

SD 62.5 (Aṭṭhaka) Vimokkha Sutta

The (Eights) Discourse on the Liberations

A 8.66

Theme: True liberation and freedom

Translated by Piya Tan ©2009; 2024

1 The term *attha, vimokkha*

1.1 THE 8 LIBERATIONS

1.1.1 A key list

1.1.1.1 In the Pāli texts, the term *vimokkha*, “liberation,” often has the same sense as *vimutti*, “freedom.” However, *vimokkha* has a special sense in itself, that is, it refers to the 8 types of liberations (or freedoms). These are 8 progressive levels in the experience and mastery of deep concentration, that is, calmness (*samatha*). However, only the last liberation has a direct relation to the cultivation of insight (*vipassanā*).¹

SD 49.5b, on the **Mahā Sakul’udāyi Sutta** (M 77), describes the 8 liberations (*attha vimokkha*) with footnotes to modern commentaries [and cross-references to sections in SD 49.5b], as follows:²

- | | SD 49.45b |
|---|--------------------|
| (1) <u>One possessing physical form</u> sees physical forms. | [3.3.1] |
| (2) One does not see physical forms internally but <u>sees physical forms externally</u> . | [3.3.2] |
| (3) One is liberated after contemplating on the idea of <u>the beautiful</u> . | [3.3.3] |
| (4) Through the utter transcending of the perception of physical forms, the passing away of the perception of impingement [sense-contact], and non-attention to the perception of diversity, (contemplating,) “Space is infinite,” one enters and dwells in <u>the base of infinite space</u> . | [3.3.4] |
| (5) Through the utter transcending of infinite space, (contemplating,) “Consciousness is infinite,” one enters and dwells in <u>the base of infinite consciousness</u> . | [3.3.5] |
| (6) Through the utter transcending of the base of infinite consciousness, (contemplating,) “There is nothing,” one enters and dwells in <u>the base of nothingness</u> . | [3.3.6] |
| (7) Through the utter transcending of the base of nothingness, one enters and dwells in <u>the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception</u> . | [3.3.7] |
| (8) Through the utter transcending of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, one enters and dwells in <u>the cessation of perception and feeling</u> . | [3.3.8] |
| | (M 77,48), SD 49.5 |

1.1.1.2 In simple terms, the 8 liberations are the results or benefits of the 8 dhyanas. These “liberations” (*vimokkha*), except in the last (8th) case, refer only to a *temporary* release from the mental hindrances and opposing states. The first 3 liberations refer to those based on form dhyanas, while 4-6

¹ For a scholarly summary, see Analayo, *From Craving to Liberation: Excursions into the thought-world of the Pāli discourses*. NY, 2009: 141-148 (ch 12.1).

² See footnotes on the key terms here in the Sutta tr below.

refer to the formless attainments. The 7th liberation is almost free of thought, and the last (no. 8) is the cessation of perception and feeling,³ experienced only by arhats and some non-returners.

The attaining of the 8 liberations, especially the last one—that of the cessation of perception and feeling—is the distinctive mark of an arhat freed both ways (*ubhato, bhāga, vimutto*),⁴ who is able to attain the 8 liberations in both forward and backward sequence, as stated in the Mahā Nidāna Sutta (D 15).⁵ “Freed both ways” basically means that such an arhat is bodily freed: he is not limited by his body and has psychic powers; he is also mentally freed in that he has attained *arhathood*.

1.1.1.3 Though the final goal of liberation entails transcending any attainment in the sphere of calmness (*samatha*), early Buddhism clearly lists, in some detail, the levels of mental or meditative freedom that are not yet the final goal. Thus, the 8 liberations, listed among the Buddha’s key teachings, are found, for example, in these suttas:

Mahā, parinibbāna Sutta	D 16,3.33/2.112	SD 9;
Saṅkhār’ upapatti Sutta	M 120,37/3:103	SD 3.4;
Saḷāyatana Sutta	M 137,26/3:222	SD 29.5;
(Aṭṭhaka) Vimokkha Sutta	A 8.66/4:306	SD 62.5;
Saṅgīti Sutta	D 33,3.1(11)/3:262;	
Das’uttara Sutta	D 34,2.1(10)/3:288.	

The Das’uttara Sutta, in fact, specifies that the 8 liberations “should be realized” (*sachikātabbā*).

1.1.2 Suttas and cycles on the 8 liberations

1.1.2.1 A number of suttas tell us that the 8 liberations are an integral part of the early Buddhist path of practice. **The Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137), for example, compares the Buddha’s ability to teach these 8 liberations to the ability of the trainer of an elephant, a horse, or an ox. While such a trainer only teaches the animals how to move in any of the 4 quarters, the Buddha’s disciples learn how to progress in 8 directions, that is, by the cultivation of *the 8 liberations*.⁶

1.1.2.2 The 8 liberations are sometimes listed alongside the noble eightfold path (here called *aṭṭha magg’āṅga*, “the 8 path limbs”) and the 8 bases of mastery (*aṭṭha abhibh’āyatana*). Each of these 3 teachings, properly cultivated, leads to awakening, expressed in 10 synonyms leading to direct knowledge, full understanding, utter destruction (of defilements), etc, each of which, in turn, overcomes the 17 defilements [1.1.2.3]. Each of these possible permutations form a sutta of its own, totalling 510 suttas! [3].

This is a case of *peyyāla* (an elliptical cycle of teachings) based on a *pariyāya* (formula of concatenations of a new item each time). The whole cycle of repetitions restarts for each lemma (heading). Thus, in **Table 1.1.2.3** we can list⁷ the teachings mentioned as follows:

³ *Saññā.vedayita, nirodha* or simply *nirodha*. See SD 49.5b (3); SD 30.2 (4); SD 48.7 (3.2); SD 50.7 (1.2).

⁴ See SD 4.25 (3.2); SD 10.16 (14.3); SD 50.26 (1.4.3).

⁵ D 15,35/2:71 (SD 5.17).

⁶ M 137/3:222 (SD 29.5).

⁷ Mathematicians may see some similarities here with combinatorics. T Gowers (ed), *The Princeton Companion to Mathematics*, 2008:6 f.

A x B x C = 510 suttas,

where

A is one of the Dharma triad: A1 (the 8-limbed path), A2 (the 8 bases of mastery), A3 (the 8 liberations);

B is one of the 10 awakenings: B1, B2, B3 ... B10; and

C is one of the 17 defilements: C1, C2, C3, ... C17.

1.1.2.3 The Aṅguttara Book of Eights (*aṭṭhaka nipāta*) (A 4:349 f) closes with a masterly permutation of ways of overcoming the 3 unwholesome roots and other defilements—called **the Rāg’ādi Peyyāla** (“the recital cycle on lust and the rest,” A 8.118-627)—as shown in **the Table** below:

THE SUTTAS OF THE RĀG’ĀDI PEYYĀLA:

A	B	C
<u>The 3 teachings</u>	<u>the 10 cessations (synonyms)</u>	<u>the 17 defilements</u>
the 8 path-limbs <i>(aṭṭha magg’āṅga)</i>	(1) for the direct knowledge (<i>abhiññā</i>) (2) for the full understanding (<i>pariññā</i>) (3) for utter destruction (<i>parikkhāya</i>)	(1) of lust (<i>rāga</i>); (2) of hatred (<i>dosa</i>); (3) of delusion (<i>moha</i>);
the 8 bases of mastery <i>(aṭṭha abhibh’āyatana)</i>	(4) for the abandoning (<i>pahāna</i>) (5) for the destruction (<i>khaya</i>) (6) for the passing away (<i>vaya</i>)	(4) of anger (<i>kodha</i>); (5) of grudge (<i>upanāha</i>); (6) of scorn (<i>makkha</i>);
the 8 liberations <i>(aṭṭha vimokkha)</i>	(7) for the fading away (<i>virāga</i>) (8) for the cessation (<i>nirodha</i>) (9) for the giving up (<i>cāga</i>) (10) for the relinquishment (<i>paṭinissaga</i>)	(7) of spite (<i>paḷāsa</i>); (8) of jealousy (<i>issā</i>); (9) of miserliness (<i>macchariya</i>); (10) of deceit (<i>mayā</i>); (11) of fraud (<i>saṭheyya</i>); (12) of callousness (<i>thambha</i>); (13) of impetuosity (<i>sārambha</i>); (14) of conceit (<i>māna</i>); (15) of arrogance (<i>atimāna</i>); (16) of (mental) intoxication (<i>mada</i>); (17) of heedlessness (<i>pamāda</i>).
<u>Table 1.1.2.3</u> The 3 teachings, 10 cessations, and 17 defilements		(A 8.118-627/4:348-350)

See (3) Appendix for a full listing.

1.1.2.4 Some may dismiss this “number play” as some kind of “pious pedantry.” However, for those of us who love suttas and numbers, we cannot help seeing the beauty of the Dharma and the subtle sense of spiritual humour of the sutta compilers. The suttas are merely mentioned in formulaic form (*peyyāla*) not to test the sutta reciter’s memory and dexterity but rather to show us how versatile and comprehensive the Dharma is in truth and technicality.

Those who love numerology will surely see the beauty in the comprehensiveness of the Dharma, how it covers *all* of reality. The Buddha’s awakening reveals to us *all* aspects of true reality; all that Māra is trying to hide from us and all his efforts to sugarcoat defilements which we stumble over and which overwhelm us. The Buddha knows it all; we can know it all, too, by the 8-limbed path, or any of the 8 bases of mastery, or any of the 8 liberations. This is a Dharma teaching in formulaic form (*pariyāya*).

1.2 PRACTICE AND PERFECTION

1.2.1 The true practice cycle

The **Accharā Saṅghāta Vagga** (the chapter on the finger-snap) records the Buddha praising “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) (that is, a Dharma-spirited meditator) as a truly worthy renunciant for practising any of the 8-limbed path, or attaining any of the 8 bases of mastery, or dwelling in any of the 8 liberations. The 3 groups or cycles of very short suttas of a few lines each that comprise the Chapter may be summarized as follows:

1.2.1.1 THE 8-LIMBED PATH [SD 10.16]

“Bhikkhus, if for just the time of a finger-snap, a monk cultivates ... :⁸

- | | | |
|---------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| A 1.431 | (1) right view, | <i>sammā diṭṭhi</i> |
| A 1.432 | (2) right intention, | <i>sammā saṅkappa</i> |
| A 1.433 | (3) right speech, | <i>sammā vācā</i> |
| A 1.434 | (4) right action, | <i>sammā kammantā</i> |
| A 1.435 | (5) right livelihood, | <i>sammā ājīva</i> |
| A 1.436 | (6) right effort, | <i>sammā vāyāma</i> |
| A 1.437 | (7) right mindfulness, | <i>sammā sati</i> |
| A 1.438 | (8) right concentration, | <i>sammā samādhi</i> |

he is called a monk who is not void of *<any of the 8 path-limbs>*, who acts on the teacher’s teaching, who acts on his advice, who does not eat the country’s almsfood in vain. How much more so for those who develop it!”⁹

1.2.1.2 THE 8 BASES OF MASTERY¹⁰

“Bhikkhus, if for just the time of a finger-snap, a monk:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| A 1.439 | (1) perceiving <u>forms</u> internally [within oneself], sees forms externally, as limited , beautiful or ugly. By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see’; ¹¹ |
| A 1.440 | (2) perceiving <u>forms</u> internally, sees forms externally, as immeasurable , beautiful or ugly. By mastering them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see’; |
| A 1.441 | (3) <u>not</u> perceiving <i>forms</i> internally, sees forms <i>externally</i> , as limited , beautiful or ugly. By mastering them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see’; |
| A 1.442 | (4) <u>not</u> perceiving <i>forms</i> internally, sees forms <i>externally</i> , as immeasurable , beautiful or ugly. By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see’; |
| A 1.443 | (5) <u>not</u> perceiving <i>forms</i> internally, sees forms <i>externally</i> , that are blue [indigo], of blue colour, blue in appearance, with a blue glow. ¹² ... By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see’; |
| A 1.444 | (6) <u>not</u> perceiving <i>forms</i> internally, sees forms <i>externally</i> , that are yellow , of yellow colour, yellow in appearance, with a yellow glow. ... By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see’; |

⁸ *Accharā,saṅghāta,mattam pi ce bhikkhave bhikkhu ... bhāveti.*

⁹ *Bhikkhu ... satthu sāsana,kāro ovāda,patikaro amoghaṃ raṅṅha,piṇḍam bhuñjati. Ko pana vādo ye naṃ bahulī,-karontī ti.*

¹⁰ **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,3.24), SD 9; **Mahā Sakul’udāyi S** (M 77,40), SD 49.5.

¹¹ *Tāni abhibhuyya jānāmi passāmī ti evaṃ saññī hoti.*

¹² On blue (*nīla*) *kasiṇa*, and yellow (*pīta*), copper-red (*lohita*) and white (*odāta*), see **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1(9.2).

- A 1.445 (7) not perceiving *forms* internally, sees forms externally, that are **red** [copper-red], of red colour, red in appearance, with a red glow. ... By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see’;
- A 1.446 (8) not perceiving *forms* internally, sees forms externally, that are **white**, of white colour, white in appearance, with a white glow. ... By mastering [transcending] them, one perceives thus, ‘I know, I see’;

he is called a monk who is not void of <any of the 8 bases of mastery>, who acts on the teacher’s teaching, who acts on his advice, who does not eat the country’s almsfood in vain. How much more so for those who develop it!”

D 16,3.24 (SD 9) = M 77,72 (SD 49.5a)

1.2.1.3 THE 8 LIBERATIONS¹³

“Bhikshus, if for just the time of a finger-snap, a monk:

- A 1.447 (1) with physical form **sees physical forms**¹⁴;
- A 1.448 (2) does not see physical form internally, but **sees physical forms externally**,¹⁵
- A 1.449 (3) is liberated after contemplating on just the idea of **the beautiful**,¹⁶
- A 1.450 (4) through the utter transcending of the perception of physical form, the passing away of the perception of impingement, and non-attention to the perception of diversity, (contemplating,) ‘Space is infinite,’ enters and dwells in **the base of infinite space**,¹⁷
- A 1.451 (5) through the utter transcending of infinite space, (contemplating,) ‘Consciousness is infinite,’ enters and dwells in **the base of infinite consciousness**,
- A 1.452 (6) through the utter transcending of the base of infinite consciousness, (contemplating,) ‘There is nothing,’ enters and dwells in **the base of nothingness**,
- A 1.453 (7) through the utter transcending of the base of nothingness, enters and dwells in **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**,
- A 1.454 (8) through the utter transcending of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, enters and dwells in **the cessation of perception and feeling**,

he is called a monk who is not of void <any of the 8 liberations>, who acts on the teacher’s teaching, who acts on his advice, who does not eat the country’s almsfood in vain. How much more so for those who develop it!”

(M 77,48), SD 49.5a

In this collection of very brief suttas (A 1.431-454), we again see the suttas recited applying the formulaic sequence (*peyyāla*) to create cycles of suttas in terms of the 8-limbed path, the 8 bases of mastery, and the 8 liberations, thus totalling 24 short suttas. [1.1.2.3]

¹³ SD 5.17 (10); SD 49.5b (3).

¹⁴ *Rūpī rūpāni passati*. Perceiving form on one’s own body, one sees forms externally. This is said in connection with *kaṣiṇa* meditation. This is one of the 8 “spheres of sovereignty” or stages of mastery (*abhibhāyatana*) over the senses through *dhyana* (*jhāna*); see D 16,3.24-32/2:110; M 77/2:13; A 8.65/4:305, 10.29/6:61. See SD 5.17 (10).

¹⁵ *Ajjhattam arūpa,saññī bahiddhā rūpāni passati*. Not perceiving forms on one’s own body, one sees forms externally. See SD 5.17 (10).

¹⁶ *‘Subhan t’eva adhimutto hoti*. This consists of concentrating the mind on perfectly pure and bright colours as *kaṣiṇa*-object. See SD 5.17 (10).

¹⁷ On these 4 formless *dhyanas* and cessation, see also **Cūḷa Go,siṅga S** (M 31,13-18), SD 44.11.

2 Various ways to liberation

2.1 GAINING LIBERATION

2.1.1 Colours of freedom

2.1.1.1 The Pāli suttas that list the 8 liberations do not provide much information on their practical implications. According to an explanation given in **the Paṭisambhidā, magga**, the 1st liberation involves developing the perception of a colour like *blue, yellow, red, or white*. This colour, or more precisely the “sign” (*nimitta*) of this colour, is first attended to “internally,” on oneself (*ajjhatta paccatta*). Once this has been well developed, the same colour sign is then attended to “externally” (*bahiddhā*), leading to a perception of form in terms of the respective colour *internally* as well as *externally* (Pm 3:38).

2.1.1.2 The Attha, sālinī (the Dhamma, saṅgāṇī Commentary) further specifies that to perceive a colour internally refers to developing dhyana based on taking a colour of some part of one’s own body as the object. Thus to develop perception of the colour “blue” [2.1.2.2] the hair, bile or the pupil of the eye should be used; for “yellow,” fat, the skin or the yellow spot of the eyes; for “red,” the flesh, blood, the tongue, the palms and feet, or the red of the eyes; and for “white,” bones, the teeth, the nails, or the white of the eye. (DhsA 190)

Next, according to the Attha, sālinī, the dhyanic vision of these colours should be developed externally by way of a kasiṇa meditation-object. The 2nd of the 8 liberations would then represent the case of someone who does not develop the internal vision of colours described under the 1st liberation, but instead directly proceeds to develop the vision of these colours with the help of an external device.

2.1.2 The body that frees

2.1.2.1 In Analayo’s view (2009), the interpretation offered in **the Attha, sālinī** seems somewhat forced. It is not easy to imagine how someone uses the white colour of his or her own bones as a meditation object, unless the meditator had just had a type of accident that renders the bones visible, but then such a condition would make it difficult to develop the vision of the white bones into a deeper level of concentration.

The same would, to a lesser extent, also apply to looking at one’s own flesh or blood in order to develop a perception of the colour red. For a monk or a nun to be able to look directly at the hair of their own head would also not be an easy task, as due to regular shaving their hair would not be long enough to be seen directly.

It is also not clear how such hair or even bile could be perceived as blue [2.1.1.2]; how the dark skin of an Indian could be perceived as yellow or else, in the case of the palms, as red; or how one would be able to see colours in the pupil of one’s own eye. All these visions would only be possible if one were to resort to an external aid such as *a mirror*, although even here, the use of another external object of the respective colour would be more straightforward.

Moreover, by resorting to a mirror the distinction drawn in the Attha, sālinī between internal and external visions would be lost. Thus, the Attha, sālinī’s explanation of the 1st and the 2nd liberations seems contrived, being perhaps modelled on the 8 bases of transcendence (*abhibhāyatana*), several of which do involve external visions of forms whose colour is blue, yellow, red or white, as stated in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33).¹⁸

¹⁸ D 33,3.1(10)/3:260.

2.1.2.2 It would be interesting to do an in-depth study of the early Buddhist or Indian perception of colours, even an Indian Buddhist psychology of colours. The early Buddhist or Indian notion of colours, such as “blue” (*nīla*), is not what we are used to today. Apparently, there is no Pali word for the modern colour “blue”; or more likely the early Buddhists perceived *blue* differently from how we perceive it today. Thus, words like *nīla* do not have a fixed technical hue or “wavelength” that we know of today. In the suttas, *nīla* is a range of colours such as *grey-black*, *blue-green*, *cloud-grey* of storm-clouds.¹⁹

Clearly the Paṭisambhidā, magga descriptions of the colours of “our body” are not meant to be taken literally. They are a generic reference to natural colours that we perceive in these body-parts. The “colours” then are not those of an artist’s range of hue that are to be painted on a canvas. Rather, this is the way the attention is focused on the body-parts, first from observance of a fresh cadaver (for example), or from memory of these colours (based on what one has seen).²⁰ [2.1.2.3]

2.1.2.3 The Buddhist Sanskrit texts in Chinese translations offer some help here. An alternative explanation of the first 2 liberations can be found in **the Mahāvibhāṣā**²¹ and **the Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra**²² (T27.437c29 and T25.215a14). These works agree with the Paṭisambhidā, magga and the Attha, -sālinī that the 1st liberation takes parts of one’s body as its object, such as hair, bones, flesh, etc. They differ in as much as these objects are not to be seen directly, but rather are to be contemplated in a recollective manner from the perspective of the unattractiveness and impure nature of these different parts of one’s own body.

Once the 1st liberation has been developed in this way, the same mode of contemplation is then to be undertaken in relation to the bodies of others. Properly done, this becomes the 2nd liberation. The Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra states that to progress in this way from the 1st to the 2nd liberation is to proceed from at first having reached some degree of freedom from conceit and attachment in relation to one’s own appearance to subsequently developing a similar degree of freedom from attraction and lust towards the bodies of others (T25.215a16).

2.1.2.4 The meditative recollection of the parts of our body is described in some detail in **the Sati-paṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10). The instruction there is that one should review (*paccavekkhati*) the whole body, from the soles of the feet to the crown of the head, in terms of the impurities found in the head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin, and so on. Like the progress from the 1st to the 2nd liberation, the *sati-paṭṭhāna* instructions, too, proceed from contemplating one’s own body (*ajjhatta*) to contemplating the nature of the bodies of others (*bahiddhā*).²³

In both cases, one need not actually see these different body-parts, which in the case of bones etc. would need superpowers or surgery (which was known in India of the Buddha’s time); one only mentally reviews the composition and nature of the physical body so far as one is familiar with it. **The Visuddhi-**

¹⁹ SD 15.1 (9.2.2).

²⁰ On “cloud-grey forest tract” (*nīla, vana, rāji*), see **Sela S** (M 92,11.2), SD 45.7a. See also SD 15.1 (9.2.2).

²¹ Fully, **Abhidharma Mahāvibhāṣā**, “the great exegesis of Abhidharma,” a massive Vaibhāṣika on Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma tr into Chin by Xuanzang and his translation bureau (656-659), 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 *apidamo dapiposa lun*.

²² Also *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* (treatise on the great perfection of wisdom), 大智度論 *dazhidu lun*. It was attr to Nāgārjuna and tr by Kumārajīva between 402 and 406. Throughout the tr, there are frequent and often substantial interlinear glosses and interpolations, apparently provided by Kumārajīva himself and targeting his Chinese readership. As a commentary, it is very broad, covering everything from doctrine, legends, and rituals to history and geography, an authoritative source of Chinese Mahāyāna. The Belgian scholar É Lamotte published an annotated French tr of the entire first section and ch 20 of the 2nd section as *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse*, in 5 vols (1944-1980).

²³ M 10/1:57 (SD 13.3).

magga gives a very detailed description of the various body-parts to be reviewed in this manner (Vism 248-265).

2.1.3 Contemplating the unattractive

2.1.3.1 One of the most potent meditative methods to counter lust, the 1st of the 3 unwholesome roots, prescribed by the Buddha is the perception of impurity (*asubha,saññā*). The worldly tends to regard the body as pleasurable and desirable. At the same time, it should be noted that the suttas also speak of traditional views of bodily beauty, such as the 32 marks of the great man (*mahā,purisa,lakkhaṇa*)²⁴ or the qualities of the “woman jewel” (*itthī ratana*) of the universal monarch.²⁵

To counter the unawakened mind from being nose-led by such imaginations, to free the mind from lustful impulses, the Buddha teaches the perception of impurity. This is not because the body is ugly or evil, but that, being caught up in the body, we are unlikely to be able to focus the mind for mental cultivation and liberation. **The Gīrīmānanda Sutta** (A 10.60), for example, specifies that the reviewing of the make-up of the body as prescribed in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta leads to the perception of the impure.²⁶

2.1.3.2 For those unfamiliar with Pali suttas, their teachings may sometimes seem to be terse, even incomplete. Indeed, the suttas of the Āṅuttara Nikāya often come in the form of lists. To explicate these lists, we need to be familiar with at least the Dīgha, the Majjhima and Saṃyutta Nikāyas, and perhaps with the help of the Commentaries. Also helpful is the mental and spiritual acumen of the Dharma-spirited teacher to present these timeless teachings to us.

Thus a casual reading of the suttas on the 8 liberations may not at once prompt one to see that the first 2 liberations include the contemplation of impurity (*asubha*), especially the impurity of the body. We may also not see that they entail some form of *kaṣiṇa* meditation unless we are familiar with the explanations of the Attha,sālinī [2.1.2.1], or we are very familiar with the 8 liberations with traditional monastic training.

2.1.3.3 The Mahāvibhāṣā [2.1.2.3] then explains that, once the perception of impurity has been cultivated, there is a need to prevent excessive disgust and negativity by balancing the mind with the cultivation of the perception of the beautiful (*śubha,samjñā*), that is, the 3rd liberation (T27.437c28). In this case, the suggestions given in the Mahāvibhāṣā and the Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra are very helpful. They help us with a better understanding of the first 3 liberations so that they are properly and effectively cultivated.

2.2 LIBERATED BY BEAUTY

2.2.1 By beauty or by colour

2.2.1.1 To be resolved upon the beautiful, the 3rd liberation requires, according to the Paṭisambhidā,-magga, the cultivation of **the 4 divine abodes** (*brahmavihara*) as liberation of the mind, which takes the form of a boundless radiation of the wholesome mind. The Paṭisambhidā,-magga explains that due to such cultivation one perceives beings as being non-repulsive (*appaṭikula*); in this way, one reaches the liberation of being resolved upon the beautiful (Pm 2:39).

There is a difficulty here though. For the full experience of the divine abodes, we need to cultivate them to the level of **dhyana** (*jhāna*). To experience any of the divine abodes on a dhyana level, that is, as

²⁴ See **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30), SD 36.9 esp (3+4).

²⁵ See **Bāla Paṇḍita S** (M 129,39/3:174 f), SD 2.22.

²⁶ A 10.60/5:109 (SD 19.16).

a purely mental (free of the physical senses) experience of utter immeasurability (*appamāṇa*), we need to directly feel the abode. In other words, we have to transcend the body, words and thoughts, so that there is neither sensual processing nor perception of meditator and meditation-object—there is only the divine abode; we *are* the divine abode.

If we are cultivating lovingkindness, once we are fully immersed in the feeling (*not* the thought) of lovingkindness, we should simply attend to the pleasant feeling and do nothing else. However, the presence of zest and joy (*pīti, sukha*), and even just joy itself, means that the first 3 abodes can only reach up to the 3rd dhyana. Equanimity is the only abode that reaches the 4th dhyana.²⁷

<u>divine abode</u>	<u>antidote for</u>	<u>dhyana level</u>
lovingkindness	the hateful	} 1 st -3 rd dhyanas
compassion	the cruel	
gladness	the resentful	
equanimity	the lustful	— 4 th dhyana

Table 2.2.1.1 Divine abodes, antidotes and dhyana

2.2.1.2 Any of the first 3 divine abodes—lovingkindness, compassion or gladness—as the basis for dhyana can only bring us to the 3rd dhyana at best. In order to break through into the 4th dhyana or into the formless attainments, the Paṭisambhidā, magga recommends one of these **5 perceptions**:

- (1) For an agreeable (sensually attractive) object, either perceive it as impure [foul] or as impermanent.
- (2) For a disagreeable object, pervade it with lovingkindness or perceive it as the physical elements.
- (3) For both agreeable and disagreeable objects, either perceive them as impure or as impermanent; thus perceiving them as repulsive.
- (4) For both agreeable and disagreeable objects pervade them with lovingkindness or perceive them as the physical elements; thus perceiving them as unrepulsive.
- (5) Avoiding both the disagreeable and the agreeable, one simply abides in equanimity.

(Pm 22.26/2:212 f; Vism 12.36/381 f)

2.2.1.3 To go on to attain mental liberation, each of these 4 practices in the divine abodes need to incorporate two further practices: the cultivation of the awakening-factors (accompanied by the respective divine abode) by which one is freed, and either (a) one of the 5 perceptions, or (b) a dhyana (temporary liberation). The scheme is here summarized thus:²⁸

<u>awakening-factor</u> <u>accompanied by</u>	<u>(a) the 5 perceptions</u>	<u>(b) dhyanas (ie, liberation, vimokkha)</u>
[§12] lovingkindness	one of the 5 perceptions	the liberation by the beautiful.
[§13] compassion	"	the base of infinite space.
[§14] gladness	"	the base of infinite consciousness.
[§15] equanimity	"	the base of nothingness.

Table 2.2.1.3 Awakening-factors, divine abodes, perceptions and dhyanas

²⁷ Vism 90.111/322. Further see Vism 112-118/322-324. On “how to attain dhyana,” see *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1 (8.7). See also *Dhyana*, SD 8.4.

²⁸ So noted in Upatissa’s *Vimutti, magga*: (Tr from Chin) N R M Ehara, Soma Thera & Kheminda Thera, Kandy, 1961; Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1977:195.

Here, a meditator uses any of the divine abodes—we must begin with *lovingkindness*, the first and easiest of the abodes—to attain dhyana (either the 1st, the 2nd or the 3rd dhyana).²⁹ On emerging from dhyana, he directs his calm clear mind to the practise of insight, by way of any of the 5 perceptions. In due course, the meditator may attain the path (as a streamwinner and so on).

One who attains arhathood in the way just described is called ‘wisdom-freed’ (*paññā, vimutti*). If the arhat has also mastered the form dhyanas, he is said to be “mind-freed” (*ceto, vimutti*).³⁰ When the arhat has mastered the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless dhyanas, and the cessation of perception and feeling—meaning that he has mastered the 8 liberations (*aṅṅha vimokkha*)—then, he is said to be “freed both ways” or “dual-freed” (*ubhato. bhāga, vimutta*).³¹ This freedom is known as *ubhato. bhāga, vimutti*. An example of such an arhat is described in **the Asaṅsa Bhikkhu Sutta** (A 3.13).³²

2.2.1.4 A note on “**the beautiful**” (*subha*). The Attha, sālinī, unlike the Paṅṅsambhidā, magga, understands the 3rd liberation to refer to dhyana attainment through a **colour device** that is thoroughly purified (DhsA 191). This explanation is remarkable in highlighting the degree to which the Attha, sālinī explanations are influenced by the idea of *kaṅṅa* meditation, to the extent that the Attha, sālinī seems to contradict the respectable exposition given in the Paṅṅsambhidā, magga.³³

In simple terms, the “beautiful” here refers to dhyana, while the term “beauty element, or beautiful element” (*subha, dhātu*) refers to both the dhyana and its object, namely, a dhyana arisen on the basis of lovingkindness (Pm 2:39). The Attha, sālinī, however, takes “the beautiful” here as referring to dhyana attainment through a colour device (*kaṅṅa*) that is fully purified (DhsA 191).³⁴

2.2.2 Kasina or no kasina?

2.2.2.1 The Mettā Saha, gata Sutta (S 46.54) states that lovingkindness in full dhyana alone constitutes the “beautiful liberation” (*subha vimokkha*) (S 46.54, 16), whereas the other 3 divine abodes lead to the subsequent (higher) levels of liberation, namely, those based on the first 3 formless bases.³⁵ **The Pāṅṅika Sutta** (D 24) clarifies that at the time of having attained the beautiful liberation one will not perceive phenomena as “ugly” but rather as “beautiful” (D 24).³⁶

The Commentary then explains that this passage refers to an attainment that is based on a colour device (*vaṅṅa, kaṅṅa*) (DA 3:830), thereby again opting for an explanation that involves *kaṅṅa* meditation, apparently contradicting the teaching of the Metta Saha, gata Sutta.

2.2.2.2 From the perspective of the explanation of the first two liberations given in the Mahāvibhāṅṅa and the Mahāpraṅṅāpāramitā Śāstra, however, the practice of lovingkindness would fit the series well, since the cultivation of lovingkindness would indeed effectively counterbalance any negativity that may have arisen through excessive contemplation of the repulsive nature of one’s own body or that of others.

The contrast provided in **the Pāṅṅika Sutta** between perceiving phenomena as ugly or as beautiful can also be related to this topic, in the sense of highlighting that with the 3rd liberation the perceptions of

²⁹ See *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1 (Fig 18.1).

³⁰ See *Ceto, vimutti, paññā, vimutti and ubhato. bhāga, vimutti* (SD 4.25).

³¹ See SD 4.25 (2.2.1).

³² A 3.13/1:108 (SD 51.18).

³³ See Analayo 2009:152.

³⁴ See **Satta Dhātu S** (S 14.11/2:150 f). There are 10 kasinas, viz earth, water, fire, wind, blue, yellow, red, white, light and space: see *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1 (9.2) & (Diag 8.1).

³⁵ S 46.54/5:119 (SD 10.11).

³⁶ D 24/3:34, SD 63.3.

impurity that had been cultivated earlier have now clearly been left behind. The point is that lovingkindness is a versatile catalyst in such meditations and is thus worth mastering.

2.3 THE LAST 5 LIBERATIONS

2.3.1 The formless liberations

The remaining liberations in the set are quite straightforward. **Liberations 4 to 7** involve the attainment of the 4 formless bases (*arūp'āyatana*).

In practical terms, based on the mental stability of the 4th dhyana, any perception related to materiality or diversity is to be overcome in order to attain the base of boundless space.

Next, the experience of space is attended to from the perspective of the consciousness that experiences that base of boundless space. This then leads to attaining the base of boundless consciousness.

Giving attention to the *cessation* aspect of the experience of boundless consciousness leads to attaining the base of nothingness.

Further practice results in subduing perceptions until a state is reached which can be reckoned as neither percipient nor non-percipient, which is the attaining of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. Consciousness then is too subtle to be considered as present or absent.

2.3.2 The final stage

With the final stage of the 8 liberations, the sense of true liberation from a Buddhist perspective comes to the fore as the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā, vedayita, nirodha*) which would require the development of insight up to the level of non-returning or arhathood (A 3:194; Vism 702). Hence, this last liberation is that of the arhat or the non-returner.

3 Appendix: The 8 liberations in the Rāg'ādi Peyyāla

A summary of the 3 teachings, how each overcomes, in any of 10 ways, a total of 17 defilements has been given earlier [Table 1.1.2.3]. The Aṅguttara Book of Eights (*aṭṭhaka nipāta*) (A 4:348-350) closes with a masterly permutation of ways of overcoming the 3 unwholesome roots and other defilements—called **the Rāg'ādi Peyyāla** (A 4:348-350)—that is, as follows, totalling 510 suttas:³⁷

A 8.118-287 **Aṭṭha, magg'aṅga Sutta 1-170** (the discourses on the eight-limbed path); *the sutta number is given in italics, as follows*

A 8.118-127 (1) 118 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 119 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 120 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 121 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 122 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 123 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 124 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 125 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 126 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 127 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 1 of **lust** (*rāga*), *the 1st of 17 defilements* [1.1.2.3]—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.

A 8.128-137 (1) 128 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 129 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 130 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 131 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 132 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 133 for the passing away (*vaya*);

³⁷ Ee does not number this chapter (*vagga*), Be and Ce number it as 11, continuing their numbering sequences. Following the Book of Sevens, this chapter numbered as if it were a 6th chapter in this set of 50 suttas. Be & Se number the suttas in continuation with those in whole *nipāta*, with Be numbering them from 117-626. This is the numbering followed here. Ce numbers the suttas as 1-510; it helpfully titles **8.11.3** as **Aṭṭha, vimokkha suttam**.

(7) 134 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 135 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 136 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 137 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
2 of **hatred** (*dosa*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.

A 8.138-147 (1) 138 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 139 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 140 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 141 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 142 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 143 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 144 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 145 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 146 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 147 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
3 of **delusion** (*moha*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.

A 8.148-157 (1) 148 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 149 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 150 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 151 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 152 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 153 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 154 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 155 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 156 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 157 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
4 of **anger** (*kodha*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.

A 8.158-167 (1) 158 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 159 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 160 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 161 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 162 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 163 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 164 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 165 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 166 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 167 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
5 of **grudge** (*upanāha*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.

A 8.168-177 (1) 168 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 169 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 170 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 171 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 172 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 173 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 174 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 175 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 176 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 177 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
6 of **scorn** (*makkha*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.

A 8.178-187 (1) 178 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 179 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 180 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 181 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 182 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 183 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 184 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 185 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 186 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 187 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
7 of **spite** (*palāsa*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.

A 8.188-197 (1) 188 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 189 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 190 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 191 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 192 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 193 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 194 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 195 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 196 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 197 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
8 of **jealousy** (*issā*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.

A 8.198-207 (1) 198 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 199 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 200 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 201 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 202 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 203 for the passing away (*vaya*);

- (7) 204 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 205 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 206 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 207 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 9 of **miserliness** (*macchariya*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.
- A 8.208-217 (1) 208 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 209 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 210 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 211 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 212 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 213 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 214 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 215 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 216 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 217 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 10 of **deceit** (*mayā*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.
- A 8.218-227 (1) 218 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 219 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 220 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 221 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 222 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 223 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 224 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 225 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 226 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 227 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 11 of **fraud** (*saṭheyya*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.
- A 8.228-237 (1) 228 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 229 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 230 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 231 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 232 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 233 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 234 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 235 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 236 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 237 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 12 of **callousness** (*thambha*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.
- A 8.238-247 (1) 238 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 239 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 240 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 241 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 242 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 243 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 244 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 245 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 246 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 247 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 13 of **impetuosity** (*sārambha*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.
- A 8.248-257 (1) 248 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 249 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 250 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 251 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 252 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 253 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 254 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 255 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 256 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 257 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 14 of **conceit** (*māna*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.
- A 8.258-267 (1) 258 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 259 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 260 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 261 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 262 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 263 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 264 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 265 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 266 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 267 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 15 of **arrogance** (*atimāna*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.
- A 8.268-277 (1) 268 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 269 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 270 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 271 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 272 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 273 for the passing away (*vaya*);

(7) 274 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 275 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 276 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 277 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
16 of **(mental) intoxication** (*mada*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.

A 8.278-287 (1) 278 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 279 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 280 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 281 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 282 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 283 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 284 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 285 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 286 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 287 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
17 of **heedlessness** (*pamāda*)—the eightfold path is to be cultivated.

Total: 170 suttas.

A 8.288-457 Abhibh'āyatana Sutta 1-170 (the discourses on the 8 bases of mastery)

A 8.288-297 (1) 288 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 289 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 290 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 291 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 292 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 293 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 294 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 295 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 296 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 297 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
1 of **lust** (*rāga*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.

A 8.298-307 (1) 298 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 299 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 300 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 301 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 302 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 303 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 304 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 305 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 306 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 307 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
2 of **hatred** (*dosa*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.

A 8.308-317 (1) 308 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 309 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 310 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 311 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 312 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 313 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 314 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 315 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 316 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 317 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
3 of **delusion** (*moha*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.

A 8.318-327 (1) 318 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 319 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 320 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 321 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 322 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 323 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 324 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 325 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 326 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 327 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
4 of **anger** (*kodha*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.

A 8.328-337 (1) 328 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 329 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 330 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 331 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 332 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 333 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 334 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 335 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 336 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 337 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
5 of **grudge** (*upanāha*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.

- A 8.338-347 (1) 338 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 339 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 340 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 341 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 342 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 343 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 344 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 345 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 346 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 347 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 6 of **scorn** (*makkha*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.
- A 8.348-357 (1) 348 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 349 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 350 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 351 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 352 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 353 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 354 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 355 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 356 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 357 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 7 of **spite** (*palāsa*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.
- A 8.358-367 (1) 358 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 359 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 360 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 361 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 362 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 363 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 364 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 365 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 366 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 367 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 8 of **jealousy** (*issā*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.
- A 8.368-377 (1) 368 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 369 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 370 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 371 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 372 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 373 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 374 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 375 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 376 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 377 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 9 of **miserliness** (*macchariya*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.
- A 8.378-387 (1) 378 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 379 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 380 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 381 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 382 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 383 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 384 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 385 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 386 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 387 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 10 of **deceit** (*mayā*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.
- A 8.388-397 (1) 388 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 389 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 390 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 391 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 392 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 393 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 394 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 395 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 396 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 397 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 11 of **fraud** (*saṭheyya*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.
- A 8.398-407 (1) 398 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 399 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
 (3) 400 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 401 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
 (5) 402 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 403 for the passing away (*vaya*);
 (7) 404 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 405 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
 (9) 406 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 407 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
 12 of **callousness** (*thambha*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.

A 8.408-417 (1) 408 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 409 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 410 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 411 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 412 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 413 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 414 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 415 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 416 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 417 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
13 of **impetuosity** (*sārambha*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.

A 8.418-427 (1) 418 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 419 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 420 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 421 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 422 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 423 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 424 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 425 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 426 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 427 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
14 of **conceit** (*māna*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.

A 8.428-437 (1) 428 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 429 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 430 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 431 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 432 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 433 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 434 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 435 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 436 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 437 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
15 of **arrogance** (*atimāna*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.

A 8.438-447 (1) 438 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 439 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 440 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 441 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 442 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 443 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 444 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 445 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 446 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 447 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
16 of **(mental) intoxication** (*mada*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.

A 8.448-457 (1) 448 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 449 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 450 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 451 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 452 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 453 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 454 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 455 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 456 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 457 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
17 of **heedlessness** (*pamāda*)—the 8 bases of mastery are to be cultivated.

Total: 170 suttas.

A 8.458-627 (3) **Attha,vimokkha Sutta 1-170** (the discourses on the 8 liberations)

A 8.458-467 (1) 458 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 459 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 460 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 461 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 462 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 463 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 464 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 465 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 466 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 467 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
1 of **lust** (*rāga*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.

A 8.468-477 (1) 468 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 469 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 470 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 471 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 472 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 473 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 474 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 475 for the cessation (*nirodha*);

- (9) 476 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 477 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
2 of **hatred** (*dosa*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.478-487 (1) 478 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 479 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 480 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 481 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 482 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 483 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 484 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 485 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 486 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 487 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
3 of **delusion** (*moha*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.488-497 (1) 488 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 489 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 490 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 491 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 492 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 493 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 494 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 495 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 496 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 497 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
4 of **anger** (*kodha*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.498-507 (1) 498 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 499 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 500 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 501 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 502 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 503 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 504 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 505 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 506 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 507 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
5 of **grudge** (*upanāha*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.508-517 (1) 508 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 509 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 510 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 511 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 512 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 513 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 514 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 515 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 516 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 517 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
6 of **scorn** (*makkha*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.518-527 (1) 518 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 519 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 520 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 521 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 522 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 523 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 524 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 525 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 526 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 527 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
7 of **spite** (*palāsa*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.528-537 (1) 528 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 529 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 530 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 531 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 532 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 533 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 534 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 535 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 536 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 537 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
8 of **jealousy** (*issā*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.538-547 (1) 538 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 539 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 540 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 541 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 542 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 543 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 544 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 545 for the cessation (*nirodha*);

- (9) 546 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 547 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
9 of **miserliness** (*macchāriya*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.548-557 (1) 548 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 549 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 550 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 551 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 552 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 553 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 554 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 555 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 556 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 557 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
10 of **deceit** (*mayā*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.558-567 (1) 558 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 559 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 560 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 561 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 562 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 563 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 564 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 565 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 566 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 567 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
11 of **fraud** (*saṭtheyya*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.568-577 (1) 568 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 569 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 570 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 571 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 572 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 573 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 574 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 575 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 576 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 577 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
12 of **callousness** (*thambha*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.578-587 (1) 578 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 579 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 580 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 581 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 582 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 583 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 584 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 585 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 586 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 587 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
13 of **impetuosity** (*sārambha*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.588-597 (1) 588 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 589 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 590 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 591 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 592 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 593 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 594 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 595 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 596 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 597 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
14 of **conceit** (*māna*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.598-607 (1) 598 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 599 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 600 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 601 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 602 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 603 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 604 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 605 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 606 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 607 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
15 of **arrogance** (*atimāna*) —the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.
- A 8.608-617 (1) 608 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 609 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 610 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 611 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 612 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 613 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 614 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 615 for the cessation (*nirodha*);

(9) 616 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 617 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
16 of **(mental) intoxication** (*mada*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.

A 8.618-627 (1) 618 for the direct knowledge (*abhiññā*); (2) 619 for the full understanding (*pariññā*);
(3) 620 for utter destruction (*parikkhāya*); (4) 621 for the abandoning (*pahāna*);
(5) 622 for the destruction (*khaya*); (6) 623 for the passing away (*vaya*);
(7) 624 for the fading away (*virāga*); (8) 625 for the cessation (*nirodha*);
(9) 626 for the giving up (*cāga*); (10) 627 for the relinquishment (*paṭinissaga*)
17 of **heedlessness** (*pamāda*)—the 8 liberations are to be cultivated.

Total: 170 suttas.

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(Aṭṭhaka) Vimokkha Sutta

The (Eights) Discourse on the Liberations

A 8.66

- 1 Bhikshus, there are these 8 liberations.³⁸
- 2 What are the eight?

(1) One with physical form sees physical forms.³⁹
This is the 1st liberation.

(2) One does not perceive physical form internally but sees forms externally.⁴⁰
This is the 2nd liberation.

³⁸ The word *vimokkha* is used here in a specific and limited sense, and does not imply irreversible liberation of the mind from all defilements. Permanent liberation is usually referred to as *akuppa ceto, vimutti* or *ceto, vimutti paññā, vimutti*. Comy: “In what sense are they liberations? In the sense of releasing (*adhimuccan’atṭhena*). In what sense are they liberating? In the sense of thoroughly freeing one from adverse qualities, and in the sense of thoroughly freeing through delight in the object. What is meant is [the mind’s] occurrence on the object without constraint, free from worry, like a child sleeping on his father’s lap, his body completely relaxed. This 2nd meaning (regarding the object) does not apply to the last liberation, but only to the others [for in the last liberation there is no object of perception].” (AA 4:146,3-10)

³⁹ *Rupī rūpāni passati*. Comy: “Here, ‘form’ is the dhyana with a form-object, which has arisen by way of a blue kasina, etc, based on something internal such as head hairs, etc. One who gains this [dhyana] is said to possess form. One might also see forms with the eye of dhyana externally, such as a blue kasina, etc. What is indicated by this are the 4 form-sphere dhyanas in the case of a person who has attained dhyana through the kasinas with an internal or external basis.” (AA 4:146,11-16). Simply, this 1st liberation refers to the attainment of the 4 dhyanas using a *kasina* (meditation device) derived from a coloured object on one’s own body.

⁴⁰ *Ajjhattam arūpa, saññī, bahiddhā rūpāni passati*. Comy: “One who is not percipient of forms internally is one who does not attain form-sphere dhyanas based on his own head hairs, etc. What is shown by this are the form-sphere dhyanas of one who attains dhyana externally, having done the preliminary work externally.” (AA 4:146,17-20). Simply, this 2nd liberation is the attainment of dhyana using a *kasina* derived from an external object and the arising of the concentration sign externally.

- (3) One is focused on just (the idea of) the beautiful.⁴¹
This is the 3rd liberation.
- (4) Through the utter transcending of the perception of physical form,
with the passing away of the perception of sensory impingement,
with non-attention to the perception of diversity,
(perceiving,) ‘Space is infinite,’ one enters and dwells in **the base of the infinity of space.**⁴²
This is the 4th liberation.
- (5) Through the utter transcending of infinite space, (perceiving,) ‘Consciousness is infinite,’
one enters and dwells in **the base of the infinity of consciousness.**⁴³
This is the 5th liberation.
- (6) Through the utter transcending of the base of infinite consciousness,
(perceiving,) ‘There is nothing,’ one enters and dwells in **the base of nothingness.**⁴⁴
This is the 6th liberation.
- (7) Through the utter transcending of the base of nothingness,
one enters and dwells in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.⁴⁵
This is the 7th liberation.
- (8) Through the utter transcending of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception,
one enters and dwells in the cessation of perception and feeling.⁴⁶
This is the 8th liberation.

These, bhikkhus, are the 8 liberations.” [307]

—evaṃ—

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⁴¹ *Subhan t’eva adhimutto hoti*, lit, “One is resolved just thus, ‘Beautiful!’” Comy: “By this are shown dhyanas based on extremely purified colour kasinas, such as blue, etc” (AA 4:146,21-147,6). Comy points out that Paṭisambhidā, magga defines liberation by the beautiful as the 4 immeasurables (lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity): Pm 2:39,14-26. Apparently, the 1st liberation comprises the first 2 bases of mastery; the second, the 2nd 2 bases of mastery; and the 3rd, the remaining 4 bases of mastery. This 3rd liberation refers to the attainment of the perception of either a very pure, bright and beautiful (*subha*) coloured *kaṣiṇa* or of the 4 *brahma, vihārā*. See Analayo 2009:146 f.

⁴² “The base of the infinity of space” (*ākāsānañc’āyatana*): see **Ākāsānañc’āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.5), SD 24.15.

⁴³ “The base of the infinity of consciousness” (*viññāṇañc’āyatana*): see **Viññāṇañc’āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.6), SD 24.16.

⁴⁴ “The base of nothingness” (*akiñcaññ’āyatana*): see **Ākiñcaññ’āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.7), SD 24.17.

⁴⁵ “The base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception” (*n’eva, saññā, nāsaññāyatana*): see **N’eva, saññā, nāsaññā’āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.8), SD 24.18.

⁴⁶ On the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā, vedayita, nirodha*), see **M 43**,25/1:296,5-23 (SD 30.2); **M 44**,16-21/1:301,30-302,27 (SD 40a.9); **M 113**,29/3:45,1-5 (SD 23.7 (2)); **S 41.6**/4:293-295 (SD 48.7); **Vism** 23.16-52/702-709. This anomalous state, fully described in *Vism*, is a combination of deep meditative calm and insight where all mental states temporarily shut down (*Vism* 23.43/707 f).