

- viññāṇatthi. Sant' Ānanda sattā sabbaso viññānañcāyatanaṃ samatikkama natthi kiñci ti ākincaññāyatanūpagā. Ayaṃ sattamvīññāṇatthi. Dīghanikāya Vol.2. pp. 68-69*
- 10 Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 76.
- 11 Ibid. Vol 2. p. 105.
- 12 Saṃuttanikāya Vol. 2. p. 94.
- 13 Majjhimanikāya Vol. 1. p. 293.
- 14 *Cittenu nhs' aii loko, citteflu parikissati. Samyuttanikāya Vol. 1. p. 39.*
- 15 Ibid. Vol. 2. p. 94.
- 16 Majjhimanikāya Vol. 1. p. 23 7f
- 17 *Viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ. Dīghanikāya Vol. I. p. 223; Sumaṅgalavilāsini Kevattasuttavaṇṇanā*
- 18 *Kattha paṭhavi ca āpo ca tejo vāyo na gādhatikatha dīghaṅca rassaṅca anuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsūbhaṃ kattha nāmāna rūpaṅca asesam uparujjhati. Dīghanikāya Vol. 1 p. 215 f.*
- 19 *Viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ* Ibid. p. 223
- 20 *Uppādanto vāvayanto vā ṭhitassa aññathattanto vā etassa natthi anantaṃ. Sumaṅgalavilāsini Kevattasuttavaṇṇanā*
- 21 *Evam vimuttacittaṃ kho bhikkhave bhikkhuṃ saindā devā sabrahmakā anvesam nādhigacchanti I d a ṃ n i s s i t a ṃ tathāgatassa viññānanti. Taṃ kissa hestu. Diṭṭhevāhaṃ bhikkhave dhamme tathāgathaṃ ananuvejjoti vadāmi. Majjhima Nikāya Vol. i. p. 140*
- 22 *The Psychology of Nirvāṇa* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd. London 1969)
- 23 Ibid. p. 61
- 24 *Idāni sañjānāti vijānāti pajānāti ettha viseso vedītabbo. Tattha upasaggamatta meva viseso. Jānāti padaṃ pana aviseso. Tassāpi jānanatthe viseso vedītabbo. – Papañcasūdanī, Mahāvedallasuttavaṇṇanā*
- 25 *Buddhist Psychology of Perception* The Ceylon University Press of Colombo 1958 , p. 4
- 26 *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1963 ) p. 434
- 27 Ibid. p. 435
- 28 For a detailed discussion of this point see “*The Early Buddhist Analysis of Varieties of Cognition*”
- 29 *Buddhist Psychology of Perception* p. 16
- 30 Ibid. pp. 18-19. See also Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids , *Birth of Indian Psychology* pp. 75 and 245.
- 31 *Buddhist Psychology of Perception* p. 19
- 32 Ibid. p. 20
- 33 Majjhima Nikāya Vol. I. p. 53
- 34 *The Buddhist Unconscious* (Routledge Curson, London and New York 2003) p. 12
- 35 *Journal of the American Oriental Society* , (84 (3): 254-9.
- 36 *The Buddhist Unconscious* p. 12
- 37 *Ālayavijñāna* . Internationa Institute for Buddhist Studies, Tokyo 1987
- 38 Sandhinirmocanasūtra V. 2 As reconstructed in Sanskrit by Schmithausen it reads: (*Sarvabhījakam cittam*) vipacyate samūcchati vṛddhiṃ virūḍhiṃ vipulatam āpadyate 1987: 356, n.508
- 39 Waldron: 2003, p. 94-95
- 40 *Vijñānapariṇāme sau pariṇāmah sa ca tridhā Vipāko mananākhyāśca vijñaptir viśayasya ca - Triṃśikā* verses 1-2
- 41 *Tatṛālayākhyam vijñānam vipākaḥ sarvabhījakam* –ibid. verse 2

VIÑÑĀNAÑCĀYATANA, the "sphere of boundless consciousness", is the second of the four immaterial attainments (see also ARjPA etc.) According to the standard description given in the discourse, this sphere is to be attained by overcoming the preceding sphere of boundless space, *sabbaso ākāśānañcāyatanaṃ samatikkamma*, and by giving attention to the idea of boundless consciousness (e.g. *M. II, 13*). The *Vibhaṅga* explains that the actual attainment comes about by directing attention to the space touched by consciousness during the previous attainment of the sphere of boundless space, *taṃ yeva ākāśam viññāṇena phutthaṃ manasikaroti* (*Vibh. 262*). That is, in terms of actual experience, to attain the sphere of boundless consciousness requires that mind takes consciousness itself as the object, and this consciousness is devoid of content apart from awareness of all pervasive space.

By reason of the method of attainment, the element of the sphere of boundless consciousness, *viññāṇaṇcāyatana-dhātu*, is based on the element of the sphere of boundless space (*S. II, 150*). The relationship between the two is such that a re-arising of perceptions related to boundless space is an obstruction to be overcome in order to stabilize the attainment of boundless consciousness (*S. IV, 267; A. IV, 417; A. IV, 444*). The happiness experienced during the attainment

of boundless consciousness is superior to the happiness of attaining the sphere of boundless space (*M. I*, 399). Moreover, the life span of one reborn in the realm of boundless consciousness lasts for altogether forty-thousand eons and is thus twice as long as the life span to be expected on rebirth in the realm of boundless space, (*A. I*, 267).

The sphere of boundless consciousness is the sixth in a series of altogether seven stations of consciousness, *viññāṇaṭṭhiti* (*D. III*, 253); the fifth of altogether eight liberations, *vimokkha* (*D. III*, 262), alternatively referred to as "directions", *disā* (*M. III*, 222); the seventh of altogether nine abodes of beings, *sattāvāsa* (*D. III*, 263); and the sixth of altogether nine successive dwellings or else nine successive cessations, *anupubbavihārā* or *anupubbanirodhā* (*D. III*, 265; *D. III*, 266). Another list that covers ten *kaṣiṇas* includes the *viññāṇakaṣiṇa* as the last in the series (*M. II*, 15). This *viññāṇa-kaṣiṇa* is reckoned supreme among the ten *kaṣiṇas* (*A. V*, 60), and is described as boundless in all directions and unified, *uddham adho tiriyaṃ advayaṃ appamāṇaṃ*. This description suggests that the *viññāṇakaṣiṇa* stands for the same type of experience that is elsewhere referred to by the term *viññāṇāñcāyatana*. The commentaries confirm this impression, explaining that the expression *viññāṇakaṣiṇa* refers to taking boundless consciousness as the object and thereby reaching the sphere of boundless consciousness (*AA. II*, 77).

Notably, the detailed treatment of the *kaṣiṇas* in the *Visuddhimagga* does not cover the consciousness *kaṣiṇa* (*Vism.* 118-177), though the term occurs in the same work as part of a list of objects for insight, *abhiññā* (*Vism.* 609; quoting *Ps.* I, 6). The *Atthasālinī* explains that the consciousness *kaṣiṇa* was not included in the treatment of *kaṣiṇas* because it belongs to the development of the immaterial attainments (*DhsA.* 186). In fact, the *Nettipakaraṇa* reckons the space *kaṣiṇa* and the consciousness *kaṣiṇa* as belonging to the realm of insight, *vipassanā*, while the other eight *kaṣiṇas* are assigned to tranquillity meditation (*Nett.* 89). This distinction appears artificial and the reason for the absence of the consciousness *kaṣiṇa* in the *Visuddhimagga* treatment may rather be that once the expression *kaṣiṇa* is understood to stand only for a meditation device, it becomes difficult to imagine what a consciousness *kaṣiṇa* might be. The references in the discourses to a *viññāṇakaṣiṇa* rather suggest that the original implication of the term *kaṣiṇa* was quite

literally the all pervasive 'totality', *kaṭṭhā*, of an experience, for the development of which the meditation devices described in the commentaries under the heading of *kaṣiṇa* are merely the tools (see also *KAŚIṆA*).

The experience of the totality of boundless consciousness takes place through mind-consciousness alone and does not involve the other sense-faculties (*M. I*, 293). Mental factors present during the attainment of the sphere of boundless consciousness are one-pointedness of the mind, contact, feeling, perception, volition, mind, aspiration, resolution, energy, mindfulness, equanimity and attention (*M. III*, 27). The type of perception present during this attainment is a "subtle but true perception of boundless consciousness", *viññāṇāñcāyatana-sukhuma-sacca-saññā* (*D. I*, 184).

It is perhaps not surprising that such a sublime attainment is prone to leading those who experience it to metaphysical speculations. This much can be seen from the *Brahmajāla Sutta's* listing of grounds that lead to the arising of annihilationist views, one of which involves the identification of the sphere of boundless consciousness as a self (*D. I*, 35; see also *VIBHAVATAṆHĀ*). That is, the perception of boundless consciousness has quite a propensity to lead to deluded type of imaginings and thence to the genesis of delight and appropriation in terms of 'mine' (*M. I*, 2). To have reached such attainment could also become the cause for developing conceit and despising others (*M. III*, 44). Though with the attainment of the sphere of boundless consciousness one has gone beyond Māra's vision (*M. I*, 159); and the same attainment features among the range of meditation experiences the Buddha attained on the eve of his passing away (*D. II*, 156 or *S. I*, 158); from an early Buddhist perspective this profound attainment should be reckoned as merely a peaceful dwelling (*M. I*, 41). It should be contemplated as a product of mental volition and thence as impermanent and subject to cessation (*M. I*, 352); or else each of its mental aggregate components should be seen as impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self (*M. I*, 436), in order to progress towards final liberation.

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