

for the vision of a corpse in decay, *vinīlakaṃ vā vipūyakaṃ vā vyādhmātakaṃ 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 paricitā'ti dutiyaṃ tatiyaṃca 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: *tasyārthapratisaṃvedino dharmapratisaṃvedināś cotpadyate prāmodyaṃ, pramuditasya prītir jāyate, prītimanasaḥ kāyaḥ praśrabhyate, praśrabdhakāyaḥ sukhaṃ vedayate, sukhitasya cittaṃ samādhīyate, samāhitacitto yathābhūtaṃ prajānāti yathābhūtaṃ paśyati, yathābhūtaṃ prajānan yathābhūtaṃ paśyan nirvidyate, nirviṇṇo virajyate, virakto vimucyate*. Pāsādika: "Zu den Zitaten in Yaśomitra's *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*", *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.

**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.<sup>1</sup>

### 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 *avyāpajja* (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.<sup>2</sup>

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, *viheṣā*, 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

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, *yaṃ pamāṇakataṃ kammaṃ, na taṃ tatrāvasissati, na taṃ tatrāvatiṭṭhati*. The commentaries 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*).<sup>3</sup>

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 (*It. 19*). *Mettā cetovimutti* can even become a means of progress for reaching non-return (*A. V, 300*),<sup>4</sup> and its practice helps to weaken the fetters (*A. IV, 150* and *It. 21*). In fact, all *brahmavihāras* can become tools for progress to the highest liberation, *uttarivimuttiṃ*, 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, *subha vimokkha* (*S. V, 119*),<sup>5</sup> 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).

Thus, even though the type of liberation of the mind to be attained through developing *appamāṇā cetovimutti* falls short of being the final goal, the 'liberating' effects of this type of *cetovimutti* are remarkable. These cover mental freedom in a spatial

as well as emotional sense, and lead to temporary freedom from the effects of some type of unwholesome karmic retribution as well as to freedom from such unpleasant experiences as sleepless nights, bad dreams and hostile attitudes by others. In view of this range of liberating effects, it becomes quite understandable why the development and effects of *appamāṇā cetovimutti* have been given so much attention in the early discourses.

A related type of liberation of the mind appears to be *mahaggatā cetovimutti*, liberation of the mind that has become great, which designates the ability to pervade a certain area with one's meditation object, be this the area around the root of a tree, the area of a whole village, or even the area of the whole earth (*M. III, 146*). The fact that *mahaggatā cetovimutti* is distinguished from *appamāṇā cetovimutti* suggests that its meditative pervasion would involve some other meditation object, which according to the commentarial explanation is the development of *jhāna* based on a *kaṣiṇa* object (*MA. IV, 200*).

Yet another type of *cetovimutti* is the *adukkhamasukhā cetovimutti*, the neither-painful-nor-pleasant liberation of the mind, which stands for the mental freedom attained through the fourth *jhāna* (*M. I, 296*). In this case the condition of being a mental liberation is no longer related to any spatial pervasion, but to the fact that through attaining the fourth *jhāna* the mind has become liberated by attaining immovability, *aniñjita* (*M. I, 455*), and therewith total aloofness from the pleasure/pain dichotomy, whose transcendence is the very precondition for entry into fourth *jhāna* attainment, *sukhassa ca pahānā, dukkhassa ca pahānā, pubb' eva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthagamā* (e.g. *D. I, 75*).

Based on the mental strength of the fourth *jhāna*, the immaterial attainments can be developed, which correspond to four types of deliverances, *vimokkha*, in the eightfold standard listing (e.g. *A. IV, 306*, See also VIMOKKHA). Out of these four, the attainment of the sphere of nothingness is also reckoned as a type of liberation of the mind on its own, namely as the *akiñcaññā cetovimutti* (*M. I, 297*). According to the standard description in the discourses, to attain this type of mental liberation requires giving attention to nothingness, *n'atthi kiñci* (e.g. *M. I, 41*). The *Āneñ jasappāya Sutta* depicts three additional modes that lead to the sphere of nothingness, the first of which

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, *saññā*, 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 *animittā cetovimutti*, mental liberation through signlessness. Such *animittā 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 *animitta vimokkha*, further qualified to be also *suññata vimokkha*, 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.<sup>6</sup> 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, *sāmāyika*. 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 *Saṃyutta Nikāya* lost his liberation of the mind again and again (*S. I, 120*). The commentary explains that this happened due to physical illness (*SA. 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, *santā 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 *Saṃyutta Nikāya* defines noble liberation, *ariyā vimutti*, to be a manifestation of the faculty of concentration, *samādhindriya* (*S. V, 223*).

#### Final Liberation

Once the same term is additionally qualified as foremost, *ariyā paramā vimutti*, however, it does stand for supreme liberation, *adhivimutti* (*D. I, 174*). The same is the case for the term *ariya vimokkha*, 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 *suññatā 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 attha vā attaniyena 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 *Āneñ jasappāya Sutta* (*M. II, 263*). Moreover, according to the *Mahāsuññata Sutta*, the Buddha would dwell in the attainment of internal emptiness by not giving attention to any signs, *sabbanimittānaṃ amanasikārā ajjhataṃ suññataṃ upasampajja viharituṃ* (*M. III, 111*). This points to some degree of relatedness between *suññatā 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 - *appamāṇā cetovimutti*, *akiñcaṇṇā cetovimutti* and *animittā cetovimutti* - could be used as expressions to designate final and unshakeable liberation of the mind, *akuppā cetovimutti* (M. I, 298). With final liberation one goes beyond the bounds or limits, *pamāṇa*, set by the three root defilements of lust, anger and delusion; and at the same time goes beyond their 'somethingness', *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 *cetovimutti* that is *appamāṇā*, *akiñcaṇṇā* and *animittā*. Yet, of the different liberations of the mind considered so far, only *suññatā cetovimutti* 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-returned, or a non-returned (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, *aveccappasāda* (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 *Anguttara 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).<sup>7</sup> 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 *Susīma Sutta* reports the puzzlement in this respect of the wanderer Susīma, who had become a monk in order to spy out the Buddha's teaching. When other monks declared to have won final knowledge, Susīma 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 Susīma's puzzlement, the Buddha clarified that insight, in the sense of knowledge of the stability of the *Dhamma*, *dharmatthitīnāṇa*, 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, *aññāvimutti* (A. I, 231).

Such penetrative insight is the distinctive mark of one freed by wisdom, for whom all ignorance has been

overcome, *paññāvimuttassa na santi mohā* (Sn. 847). From a discourse in the *Samyutta 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, *ubhatobhāgavimutta*. Such an *arahant* is able to attain the immaterial attainments (M. I, 477), and therefore is perfected also in this respect (A. IV, 316). The *Mahānidāna 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 *Aṅguttara 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 *vimokkhas* is like a white lotus. This suggests that the theme of this presentation is indeed the difference between the *paññāvimutta* and the *ubhatobhāgavimutta*, a difference elsewhere said to be related to differences in their respective faculties, *indriyavemattatā* (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*.<sup>8</sup> On the definition that involves the immaterial 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 *vimokkhas* is lower, as the first three out of the set of eight *vimokkhas* 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 *vimokkhas*, this definition does nevertheless seem closer to the commentarial conception of a *sukkhavipassaka 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 *parihānadharma arhant* (*AbhKbh*. VI:56; see also *KvuA*. 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 cetovimutti paññāvimutti*, 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 ñāṇa* (M. III, 76). Here it is noteworthy that in the Pāli discourses *sammā vimutti* is invariably preceded by *sammā ñāṇa*, whereas in the Chinese *Āgamas* the opposite sequence prevails, as discourses in the *Dīrgha Āgama* (e.g. T. I, 57b17),<sup>9</sup> in the *Madhyama Āgama* (e.g. T. I, 736b19) and in the *Samyukta Āgama* (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 *Saṅgīti Sūtra* and the *Daśottara Sūtra*.<sup>10</sup> According to an explanation given in the *Madhyama Āgama* and in the *Samyukta Āgama*, 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, *paccavekkhaṇāñāṇam 'sammāñāṇam' ti vuccati* (*MA. I*, 189).<sup>11</sup>

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 liberation, *vimuttikkhandha*, is followed by the aggregate of knowledge and vision of liberation, *vimuttiñāṇadassanakkhandha* (e.g. *S. V*, 162). Yet, the same type of listing precedes the *vimuttikkhandha* 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 *YATHĀBHJTAÑĀDASSANA*) 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 *Mahāśāropama Sutta* and the *Cūḷasāropama 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, *bojjhaṅga*, 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*, *pārisuddhipadhāniyaṅga*, 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 *Sāmuḍḍiya Sutta* explains that purity of liberation, *vimuttiṭṭhārasuddhi*, comes about when one touches right liberation after having developed dispassion and after having liberated the mind, *rajanñesu dhammesu cittaṃ virājetvā, vimocanñesu dhammesu cittaṃ vimocetvā, sammāvimuttiṃ 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 *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta* quite explicitly speaks of an outsider who has reached dispassion towards sensual things, *bāhiraka kāmesu vītarāga* (*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 cetovimutti, 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.<sup>12</sup> 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, *cetovimutti*, 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, *vivicc'eva kāmehi* (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 bhāvīyati*, and to the removal of ignorance, *avijjāsāpahīyati* (A. I, 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, *sammadaññā vimutta* (M. III, 30), with which an inner state of deliverance has been reached, *ajjhata vimokkha*, wherein all clinging is destroyed and all influxes are removed (S. II, 54). Such liberation implies that delight and lust have been completely destroyed, *nandirāgakkhayā cittaṃ vimuttaṃ suvimuttaṃ* (S. III, 51), as well as craving, *taṇhakkhayavimutti* (A. II, 42); being a liberation through non-clinging, *anupādā vimutta* (S. II, 18), whereby the round [of faring on in *saṃsāra*] has been transcended, *taṇhāsānikkayavimuttassa ... vaṭṭaṃ n'atthi paññāpanāya* (S. IV, 391). In this way liberation from being reckoned in terms of any of the five aggregates has been reached, *saṅkhāvimutta* (M. I, 487), and one has been liberated through the highest deliverance from perception, *saññāvimokhe parame vimutto* (Sn. 1071).

Such highest deliverance from perception is none other than the experience of *Nibbāna*, which is the counterpart to liberation, *vimuttiyā nibbānaṃ patibhāgo* (M. I, 304), and the resort of liberation, *vimuttiyā nibbānaṃ paṭisaraṇaṃ* (S. V, 218), wherefore *Nibbāna* is the very purpose of liberation, *vimutti nibbānanthā* (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 *bhikkhunī* Paṭācārā, who explains that just like the *Nibbāna* of her lamp, which she had just put out, so was the liberation of her mind, *padīpasseva nibbānaṃ vimokkho ahu cetaso* (Thig. 116; see also NIBBĀNA).

To attain such *vimutti* is to arrive at the very essence of all things, *vimuttisārā sabbe 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, *khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparam itthāya* (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, *setapacchāda* (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 moat; 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 moat for faring on in *saṃsāra*, 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). Undefined 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.

*Vātaṃ va jālamhi asajjamānaṃ,  
padumaṃ va toyena alippamānaṃ,  
netāraṃ aññesaṃ anaññaneyyaṃ* (Sn. 213).

Anālayo

#### References

- 1 The use of the qualifications *sāmi* and *nirāmi* in this passage is probably best understood relatively, as the same discourse applies the qualification *nirāmi* to the *jhānas* when treating different types of joy, happiness or equanimity, *pīti, sukha*

- and *upekkhā*. Thus the *jhānas* of the form sphere are considered as a *sāmisa* 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 *avaireṇa* and *avyābādheṇa*, but also as *asapatnena*, "without adversary"; Gnoli: *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu*, vol. II, Rome 1978: 206.
  - 3 Lily de Silva: "Cetovimutti, Paññāvimutti and Ubhatobhāgavimutti", *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. I.*, 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 *animitta* 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 Arahant*", *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, vol. 29, 2007 (forthcoming).
  - 9 *T.* stands for the Taishō edition.
  - 10 Fragment K 484m2 Rb in Stache-Rosen: *Dogmatische Begriffsreihen im Älteren Buddhismus II*, Berlin 1968: 35; fragment 679 folio 23 R4 in Schlingloff: *Dogmatische Begriffsreihen im Älteren Buddhismus I*, Berlin 1962: 12.
  - 11 Such retrospective knowledge of having reached liberation might also be the implication of the instruction in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* to know when the mind is liberated, '*vimuttaṃ cittaṃ'ti pajānāti* (*M. I.*, 59), though according to the commentarial explanation the reference to the liberated mind in this context includes also temporary types of liberation (*MA. I.*, 280).
  - 12 E.g. Gombrich: "Retracing an Ancient Debate", in *How Buddhism Began*, London 1996: 114.
- 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* (Ā%+ S̄ ÖŠ, corresponding perhaps to *Vimuktimārga-śāstra* or *Vimuktimārga-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 *Upatisya*, and its translation into Chinese to Seng-qie-po-lo (çP=OFZ...n) from Fu-nan (in the area of modern Cambodia / Thailand). Seng-qie-po-lo, whose name could be reconstructed as Saṃghapāla, Saṃghavarman or Saṃghabhara, 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 *Vimuktimārga-dhutagaṇa-nirdeśa* in Sanskrit. The translation of this extract, which describes the ascetic practices, is attributed to Vidyākara-prabha, 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 *Vimuktimārga-dhutagaṇa-nirdeśa* contains a spurious passage with some *sūtra*



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