

# 2a

## (Paṭhama) Pāpaṇika Sutta

**Pāpaṇika Sutta 1** The (First) Discourse on the Store-keeper | A 3.19/1:115 f

Theme: The conditions for wealth to arise

Translated by Piya Tan ©2007, 2011

### 1 The Pāpaṇika Suttas

**1.1 PĀPAṆIKA SUTTAS 1 & 2.** There are at least two Pali discourses named Pāpaṇika Sutta, that is, **the (Paṭhama) Pāpaṇika Sutta** (A 3.19) and **(Dutiya) the Pāpaṇika Sutta** (A 3.20).<sup>1</sup> Both Suttas employ the parable of the store-keeper. **The (Paṭhama) Pāpaṇika Sutta** or **Pāpaṇika Sutta 1** employs the parable to instruct on the tasks of a monastic or practitioner. Like *the lazy store-keeper* who neglects his work morning, noon and afternoon [§§1-4], the lazy monastic or practitioner neglects his meditation throughout the day [§§4-6]. On the other hand, like *the good store-keeper* who toils the whole day [§§7-9], the good monastic properly “attends to the meditation sign” throughout the day [§§10-12].

**The Pāpaṇika Sutta 1**, the shorter of the two, instructs that diligence, the adverb of which is *sakkacca*<sup>2</sup> [§§2, 5, 8, 11], meaning “respectfully, carefully, duly, thoroughly,” and is often used with *uppaṭṭhahati*, meaning “he attends, serves with due honour.”<sup>3</sup> Clearly here, the term *samādhi nimitta* must mean “meditation sign,” as he is said to be working on his meditation and has not attained any “wholesome state,” that is, mental, dhyana or wisdom.

While the first Sutta only reminds the monastic of his meditation task, **Pāpaṇika Sutta 2** reminds the practitioner not only to know the Dharma-Vinaya (as theory), but also devotes himself to meditation practice. Hence, it is a longer sutta than the first.

**1.2 PĀPAṆIKA.** The word *pāpaṇika* is resolved as *pa* (a intensifying prefix) + *āpaṇa* (stall, shop, market) + *ika* (a suffix that here denotes a person), meaning “one who runs a stall, store-keeper, merchant.” There is also a late synonymous form, *āpaṇika* (store-keeper, merchant).<sup>4</sup> Another late related form is *kār’āpaṇika*, “the market value of the work, the value of the workmanship” (DhA 1:412).

The word *pāpaṇika*, meaning “shop, store” is found elsewhere in the texts. In **the Mahā Sakul’udāyī Sutta** (M 77), monks who use dust-heap and coarse rag-robles (*paṃsukūlikā lūkha, cīvāra, dharā*) collect pieces of cloth or rags (*nantaka*) from “the charnel ground, rubbish heaps or shops” (*susānā vā saṅkāra, kūṭā vā pāpaṇikā*) and then make them into robes.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, here *pāpaṇika* is used as a noun, or more specifically, a *synecdoche*, that is, a figure where a part stands for the whole, or a shorthand term (such as “the grocer” or “the grocer’s”).

### 2 Sutta highlights

**2.1 THE SUTTA’S SIGNIFICANCE.** The Pāpaṇika Sutta 1 exhorts the renunciant or practitioner to keep up his meditation practice through the waking hours, just as a store-keeper or merchant who is diligent (*sakkacca*) the whole day would be successful and wealthy. The theme, as such, is *unrelenting effort* and the benefit is *wealth*.

Understandably, we have two kinds of wealth here. For the store-keeper, it is a *worldly* wealth, while for the renunciant and meditator, it is a *spiritual* wealth. In a number of suttas, mostly from the Aṅguttara, where one who exerts such a meditative effort is said to be “accomplished in power” (*bala, sampanna*),<sup>6</sup> or has attained to the “power of effort” (*virīya bala*).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A 3.19/1:115 f = SD 37.2a & A 3.20/1:116-118 = SD 37.2b.

<sup>2</sup> *Sakacca* (BHS *satkrīya*, Mvst 1.10): D 2:356 f; S 4:314; A 2:147, 4:392; V 4:190, 275; Tha 1054; J 1:480; Dh 392; PvA 26, 121. Cpds: *~kāri*, zealous (S 3:267; Miln 94; *~dāna*, “a gift carefully made” (M 3:24).

<sup>3</sup> Vv 12,5; Miln 305; J 4:310.

<sup>4</sup> V 3:64, 4:248; Miln 341; VA 653; SA 2:202; AA 2:186; DhA 2:189

<sup>5</sup> M 77.9/2:7 = SD 49.5, which also has pl *pāpaṇikāni* (id); also see Nm 1:224, 2:461; Nc:Be 272; cf V 1:255, 290.

<sup>6</sup> **Parisā S** (A 3.94.4/1:244), **Ājāniya S 1** (A 3.95.4/1:245), **Ājāniya S 2** (A 3.96.4/1:246), **Mālukya,putta S** (A 4.256.2/2:250), **Kula S** (A 4.257.2/2:251). See **Pāpaṇika S 2** (A 3.20.11/1:117) = SD 37.2b.

In the **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 26) the “wealth for a monk” (*bhikkhu bhoga*) is the four divine abodes—that is, lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity<sup>8</sup>—vital qualities for a businessman (hence, they are also known as *the social emotions*) and *the qualities of a professional*.<sup>9</sup> For a monastic or a lay practitioner, the divine abodes are powerful meditations that can lead to dhyana, and with proper attention, they can lead to liberation.<sup>10</sup> Basically, this means that, on attaining dhyana or even some level of samadhi, we should spend as much time with it as we feel inclined to, and then emerge from it. With the calm and clear mind, we should then reflect on the nature of impermanence.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.2 SAMĀDHI,NIMITTA.

**2.2.1 Nimitta.** A *nimitta* is a mental object, image or concept which, on being meditated upon, induces some level of deep concentration. A careful examination of the contexts in which *nimitta* appears in the suttas will show that it is used in at least *two* different, but partly overlapping senses, that is to say: meaning (1) meditation sign, and (2) basis or condition for a meditative state to arise [2.2.3]. We shall here examine the first meaning first.

The Buddhist Dictionary defines *nimitta* (the first meaning), following the Commentaries, as follows:

“Mental (reflex-) image,” obtained in meditation. In full clarity, it will appear in the mind by successful practice of certain concentration-exercises and will then appear as vividly as if seen by the eye. The object perceived at the very beginning of concentration is called **the preparatory image** (*parikamma,nimitta*).

The still unsteady and unclear image which arises when the mind has reached a weak degree of concentration is called **the acquired image** (*uggaha,nimitta*).

An entirely clear and immovable image arising at a higher degree of concentration is **the counterpart sign or counter-image** (*paṭibhāga,nimitta*). As soon as this image arises, the stage of neighbourhood (or access) concentration (*upacāra,samādhi*) is reached.<sup>12</sup>

(*The Buddhist Dictionary*: nimitta)

“Access (or neighbourhood) concentration” (*upacāra,samādhi*) refers to a mental focus when an entirely clear and immovable image (*nimitta*), called the **counter-image** (*paṭibhāga,nimitta*), has arisen. As soon as this image arises, access concentration is reached.<sup>13</sup>

**2.2.2 Samādhi.** Once the mental sign (*nimitta*) has arisen, we are technically in a state of concentration (*samādhi*). The quality or depth of the concentration depends on how still (*samatha*) our mind is, that is, how well we can sustain its stability and strength in subtly keeping out any sense of distractions that may try to weaken it. This is where the skill of a teacher or spiritual friend will benefit the student, and must be learnt hands-on, that is, through instructions and with personal effort.

Proper mental concentration in terms of meditation is known as *samādhi*, more technically, “right samadhi.” On a higher level, when this would lead to attaining to the path, it is called “noble right samadhi” (*ariya sammā,samādhi*). This last term, found in all the four Nikāyas, emphasizes that the path factors, culminating in *right mindfulness*, functions to support samadhi:

What, bhikshus, is noble right samadhi, with its vital conditions, with its prerequisites?

There are these (seven factors): right view, right thought [intention], right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness.

<sup>7</sup> **Upaṇṇāta S** (A 2.5/3:2), **Kūṭa S** (A 5.12.4/3:10), **Vitthata Pañcabala S** (A 5.14.4/3:11). See **Pāpaṇika S 2** (A 3.20.11/1:117) = SD 37.2b.

<sup>8</sup> D 26.28a(4)/3:77 f = SD 36.10.

<sup>9</sup> See **Right livelihood** = SD 37.8 (6.2.1).

<sup>10</sup> See **Mettā Sahagata S** (A 46.54/5:115-121) & SD 10.11 (3).

<sup>11</sup> See **CAkkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225) = SD 16.7 Intro (1.5).

<sup>12</sup> For details, see BDict: *kaṣiṇa,samādhi*. For other meanings and usages of *nimitta*, see PED sv.

<sup>13</sup> For details, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) @ SD 13.1 (3.1d) & **Nimitta** = SD 19.7 (2-3).

One-pointedness of mind, bhikshus, equipped with these seven factors, is called noble right samadhi “with its vital conditions, with its prerequisites (*sa,upaniso sa,parikkhāro*).”<sup>14</sup>

(D 18.27/2:216 f; M 117.3/3:71; S 45.28/5:21; A 7.42/4:40)

In other words, to have perfect samadhi, all the other path factors must also be perfect or right (*sammā*). At that time, we must be free of any wrong view. In simple terms, as explained consistently in the Commentaries, it is attention directed to the impermanent, seeing it as impermanent, to the suffering as suffering, to the not-self as being not-self, and to the foul as being foul (cf Vbh 373).

With the power of such a right view, the mind is able to let go of all thoughts and distractions, settle down completely so that we experience what is said to be the “pure mind.” This is our mind just the way it is, pure and bright. As such, the mental sign (*nimitta*) is often described as some kind of powerful and boundless inner radiance.<sup>15</sup>

### 2.2.2 Samādhi,nimitta

2.2.2.1 “MEDITATION SIGN.” The term *samādhi,nimitta*<sup>16</sup> [§§5+11] appears a total of six times below in the Pāpaṇika Sutta 1. The Sutta commentary,<sup>17</sup> however, uses the term (its lemma) *samatha,nimitta* (as found in the Thai reading, which seems to be the better one). Clearly, they are synonyms. The Commentary explains that the calmness sign (*samādhi nimitta*) is calmness (*samatha*) (that is, samadhi itself), as well as its object (*ārammaṇa*), which the Porāṇa Tīkā glosses as “counterpart sign” (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). The term “non-dispersal sign” (*avyagga nimitta*) is a synonym of “the calmness sign,” (SA 3:141), which is confirmed by the (Āhāra) Kāya Sutta (S 46.2) below [2.2.2.2].

It is clear that here the term *samādhi,nimitta* refers to “meditation sign” (that is, the first sense of *nimitta*) [2.2.1]. The Commentary’s mention of the term “non-dispersal sign” (*avyagga nimitta*),<sup>18</sup> confirms this. *Avyagga* (Skt *avyagra*) means “undistracted or unconfused, steady” (J 3:7). It is often found in the suttas in the compound, *avyagga,manasa* or *avyagga,mānasa* (Be), “with undistracted mind, with the mind focussed.”<sup>19</sup>

2.2.2.2 “BASIS FOR SAMADHI.” Elsewhere we can see another sense of *samādhi,nimitta*. We have already noted here that *samādhi,nimitta* has a synonym, that is, the term *samatha,nimitta*, “calmness sign.” It appears in **the (Āhāra) Kāya Sutta** (S 46.2),<sup>20</sup> where there is this important passage on meditation progress using the model of the awakening-factors (*bojjhaṅga*), thus,

And what, bhikshus, is the food for the arising of the unarisen awakening-factor of concentration (*samādhi sambojjhaṅga*), or for the cultivating of the arisen awakening-factor of concentration to perfection?

There is, bhikshus, **the calmness sign, the non-dispersal sign.**<sup>21</sup> Therein, it is the frequent cultivation of wise attention (*yoniso,manasikāra,bahulī,kāra*). This is the food for the arising of the unarisen awakening-factor of concentration, or for the cultivating of the arisen awakening-factor of concentration to perfection. (S 46.2.16/5:66) = SD 62.9

<sup>14</sup> The term *parikkhāra* more familiarly refers to a monk’s four requisites: bowl, robes, dwelling, and medicine. Here, it obviously means the factors that are “pre-requisite” for attaining dhyana. In later usage, it is replaced in this sense by its etymological twin *parikamma*, usu rendered something like “preparatory work.” (Sujato’s fn)

<sup>15</sup> See **Accharā Vagga** (A 1.6.1-2): “Monks, this mind is radiant (*pabhassara*), but it is defiled by defilements from outside. The ignorant ordinary person does not understand this as it really is. As such, for him there is no personal development.” (A A.6.1-2/1:10). See also **The Buddha discovered dhyana** = SD 33.1b (6.2).

<sup>16</sup> D 3:226, 242; M 1:249, 301, 3:112; A 1:115, 2:17, 3:23, 321.

<sup>17</sup> *Samatha,nimittan’ti samatho’pi samatha,nimittam, ārammaṇam pi. Avyagga,nimittan’ti tass’eva vevacanam.* (SA 3:141)

<sup>18</sup> The Burmese mss generally use a *b* instead of the *v*, spelling it as *abyagga*.

<sup>19</sup> *Avyagga,manaso naro*, S 1:96,11\*-25\* (= *ekagga,citto*, “one-pointed mind,” SA) = A 1:130,1\* (= *nibbicikiccha,citto*, “a mind free from doubt,” AA) ≠ 131,33\*. See DP: *avyagga*.

<sup>20</sup> Where Se has *samādhi,nimitta*.

<sup>21</sup> *Atthi, bhikkhave, samatha,nimittam avyagga,nimittam.*

It is clear here that “the calmness sign” cannot be a meditation sign, because it is here described as “the frequent cultivation of wise attention,” which is the “food” or basis for the awakening-factor of concentration.

We see a similar situation in **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44), where *nimitta* cannot be translated as “meditation sign,” but as “the basis for samadhi.” The nun Dhamma, dinnā gives this analysis of samadhi to the layman Visākha:

One-pointedness of mind, friend Visākha, is samadhi. The focusses of mindfulness (*sati, paṭ-  
thāna*) are the basis for samadhi. The four right strivings are the prerequisite of samadhi. The culti-  
vation, development, and making much of these same principles is the development of samadhi  
therein. (M 44.12/1:301) = SD 40a.9

The Commentary here notes that the four focusses of mindfulness are the basis of samadhi (*samādhi, -  
nimitta*)<sup>22</sup> in the sense of being its basis or condition (MA 2:363) [2.2.1]. **Bodhi** says that here it “would seem incorrect to translate *nimitta* as ‘sign,’ in the sense of either distinctive mark or object.”<sup>23</sup>

Bodhi, in his Saṃyutta translation, refers to another case where *nimitta* cannot be rendered as “sign,” that is, at the beginning of **the Uppaṭi, pātika Sutta** (S 48.40), where we have this passage:

*Uppannaṃ kho me idaṃ dukkh’indriyaṃ.  
Taṃ ca kho sa, nimittam sa, nidānaṃ  
sa, saṅkhāraṃ sa-p, paccayyaṃ.  
Taṃ ca animittam anidānaṃ asaṅkhāraṃ  
appaccayaṃ dukkh’indriyaṃ uppajjissati  
n’etaṃ thānaṃ so vijjati*

There has arisen in me this pain faculty.  
That has a basis [a sign], a source,  
a causal formation, a condition.

It is impossible for that pain faculty to arise  
without a basis [without a sign], without a source,  
without a causal formation, without a condition.

(S 48.40.3/5:213) Bodhi’s translation, last 3 lines not interlinear.

Although technically, Bodhi’s suggestion sounds correct, *experientially* (that is, in terms of reality), it makes perfect sense to render *nimitta* even here as “a sign.” Here, *sign* refers to an “**outward appearance**” or general appearance, that is, a distinguishing feature. “Sign” here is often contrasted with “details” or “particulars” (*anuvyañjana*) (M 39.8/1:273). Of one who restrains his senses it is said, “He does not seize at the sign” (*na nimitta-g, gāhi*) of an object.<sup>24</sup>

In terms of perception, this “sign” (*nimitta*) is “related to the first evaluation of the raw sense data, because of which the object appears to be, for example, ‘beautiful’ (*subha, nimitta*) or ‘irritating’ (*paṭigha nimitta*), which then usually leads to subsequent evaluations and mental reactions.”<sup>25</sup> The Commentaries

<sup>22</sup> Although at M 1:301, this concentration sign is related to the 4 satipatthanas, at M 3:112, it refers to the practice of samatha meditation, since it speaks of quieting the mind leading up to dhyanas. Cf *samatha, nimitta*, “calmness sign,” which S 5:105 recommends as food for the awakening-factor of concentration (also at D 3:213; S 5:66; cf Dhs 1357; Vism 1.113, 125; Abhs 9.5 = Abhs:SR 54, Abhs:BRS 9.18-20, Abhs:WG 328 (see index); *Manual of a Mystic* 2); and *citta, nimitta*, “mind sign” (S 5:151; A 3:423), which Tha 85 relates to non-sensual happiness, “an instance reminiscent of the experience of non-sensual happiness during absorption” (Anlayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*, 2003:237). Cf A 4:419, which recommends developing the “sign,” which in this passage too represents dhyana.

<sup>23</sup> M:ÑB 1242 n464 ad **Cūḷa Vedalla S**, M 44.12/1:301; see also S:B 1900 n54. See *Nimitta* = SD 29.7 (1); also **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** = SD 13.1(7): “How to enter the path in one week.”

<sup>24</sup> D 2.64/1:70 = D:RD 1:80n; M 33.7/1:221, 38.35/1:269; Vism 1.53-59/20-23.

<sup>25</sup> Anlayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*, 2003:225 f. In **Nīvaraṇa, pahāna Vaggo** (A 1:3), sensual desire arises due to unwise attention to the “sign of beauty,” (A 1.2.1/1:3) and aversion arises due to the “sign of repulsion” (A 1.2.2/1:3). **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43) explains that greed, hate and delusion are each a “maker of signs” (*nimitta, karaṇa*) (M 43.37/1:298), ie, they ascribe a false significance to things as being impermanent, pleasurable, self, or beautiful (ie in terms of the 4 perversions, *vipallāsa*, A 2:52; Pm 2:80; Bodhi 1980:4, 25 n27). **Uddesa Vi-**

say that “**sign**” (*nimitta*) here refers to a grasping arising through one’s sensual lust (*chanda, rāga, vasena*) or on account of one’s view (*diṭṭhi, matta, vasena*); “**features**” (*anuvyañjanā*) here refers to finding delight by grasping at another’s limb or body part (eyes, arms, legs, etc).<sup>26</sup>

However, all this is debatable. But for practical purposes, we could accept *nimitta* here as “basis,” with the understanding that it refers to the way the “sign” works on the mind, arousing lust or ill will, hence bringing on suffering.

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## The (First) Discourse on the Store-keeper

A 3.19/1:115 f

### The lazy store-keeper

1 Bhikshus, a store-keeper who possesses three qualities is unable, impossible for him, to attain wealth not yet attained, or having attained wealth to make it grow.<sup>27</sup>

What are the three qualities?

2 Here, bhikshus, the store-keeper does not diligently attend to his work in the morning,  
does not diligently attend to his work in the middle of the day,  
does not diligently attend to his work in the afternoon,

3 A store-keeper, bhikshus, who possesses these three qualities is unable, impossible for him, to attain wealth not yet attained, or having attained wealth to make it grow

### The lazy monk

4 Even so, bhikshus, a monk who possesses three qualities is unable, impossible for him, to attain a wholesome state not yet attained, or having attained a wholesome state, to make it grow.

What are the three qualities?

5 Here, bhikshus, the monk does not diligently attend to the meditation sign<sup>28</sup> in the morning,  
does not diligently attend to the meditation sign in the middle of the day,  
does not diligently attend to the meditation sign in the afternoon.

6 A monk, bhikshus, who possesses these three qualities is unable, impossible for him, to attain a wholesome state not yet attained, or having attained a wholesome state to make it grow. [116]

### The hard-working store-keeper

7 Bhikshus, a store-keeper who possesses three qualities is able, possible for him, to attain wealth not yet attained, or having attained wealth to make it grow.<sup>29</sup>

What are the three qualities?

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**bhaṅga S** (M 138) describes how when consciousness follows the sign, it becomes “tied and shackled by the gratification derived in the sign,” and thereby becomes fettered to the sign (M 138.10/3:225). It is also possible that a grasping at a “sign” may be followed by various types of thought that could be regarded as “association” (**Vitakka Saṅghāna S**, M 20.3/1:119).

<sup>26</sup> D 3:249; A 1:256, 3:319, 375 f, 4:33, 418 f; J 1:420; Pm 1:60, 91 f, 164, 170, 2:39, 64; Vbh 193 f; Nm 2:390; Nc 141, 141; DhsA 400, 402; cf MA 1:75, 4:195; SA 3:4, 394; Nc 1:55; DhA 1:74.

<sup>27</sup> *Tīhi, bhikkhave, aṅgehi samannāgato pāpaṇiko abhabbo anadhigatam vā bhogaṃ adhigantum, adhigatam vā bhogaṃ phātim kātum.*

<sup>28</sup> “Meditation object,” *samādhi, nimitta*, see Intro (2.2.2).

<sup>29</sup> *Tīhi, bhikkhave, aṅgehi samannāgato pāpaṇiko abhabbo anadhigatam vā bhogaṃ adhigantum, adhigatam vā bhogaṃ phātim kātum.*

**8** Here, bhikshus, the store-keeper diligently attends to his work in morning,  
diligently attends to his work in the middle of the day,  
diligently attends to his work in the afternoon,

**9** A store-keeper, bhikshus, who possesses these three qualities is able, it is possible for him, to attain wealth not yet attained, or having attained wealth to make it grow

### The hard-working monk

**10** Even so, bhikshus, a monk who possesses three qualities is able, it is possible for him, to attain a wholesome state not yet attained, or having attained a wholesome state, to make it grow.

What are the three qualities?

**11** Here, bhikshus, the monk diligently attends to the meditation sign in the morning,  
diligently attends to the meditation sign in the middle of the day,  
diligently attends to the meditation sign in the afternoon.

**12** A monk, bhikshus, who possesses these three qualities is able, it is possible for him, to attain a wholesome state not yet attained, or having attained a wholesome state to make it grow.

— evaṃ —

111010; 111011; 111126; 111212; 120415