. 54,5:
stavyārtha-pratisamvedino dharmapratisamvedina
catpadyā-prāmodya, pramuditasya prīttī jáyate,
priśīmanasaḥ kāyaḥ praraśbhyahe,
priśīramahākāyaḥ sukham vedayate, sukhitasya
cittha samādhīyahe, samāhācito yathābhūtaṃ
prajñāni yathābhūtaṃ paśyati, yathābhūtah
prajñān yathābhūtaṃ paśyati nirvāyahe, nirvāṇo
viraṭyahe, virakto vimucyate. Pāsadīka: "Zu den
Zitaten in Yaśomitra's Abhidharmaśāsya-vyākhyā, "
Ānanda: 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.

The experience of these types of cetovimutti is
moreover a liberation from any confines, as the mind
radiates each brahmavihāra into all possible directions,
avove and below, until the experience becomes truly
great and unbounded, mahāgāta 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
trumpeter able to make himself heard in all four directions (M. II, 207). Such liberation of the mind through brahmavihāra is unlimited not only in a spatial sense, but also from a karmic perspective, as any limiting action cannot persist and remain, yam pānapākatām kammānap, na taṁ tārāsavissati, na taṁ tātārāvattīthathā. The commentators explain that the karmic fruit to be expected of the development of cetovimutti through brahmavihāra will temporarily overrule the negative karmic influence of another and more 'limited' deed belonging to the sensuous field (MA. III, 449).3

The fruitfulness of mettā as a cetovimutti in particular is of such superior degree that it could be compared to the radiance of the moon that outshines the light of any other star, or to the rising sun that dispels all darkness, or to the rise of the morning star at dawn (Il. 19). Mettā cetovimutti can even become a means of progress for reaching non-return (A. V, 300),4 and its practice helps to weaken the fetters (A. IV, 150 and Il. 21). In fact, all brahmavihāras can become tools for progress to the highest liberation, uttaravimuttis, once they are combined with the development of the factors of awakening (S. V, 119). In regard to mettā cetovimutti in particular, other and somewhat more mundane benefits of its undertaking are that one will sleep well and wake up well; one will not be disturbed by evil dreams and be protected from hostile actions by others; one will find it easy to concentrate; one will have a pleasant countenance and be liked by men and other beings; one will pass away without confusion and be reborn in a non-sensual heavenly world (A. V, 342; see also A. IV, 150). The same type of cetovimutti will also be of protective assistance when having to face non-human beings (S. II, 264), whereas liberation of the mind through sympathetic joy appears to be particularly related to communal harmony (A. I, 243). The type of deliverance that comes about through developing mettā takes place through [perceiving things and beings as] beautiful, sukhā vimokkha (S. V, 119),5 and under the heading of "being resolved on beauty" has been included in a listing of altogether eight types of deliverance (e.g. A. IV, 306; See also VIMOKKHA).

...
VIMUTTI

involves the reflection that the cessation of all perceptions is peaceful; the second requires insight into selflessness; and the third is based on contemplating that one does not belong to anything nor own anything (M. II, 263).

The first of these three, which views the cessation of all perceptions as peaceful, bears some relation to another type of liberation. As the counterpart to any perception, seṭṭha is the sign, nimitta (See also NIMITTA), this mode of viewing the cessation of perceptions as peaceful in order to attain the sphere of nothingness suggests a certain affinity of this type of attainment with another mental liberation, the anīmitta cetovimutti, mental liberation through signlessness. Such anīmitta cetovimutti is the escape from all signs (D. III, 249). Its attainment requires not giving attention to any sign and directing awareness to the signless element (M. I, 297). The anīmitta vimokkhā, further qualified to be also suññata vimokkhā, occurs in two Dhammapada verses that clearly intend the attainment of final liberation (Dhp. 92-93). Concentration on signlessness is in fact one out of different paths to the deathless (S. IV, 360). Yet, meditative experiences of signlessness can also be related to lesser levels of development.6 This can be seen from a discourse in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, which describes how a monk might pride himself on having attained concentration of the mind that is signless, but then through over socializing comes under the influence of lust and eventually disrobes (A. III, 397). Hence the signless liberation of the mind covers types of liberation that are only temporary.

This is in fact the distinguishing mark of the types of liberation of the mind discussed so far, in that they do not in themselves imply the attainment of a liberation that is perpetual, but may only be of a temporary type, sāmaṅgika. That is, by having attained a liberation of the mind one has not necessarily gone beyond the reach of Māra (M. I, 156). To be able to reach even a temporary liberation of the mind does require devotion to practice in seclusion (M. III, 110 and Sn. 54), and is therefore a token of progress on the path (see also A. III, 349 and A. V, 139). Yet, such success is temporary only, as such liberation of the mind can be lost again. This was the case with Godhika, who according to a discourse in the Sutta Nikāya lost his liberation of the mind again and again (S. I, 120). The commentary explains that this happened due to physical illness (S. I, 183). Other reasons for loss of temporary liberation of the mind are delight in excessive activity, talk, sleep and socialization; or else lack of properly examining the mind that had experienced a liberation (A. III, 173).

The attainment of such temporary liberation of the mind can even become an obstruction to reaching the final goal, if due to attaining a peaceful liberation of the mind, suññata cetovimutti, one loses inspiration for progressing towards the cessation of personality and the destruction of ignorance (A. II, 165). Such a predicament would be like taking hold of a branch that is smeared with resin. Hence such liberations of the mind should be developed and made use of without allowing the sticky resin of attachment to prevent letting go of them when the time has come to progress to final liberation. The strength of temporary liberations of the mind is based on the stability of concentration, in fact a discourse in the Saṅgītavutta Nikāya defines noble liberation, ariyā vimutti, to be a manifestation of the faculty of concentration, samādhiniringa (S. V, 223).

Final Liberation

Once the same term is additionally qualified as foremost, ariyā paramā vimutti, however, it does stand for supreme liberation, adhipivimutti (D. I, 174). The same is the case for the term arīya vimokkhā, which occurs in another discourse as a designation for final liberation through penetrative insight into not-self and the relinquishment of all clinging (M. II, 265). A cetovimutti that requires such penetrative insight into not-self is the suññata cetovimutti, the liberation of the mind through emptiness. This is to be attained through the insight that "this is empty of a self and what pertains to a self", suññam idam attena vā attanijjena vā (M. I, 297).

Notably, the same insight into selflessness constitutes the second of the three modes that lead to the sphere of nothingness according to the Ānekāsappāṇa Sutta (M. II, 263). Moreover, according to the Mahāsāṅkha Sutta, the Buddha would dwell in the attainment of internal emptiness by not giving attention to any signs, sabhānāmittinaṭṭa ananatikāra ajjhattam suññatama upasampajja viharati (M. III, 111). This points to some degree of relatedness between suññata cetovimutti, liberation of the mind through emptiness, and the liberations of the mind through nothingness and through signlessness.
In fact, the boundless liberation of the mind and the liberations of the mind through nothingness and signlessness - appamāṇa cetovimutta, akīcaṇṭha cetovimutta and animittā cetovimutta - could be used as expressions to designate final and unshakeable liberation of the mind, akappā cetovimutta (M. I, 298). With final liberation one goes beyond the bounds or limits, pamāpa, set by the three root defilements of lust, anger and delusion; and at the same time goes beyond their 'somethiness', kiñcana, and their tendency to 'make signs', nimitta-karaṇa. Hence, when considered from this perspective, final liberation can indeed be qualified as a type of cetovimutta that is appamāṇa, akīcaṇṭha and animittā. Yet, of the different liberations of the mind considered so far, only sūdā atā cetovimutta seems to stand unequivocally for what early Buddhism considers to be true and permanent liberation, namely liberation from the notion of a self and its resultant defilements.

**Liberated Beings**

Progress towards such true and permanent liberation proceeds through stages and may involve the development of other types of liberations to differing degrees. This variety of approaches is reflected in diverse types of liberated beings described in the discourses. One of these is the saddhāvimutta, the one who is liberated through faith or confidence. A saddhāvimutta has not developed the ability to attain the immaterial attainments and only some of his or her influxes have been eradicated (M. I, 478). That is, a saddhāvimutta could be a stream-enterer, a once-returner, or a non-returner (A. I, 120). By having attained stream-entry at the very least, a saddhāvimutta is liberated from the prospect of any lower rebirth and is liberated from the uncertainty of doubt and perplexity through being endowed with unwavering confidence in the Buddha, his teaching and the community, aviccayavādā (S. V, 357).

The notion of a saddhāvimutta introduces a different nuance into the types of liberations discussed so far, which were the outcome of developing concentration and/or wisdom. Though concentration and wisdom are certainly also required for becoming a saddhāvimutta, the distinctive characteristic of this type of noble disciple is the prominence of the faculty of faith or confidence (A. I, 118).

A higher level of liberation is reached by the paññāvimutta, the one who is liberated through wisdom. This refers to an arahant who has not developed the ability to attain the immaterial attainments (M. I, 477), though he or she would nevertheless be well aware of their impermanent and ultimately unsatisfactory nature (D. II, 70). This awareness would explain why a paññāvimutta may not make any further effort for developing the immaterial attainments, once final liberation has been won, since clear understanding of the impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of such attainments might make any effort to attain them appear futile.

A discourse in the Aṅguttara Nikāya distinguishes different types of paññāvimutta according to their ability in the realm of concentration. According to this discourse, the lowest type of paññāvimutta is the one who attains the first jhāna, (A. IV, 452). This indicates that, at least from the perspective of this discourse, a paññāvimutta would not be completely bereft of jhāna attainment.

The nature of a paññāvimutta was apparently not always easily appreciated by the Buddha's contemporaries. The Susima Sutta reports the puzzlement in this respect of the wanderer Susima, who had become a monk in order to spy out the Buddha's teaching. When other monks declared to have won final knowledge, Susima was perplexed by the fact that they were unable to avail themselves of supernatural powers, nor did they have the divine ear, telepathic knowledge of the mind of others, recollection of past lives, the divine eye or the ability to attain the immaterial attainments (S. II, 123). His perplexity suggests that the early Buddhist conception of a paññāvimutta arahant was unusual in the ancient Indian setting, where the attainment of the final goal was usually associated with the ability of displaying supernormal abilities. In reply to Susima's puzzlement, the Buddha clarified that insight, in the sense of knowledge of the stability of the Dhamma, dharmakālītīhā, is the precursor of the experience of Nibbāna (S. II, 124). This reply highlights that the attainment of Nibbāna does not require the development of any supernatural powers, but penetrative insight into the true nature of things, leading to liberation through higher knowledge, aṭṭhāvimutta (A. I, 231).

Such penetrative insight is the distinctive mark of one freed by wisdom, for whom all ignorance has been
overcome, pacchāvimutassā na santi mohā (Sn. 847). From a discourse in the Saṁyutta Nikāya one could get the impression that the paññāvimutta may have been the most prominent type of arahant. At least on this occasion, sixty out of a congregation of five-hundred arahants were endowed with the triple knowledge, sixty had the six higher knowledges, sixty were freed both ways, while three-hundred-and-twenty were freed by wisdom (S. I, 191). This presentation also highlights that a paññāvimutta has not developed the first two of the three higher knowledges (tevijjā), whose exercise requires the same mental strength of the mind that forms the basis for reaching the immaterial attainments, namely the fourth jhāna.

Another type of arahant mentioned in this discourse is the one who is freed both ways, ubhatobhāgavinutta. Such an arahant is able to attain the immanent attainments (M. I, 477), and therefore is perfected also in this respect (A. IV, 316). The Majjhima Sutta defines the same type of arahant in a slightly different manner by indicating that he or she has mastery over the eight deliverances (D. II, 71). The complement to this can then be found in a discourse in the Aṭṭhakakāra Nikāya, which describes an arahant bereft of the ability to attain the eight deliverances (A. II, 87). The discourse compares such an arahant to a coloured lotus, whereas an arahant who attains the eight vinokkhas is like a white lotus. This suggests that the theme of this presentation is indeed the difference between the paññāvimutta and the ubhatobhāgavinutta, a difference elsewhere said to be related to differences in their respective faculties, indriyavematattā (M. I, 437).

This alternative definition that involves the eight liberations is noteworthy in so far as it moves closer to the notion of a dry-insight arahant that is found in the commentarial literature, an arahant who has reached final liberation without being able to attain any jhāna. On the definition that involves the immanent attainments a paññāvimutta would only be bereft of stages of concentration meditation based on the fourth jhāna. The limit set by the definition that involves the eight vinokkhas is lower, as the first three out of the set of eight vinokkhas involve forms of meditation that are related to the lower jhānas, or perhaps even to stages of meditation that precede jhāna attainment (see VIMOKKHA). Though this definition does not explicitly present an arahant without jhāna abilities, as it could be argued that he or she has to develop jhāna with a meditation practice different from those related to the first three vinokkhas, this definition does nevertheless seem closer to the commentarial conception of a sukhamasāsana arahant than the one that involves the attainment of the immaterial spheres.

Though the accomplishment of a paññāvimutta arahant in the realm of concentration may remain a matter for debate, with the attainment of arahantship his or her cetovimutti has become akuppā cetovimutti, and it is when liberation of the mind is qualified as unshakeable that it indeed stands for the final goal of early Buddhism (see also CETOVIMUTTI), being a type of liberation that is no longer temporary, asamaya.

During the course of the history of Buddhism, the final nature of this attainment eventually became a matter for discussion among different Buddhist schools, some of which developed the concept of an arahant who is liable to fall away again from his or her level of attainment, the parāhānasaddhāra arahant (Abhīkha. VI.56; see also Kāvā. 37). This, however, is a later development, and in the early discourses it is clear that once someone has reached the unshakeable liberation of the mind and liberation by wisdom, akuppā cetovimutta paññāvimutta, and has thereby destroyed the influxes, no falling back from this level of liberation is possible.

The Path to Liberation

The liberation of an arahant is right liberation, sammā vimutti, the fruit of a successful undertaking of the noble eightfold path and the very opposite of wrong types of liberation, micchā vimutti. Being endowed with such right liberation is the last in a list of ten qualities of an arahant, which comprises the factors of the eightfold noble path and right knowledge, sammā ānāpā (M. III, 76). Here it is noteworthy that in the Pāli discourses sammā vimutti is invariably preceded by sammā ānāpa, whereas in the Chinese Agamas the opposite sequence prevails, as discourses in the Dīgha Agama (e.g. T. I, 57b17.9 in the Madhyama Agama (e.g. T. I, 736b19) and in the Saṁyukta Agama (e.g. T. II, 122c7) have right knowledge as the last in their listing, preceded by right liberation, a sequence also found in Sanskrit fragments of the Saṁgīti Sūtra and the Daśottara Sūtra.10 According to an explanation given in the Madhyama Agama and in the Saṁyukta Agama, right
knowledge stands for the retrospective knowledge of having achieved right liberation (T.I, 736b19 and T.II, 198c11). This explanation squares with the Pāli commentaries, which explain right knowledge to represent reviewing knowledge, paccavekkha paññāpam 'sammāñcha'mi ti vuccati (MA. I, 189).\(^{11}\)

On this explanation, it would indeed seem more suitable to list right knowledge after right liberation. This is in fact the case in another type of listing in the Pāli discourses where the aggregate of knowledge and vision of liberation, vimuttiś āpadassanākkhandha (e.g. S. V, 162). Yet, the same type of listing precedes the vimuttiś ākkhandha with the aggregate of wisdom, paññākkhandha, so that perhaps the reference in the Pāli discourses to right knowledge as what precedes right liberation should be understood to stand representative for the type of knowledge or wisdom that issues in liberation.

Whatever may be the final word on the proper sequence of listing right knowledge and right liberation, the type of knowledge and wisdom that will lead to unshakeable liberation needs to be in accordance with reality (see also YATHĀBHJṬAṆĀṆADASSANA) and has to generate disenchantment and dispassion. For knowledge to issue in liberation it needs to be based on right concentration and on a good foundation in ethical conduct, mindfulness and sense-restraint. All these factors are required for liberation just as the foliage, branches and bark of a tree are required for the heartwood to come to maturity (A. IV, 336). Yet, as the Mahāsāropama Sutta and the Cūkasāropama Sutta clarify, none of these should be mistaken for being the final goal, which would be like mistaking foliage, branch or bark for the heartwood (M. I, 197 and M. I, 205). That is, the means should not be confused with the goal.

A complementary perspective on the requirements for liberation is given in the Mahāvedalla Sutta, which presents right view, ethical conduct, learning, [suitable] conversation, tranquillity and insight as the factors that lead to liberation of the mind and liberation by wisdom (M. I, 294). Perhaps the most important requirement for bringing about liberation are the seven factors of awakening, bojjhanga, whose liberating potential comes to the fore once they are developed based on seclusion, dispassion and cessation, in this way leading to letting go (M. III, 88).

According to a listing of altogether nine factors of exertion for purification in the Dasuttara Sutta, pārisuddhipadhamiyaṛga, the purification to be attained through final liberation requires progress through the seven stages of purification (See VISUDDHI and RATHAVINĪTA SUTTA), as well as purification through wisdom, paññāvisuddhi (D. III, 288). The Sāmugiya Sutta explains that purity of liberation, vimuttipārisuddhi, comes about when one touches right liberation after having developed dispassion and after having liberated the mind, rajjavesu dharmesu cittaṁ virūṭvaṁ, vimocanīyesu dharmesu cittaṁ vimoccetvā sammāvimuttaṁ phusati (A. II, 196).

This explanation is significant since it shows that dispassion, though at times acting as a synonym for final liberation (see also VIRĀGA), in contexts such as the present clearly stands for something that precedes actual liberation. Hence dispassion can also be developed without reaching liberation. In fact, a listing of recipients of offerings in the Dakkhiṇādhakaja Sutta quite explicitly speaks of an outsider who has reached dispassion towards sensual things, bhūraka kāmesa vitarāga (M. III, 255), a presentation that would evidently not imply that he had reached final liberation.

This provides the necessary background to a statement in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, which links dispassion, in the sense of the fading away of lust, to liberation of the mind, and fading away of ignorance to liberation by wisdom, rāgavirāgā cetovicmutti, avijjāvirāgā paññāvimutti (A. I, 61). This presentation has at times been understood to represent two different paths that lead to two different types of liberation. In the light of the above passages, however, the implications of this passage can be clarified. Dispassion, or the fading away of lust, rāgavirāga, is indeed a precondition for liberation of the mind, cetovicmutti, which as shown above comprises various levels of liberation to be reached through the development of deeper stages of concentration. Such development, as the standard description of the first jhāna explicitly indicates, requires the leaving behind of all matters related to sensuality, vivece' eva kāmeḥ (e.g. D. I, 73).

Yet, such liberation of the mind through dispassion, which the above Aṅguttara Nikāya passage quite explicitly introduces as the outcome of the development of samatha, tranquillity, falls short of
being the final goal, as it is only a temporary type of liberation. Final liberation additionally requires the development of insight, vipassanā, which leads to the development of wisdom, paññā, and the removal of ignorance, avijjā, or pahāyati (A. II, 61). Hence instead of intending two different paths to two different goals, what this passage in the Aṅguttara Nikāya describes are two complementary paths to the final goal, one of which is incapable of leading to final liberation on its own.

The central point remains the removal of ignorance, and it is this removal which issues in being completely liberated through final knowledge, sammāsādānā āvimutta (M. III, 30), with which an inner state of deliverance has been reached, ajjhatta vinokkha, wherein all clinging is destroyed and all influxes are removed (S. II, 54). Such liberation implies that delight and lust have been completely destroyed, nandiraṅgakkhatā cittāttā vinimutta saviṇimutta (S. III, 51), as well as craving, taphikkhayvinimutta (A. II, 42); being a liberation through non-clinging, anupādā vinimutta (S. II, 18), whereby the round of suffering in saṁsāra has been transcended, taphāsaṅkhavimutta ... vaṭṭam n’āthi paṭiṭh āpanāya (S. IV, 391). In this way liberation from being reckoned in terms of any of the five aggregates has been reached, saṅkhavimutta (M. I, 487), and one has been liberated through the highest deliverance from perception, saṅkhvimokkhe parame vinimutto (Sn. 1071).

Such highest deliverance from perception is none other than the experience of Nibbāna, which is the counterpart to liberation, vimuttiyā nibbānam paṭibhāgo (M. I, 304), and the resort of liberation, vimuttiyā nibbānam patissaracco (S. V, 218), wherefore Nibbāna is the very purpose of liberation, vimutti nibbānam (S. III, 189). Perhaps one of the most telling descriptions of the liberating attainment of Nibbāna as the highest deliverance from perception is given by bhikkhuni Paṭacārā, who explains that just like the Nibbāna of her lamp, which she had just put out, so was the liberation of her mind, paṭipaseva nibbānam, vinokkho ahu cetato (Thig. 116; see also NIBBĀNA).

To attain such vimutti is to arrive at the very essence of all things, vimutissā sabbhe dhammā (A. V, 107). Such attainment is the very purpose all the teachings and instructions given by the Buddha, and just as the ocean has a single taste, namely the taste of salt, so too the teachings of the Buddha have a single taste, namely the taste of liberation (Ud. 56). With such liberation the holy life has been lived and what had to be done has been done, as the prospective of future birth has been destroyed and there will be no more coming to any state of being, khīpā jīti, vaśtaḥ bhramanāryaṁ, kataṁ karagāyaṁ, nācāram iññhatāya (e.g. D. I, 84).

Having won liberation, the noble disciple has pierced this huge mass of ignorance just like a skilled warrior will pierce huge objects with his arrow (A. II, 202). The liberation attained in this manner is like the white awning of a chariot, setapaccāvada (S. IV, 291); or else like the final rubbing and grooming a horse trainer gives a horse that has been thoroughly trained and is worthy of being put to service by the king (M. I, 446). One who has reached liberation of the mind and liberation by wisdom has lifted up the cross-bar, has filled the most; uprooted the pillar; withdrawn the bolts; lowered the banner; dropped the burden and is unfettered (A. III, 84). Here the cross-bar stands for ignorance, the mast for fanning on in saṁsāra, the pillar for craving, the bolts for the five lower fetters, and the banner and the burden both represent the conceit 'I am'.

Just as a head-anointed king endowed with treasures, a strong army and wise counsellors is at home anywhere in his realm, similarly those who have reached liberation will be freed in mind wherever they may dwell (A. III, 152). Dwelling freed in mind in this way, they will be aloof from the world like a lotus that has risen above water (A. V, 152). Undetected like a lotus that has risen above water, freed like the wind that cannot be caught in a net, a liberated one is a leader of others, having gone beyond any need to be led by others.

Vāṇam va jālamhi asajjāmīnaṁ, padmaṁ va toyena alippamīnaṁ, netāraṁ aññesaṁ anaññaneyyaṁ (Sn. 213).

Anālayo

References

1 The use of the qualifications sāmīsa and nirāmīsa in this passage is probably best understood relatively, as the same discourse applies the qualification nirāmīsa to the jhānas when treating different types of joy, happiness or equanimity, pīti, sukha.
and upakkha. Thus the jhānas of the form sphere are considered as a sānta type of vimokkha only in comparison to more sublime types of deliverances.

2 The Saṅghabhedavastu qualifies the radiation of the four brahmavihāras not only as avaśyika and avyādhiśena, but also as asapaiśena, "without adversary"; Gnoili: The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu, vol. II, Rome 1978: 206.

3 Lily de Silva: "Cetovimutti, Paññāvimutti and Ubbatobhaavigavimutti", Pali Buddhist Review, 3/3, 1978: 124 comments that "perhaps what is meant by this simile is that, just as petty small noises get drowned by the all-pervading sound of a conch-shell, petty emotions such as attachment and aversion associated with sense data find no foothold in a well developed mind suffused with infinite benevolence".

4 The presentation in A. V, 300 is rather succinct, but a slightly more detailed description of how to combine mettā cetovimutti with the development of insight required for progress on the path to liberation can be found at M. I, 351, see also M. I, 38 and A. 1, 196.

5 The same discourse relates the liberations of the mind developed through the other three brahmavihāras to the first three immaterial attainments.

6 A survey of passages related to aninutta can be found in Peter Harvey: "Signless' Meditations in Pāli Buddhism", Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies, vol. 9 no. 1, 1986: 25-52.

7 The same discourse does, however, also list a type of paññāvimutta who is able to attain the immaterial attainments, which would conflict with the definition of the paññāvimutta arahant given elsewhere.

8 This has been pointed out by Bhikkhu Bodhi: "The Susīma Sutta and the Wisdom-Liberated Arhat", Journal of the Pali Text Society, vol. 29, 2007 (forthcoming).

9 T. stands for the Taishō edition.


11 Such retrospective knowledge of having reached liberation might also be the implication of the instruction in the Saṅghaṭṭa Sutta to know when the mind is liberated, "vimuttiya eittan ti paññāti (M. 1, 59), though according to the commentarial explanation the reference to the liberated mind in this context includes also temporary types of liberation (M. 1, 280).


**VIMUTTIMAGGA**, the "Path to Liberation", is the title of what could perhaps best be reckoned as a practice compendium or 'path manual' that in many aspects is similar to the Visuddhimagga (see also VISUDDHIMAGGA). The present article will at first introduce the extant versions of the "Path to Liberation" and take up the question of its relationship to the Abhayagiri monastery. This will be followed by a survey of the twelve chapters of the "Path to Liberation", with particular emphasis on differences between this work and the Visuddhimagga.

A complete version of the "Path to Liberation" has been preserved in Chinese translation under the title Jie-tuo dao lun (-Ass+I- SJS OŚ, corresponding perhaps to Vimuttimārga-sāstra or Vimuttimārga-nirdeśa), found in the Taishō edition as entry number 1648 at T. XXXII 399c-461c (Nanjio no. 1293). The compilation of this work is attributed to an arhat by the name of Upatissa, and its translation into Chinese to Seng-qié-po-lo (cF=OFZ...o) from Fu-nan (in the area of modern Cambodia/Thailand). Seng-qié-po-lo, whose name could be reconstructed as Samghapāla, Sanghabharman or Samghabhara, was active in the early sixth century.

In addition to this Chinese translation, an extract from the same work has been preserved in the Tibetan canon under the title Rnam par grol ba'i lam las sbyangs pa'i yon tan bstan pa zhes bya ba (Derge edition no. 306, Peking edition no. 972), corresponding to Vismutimārga-dhūtaga-nirdeśa in Sanskrit. The translation of this extract, which describes the ascetic practices, is attributed to Vidyākara or Vidyākara, who was active in the ninth century. The Tibetan text has been edited by Sasaki 1958 and Bapat 1964. Bapat 1944 (also Bapat 1964: XV) notes that in some editions of the Tibetan canon the Vimuttimārga-dhūtaga-nirdeśa contains a spurious passage with some sātra