AN 3.102 — AN 3:103 Themes | Nimitta Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/AN/AN3_103.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

License: CC-BY-NC-4.0 — https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

License URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Copyright: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017

License notice: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Attribution: From Handful of Leaves, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu; https://www.dhammatalks.org/Archive/Writings/Ebooks/SuttaPitaka_251113.epub. Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

Themes

Nimitta Sutta (AN 3:103)

“A monk intent on heightened mind should attend periodically to three themes: He should attend periodically to the theme of concentration; he should attend periodically to the theme of uplifted energy; he should attend periodically to the theme of equanimity. If the monk intent on heightened mind were to attend solely to the theme of concentration, it’s possible that his mind would tend to laziness. If he were to attend solely to the theme of uplifted energy, it’s possible that his mind would tend to restlessness. If he were to attend solely to the theme of equanimity, it’s possible that his mind would not be rightly concentrated for the ending of the effluents. But when he attends periodically to the theme of concentration, attends periodically to the theme of uplifted energy, attends

periodically to the theme of equanimity, his mind is pliant, malleable, luminous, & not brittle. It is rightly concentrated for the ending of the effluents.

"Just as if a goldsmith or goldsmith's apprentice were to set up a smelter. Having set up the smelter, he would fire the receptacle. Having fired the receptacle, he would take hold of some gold with his tongs and place it in the receptacle. Periodically he would blow on it, periodically sprinkle it with water, periodically examine it closely. If he were solely to blow on it, it's possible that the gold would burn up. If he were solely to sprinkle it with water, it's possible that the gold would grow cold. If he were solely to examine it closely, it's possible that the gold would not come to full perfection. But when he periodically blows on it, periodically sprinkles it with water, periodically examines it closely, the gold becomes pliant, malleable, & luminous. It is not brittle, and is ready to be worked. Then whatever sort of ornament he has in mind—whether a belt, an earring, a necklace, or a gold chain—the gold would serve his purpose.

"In the same way, a monk intent on heightened mind should attend periodically to three themes: He should attend periodically to the theme of concentration; he should attend periodically to the theme of uplifted energy; he should attend periodically to the theme of equanimity. If the monk intent on heightened mind were to attend solely to the theme of concentration, it's possible that his mind would tend to laziness. If he were to attend solely to the theme of uplifted energy, it's possible that his mind would tend to restlessness. If he were to attend solely to the theme of equanimity, it's possible that his mind would not be rightly concentrated for the ending of the effluents. But when he attends periodically to the theme of concentration, attends periodically to the theme of uplifted energy, attends periodically to the theme of equanimity, his mind is pliant, malleable, luminous, and not brittle. It is rightly concentrated for the ending of the effluents.

"And then whichever of the higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.

"If he wants, he wields manifold supranormal powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, and mountains as if through space. He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting crosslegged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and moon, so mighty and powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahmā worlds. He can witness this for himself whenever there is an opening.

"If he wants, he hears—by means of the divine ear-element, purified and surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near or far. He can witness this for himself whenever there is an opening.

"If he wants, he discerns the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with his own awareness. He discerns a mind with passion as a mind with passion, and a mind without passion as a mind without passion. He discerns a mind with

aversion as a mind with aversion, and a mind without aversion as a mind without aversion. He discerns a mind with delusion as a mind with delusion, and a mind without delusion as a mind without delusion. He discerns a restricted mind as a restricted mind, and a scattered mind as a scattered mind. He discerns an enlarged mind as an enlarged mind, and an unenlarged mind as an unenlarged mind. He discerns an excelled mind [one that is not at the most excellent level] as an excelled mind, and an unexcelled mind as an unexcelled mind. He discerns a concentrated mind as a concentrated mind, and an unconcentrated mind as an unconcentrated mind. He discerns a released mind as a released mind, and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind. He can witness this for himself whenever there is an opening.

"If he wants, he recollects his manifold past lives [literally: previous homes], i.e., one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction and expansion, (recollecting,) 'There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.' Thus he remembers his manifold past lives in their modes and details. He can witness this for himself whenever there is an opening.

"If he wants, he sees—by means of the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: 'These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, and mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world.' Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human—he sees beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate in accordance with their kamma. He can witness this for himself whenever there is an opening.

"If he wants, then through the ending of the effluents, he enters & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known and realized them for himself right in the here & now. He can witness this for himself whenever there is an opening."

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 101; MN 118; MN 140; SN 46:53; SN 47:8; SN 51:20; AN 6:85