



**NIMITTA**  
(Chinese 相)

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A single meaning for nimitta came out from that study. And that is EXPRESSION (or MANIFESTATION). These can be physical or mental.

Check it out for yourself, by replacing nimitta by one of these very close meanings.

Once more, if you take out the fuzzy meanings that appear sometimes in suttas with no parallels, the signification is quite straightforward.

Here we go!

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Nimitta as some constituent of a sign:

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Nimitta is not a "sign" per se; but more properly a portion of a sign.

To make it short, a sign is a thing which is used to signify other things, and to make them come to mind.

In the point of view of the one who is concerned by signs, there are in signs, what is intended/underlying (usually by the external), what is expressed/displayed (usually by the external); and what is meant/understood (by the internal).

When it comes to nimitta, one is not concerned by the underlying intent. Nor one is really required to understand the meaning of the nimitta.

Nimitta is predominately what is expressed/displayed.

Then there is the vyañjana that comes alongside (anuvyañjana (anubyañjana);) that really makes it manifest (by its attractive features).

So nimitta could be understood as "what is expressed"; as an EXPRESSION ( a manifestation).

[An appearance / a manifest indication of the existence of some person or thing or communication / a way of showing or communicating something].

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Here, having seen a form with the eye, a bhikkhu does not grasp its nimittas and ornaments.

[idem with the other senses]

Idha... bhikkhu cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā na nimittaggāhī hoti nānubyañjanaggāhī.

SN 35.127

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莫取色相, 莫取隨形好

Not to obtain the nimitta of form (materiality) , not to obtain in accord with the anubyañjana (lit. good appearance 形好).

SA 1165

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GOOD PARALLEL

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Friend, in the eighty years since I (Bakkula) went forth I do not recall ever having grasped at the nimittas and ornaments of a woman.

...nābhijānāmi mātuḡāmassa anubyañjanaso nimittam gaheṭṭā

MN 124

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Although an interesting extract to grasp the meaning of nimitta and anubyañjana, there is not a real parallel to MN 124. The Madhyama-āgama MĀ 34 version explains that Bakkula never looked women in the face (未曾視女人面).

NOT A CONVINCING PARALLEL

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Develop animitta - And discard the tendency to conceit.

Then, by breaking through conceit - You will be one who fares at peace.

Animittañca bhāvehi, mānānusayamujjaha;

Tato mānābhisamayā, upasanto carissasī.

SN 8.4

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修習於無相, 滅除憍慢使

Cultivate meditation towards animitta to remove pride (憍慢), as natural inclination (使).

SA 1214

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SA directly links animitta to conceit. This is not really the case in SN.

QUITE GOOD PARALLEL

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Having seen a form with mindfulness muddled,

Directing the mano to the pleasing nimitta,

One experiences it with an enamoured citta,

And remains tightly holding to it.  
Rūpaṃ disvā sati muṭṭhā,  
piyaṃ nimittaṃ manasi karoto;  
Sāratta(सराग sarāga) citto vedeti,  
tañca ajjhosa tiṭṭhati.  
SN 35.95

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眼已見色,  
If one sees a form with the eye,  
而失於正念,  
and correct mindfulness has been lost,  
則於所見色,  
then towards this form seen,  
而取愛念相  
the nimitta of fondness is obtained.  
取愛樂相者。  
The one who obtains the nimitta of indulgence,  
心則常繫著,...  
has a citta permanently fastened...  
SA 312

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GOOD PARALLEL

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It would be better, bhikkhus, for the eye faculty to be lacerated by a red-hot iron pin burning, blazing, and glowing, than for one to grasp the nimitta through the ornaments in a form cognizable by the eye.

Varaṃ, bhikkhave, tattāya ayosalākāya ādittāya sampajjalitāya sajotibhūtāya cakkhundriyaṃ sampalimatṭhaṃ, na tveva cakkhuviññeyyesu rūpesu anubyañjanaso nimittaggāho.

For if consciousness should stand tied to gratification in the nimitta or in the ornaments, and if one should die on that occasion, it is possible that one will go to one of two destinations: hell or the animal realm.

Nimittassādagathitaṃ vā, bhikkhave, viññāṇaṃ tiṭṭhamānaṃ tiṭṭheyya, anubyañjanassādagathitaṃ vā tasmīñce samaye kālaṃ kareyya, ṭhānametaṃ vijjati, yaṃ dvinnaṃ gatīnaṃ aññataraṃ gatim gaccheyya – nirayaṃ vā, tiracchānayoṇim vā.

SN 35.235

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不以眼識取於色相、取隨形好

Not to grasp by means of the eye, the nimitta of form (materiality), and obtain the anubyañjana (lit. good appearance 形好).

SA 241

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QUITE A GOOD PARALLEL

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That bhikkhu should then direct his citta towards some nimitta that leads to pleasantness. When he directs his citta towards some pleasant nimitta, gladness is born.

Tenānanda, bhikkhunā kismiñcideva pasāda-nīye (प्रसाद prasāda [agt. prasād - pra √ सद् sad] /// नीय nīya = that leads to) nimitte cittaṃ paṇidahitabbaṃ. Tassa kismiñcideva pasādanīye nimitte cittaṃ paṇidahato pāmojjaṃ jāyati.

SN 47.10

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प्रसद् prasād [ pra-√ sad ]

- to become satisfied or pleased or glad Mn. MBh.
- to become clear or distinct KaṭhUp.

प्र pra

- away

√ सद् sad

- become faint or dejected or low-spirited Mn. MBh.

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彼比丘當起淨信, 取於淨相, 起淨信心

That a bikshu should build a clear (淨) conviction (信), to obtain a clear nimitta, so a citta of clear conviction (prasāda) should arise.

SA 615

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A SOMEWHAT COMPLEMENTAL PARALLEL

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So too, Soṇa, if energy is aroused too forcefully this leads to restlessness, and if energy is too lax this leads to laziness. Therefore, Soṇa, resolve on a balance of energy, achieve evenness of the spiritual faculties, and take up the nimitta there.

Tasmātiha tvaṃ, soṇa, vīriyasamathaṃ adhiṭṭhahaṃ, indriyānañca samataṃ paṭivijjha, tattha ca nimittaṃ gaṇhāhī

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尊告曰：如是。

沙門！極大精進，令心調亂；不極精進，令心懈怠。

是故汝當分別此時，觀察此相，莫得放逸。

The Honored One adressed them like this:

Śramaṇa, excessive diligence causes a restless and confused citta. Not being diligent causes an indolent citta. Therefore, you should discriminate this situation (時), observe this nimitta; not to be negligent.

MA 123

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NO PARALLEL IN SA 254, EA 23.3

FAIR PARALLEL IN MA 123

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no I-making, mine-making, and underlying tendency to conceit in regard to all external nimittas.

bahiddhā ca sabbanimittesu ahaṅkāramamaṅkāramānānusayā na bhavissanti AN 3.32/AN 3.33

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切相

[if one] cuts (切) these nimittas, no I making, etc.

SA 982

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GOOD PARALLEL

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But what, Noble Lady, is the establishment [of citta], what are the nimitta(s) of this establishment, what are the things that perfect that establishment,...

Katamo panāyye, samādhi, katame dhammā samādhinimittā, katame dhammā samādhiparikkhārā [परिष्कृ pariṣkṛ = make ready or perfect],...?

“Whatever a citta has arrived at a (primary & pristine) "one", friend Visākha, that is establishment. The four ways way to attain the acquisition (sati) [ viz. of that establishment] are the nimittas of this establishment; The four right efforts are the prerequisites for the establishment, ....

Yā kho, āvuso visākha, cittassa ekaggatā ayaṃ samādhi; cattāro satipaṭṭhānā samādhinimittā; cattāro sammappadhānā samādhiparikkhārā, ...

云何定？云何定相？云何定力？云何定功？云何修定耶？

What does establishment (定) mean? - What does the nimittas of the establishment mean? - What is the strength of the establishment?

若善心得一者，是謂定也。四念處，是謂定相也。四正斷，是謂定力也。

If one attains the unity of citta (*viz. unpolluted; either with mano, or as ceto*), this is called establishment. The four ways to care after it (念 - tr. Karashima), this is called the nimitta of the establishment. The four kinds of elimination, this is called the strength of the establishment.

MA 210

GOOD PARALLEL

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Bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu is pursuing the higher citta (adhicitta), from time to time he should direct the mano upon five nimittas.

Adhiccittamanuyuttena, bhikkhave, bhikkhunā pañca nimittāni kālena kālaṃ manasi kātabbāni.

MN 20

若比丘欲得增上心者，當以數數念於五相。

If a bhikṣu wants to attain the superior citta, he should often focus attention (念 - tr. Karashima) about these five nimittas.

MA 101

The five nimittas are quite wholly corresponding in MN 20 & MA 101.

QUITE PERFECT PARALLEL

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Here, when a bhikkhu has seen a form with the eye, if his consciousness follows after the nimitta of that form, is tied and shackled by gratification in the nimitta of that form, is fettered by the fetter of gratification in the nimitta of that form, then his consciousness is called 'distracted and scattered externally. ... [idem with the other senses]

Idhāvuso, bhikkhuno cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā na rūpanimittānusāri viññāṇaṃ hoti rūpanimittassādagadhiṭṭhaṃ na rūpanimittassādavinibandhaṃ na rūpanimittassādasamyojanasammuttaṃ bahiddhā viññāṇaṃ avikkhittaṃ avisaṭanti vuccati.

MN 138

In the Madhyama-āgama parallel, “consciousness feeds on the nimitta of that form, consciousness attaches to the pleasure of the nimitta of that form, consciousness is fettered by the pleasure of the nimitta of that form”, 識食色相, 識著色樂相, 識縛色樂相, concluding that “being fettered to the gratification [derived from] the nimitta of that form, the citta has gone out externally and is scattered”, 彼色相味結縛, 心出外灑散. (Analayo)

MA 164

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As far as nimitta is concerned, the parallel is convincing.

Yet, while MN 138 speaks about a scattered consciousness (viññāṇa); MA 164 speaks about a scattered citta (心). Quite a difference indeed; and the Pali version seems to be a bit more on the right side; (although true, citta is too "remote" in the process).

GOOD PARALLEL (for nimitta only) .

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Lust is a maker of nimittas, hate is a maker of nimittas, delusion is a maker of nimittas.

Rāgo kho, āvuso, nimittakaraṇo, doso nimittakaraṇo, moho nimittakaraṇo.

MN 43 - SN 41.7

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Sensual attachment, anger, and delusion are not wholesome roots (善根) [good (善) faculties(根)].

貪、恚、癡，是不善根也。

MA 211 (MN 43) >>> No "nimitta"

the one who has sensual attachment, anger, and delusion has nimittas.

貪者是有相，恚、癡者是有相

SA 567 (SN 41.7)

GOOD PARALLEL (for SN 41.7 only)

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When a person with no blemish does not understand it as it actually is thus: ‘I have no blemish in myself,’ it can be expected that he will direct the mano towards the nimitta of the beautiful, that by his doing so, lust will infect his citta...

subhanimittaṃ manasi karissati, tassa subhanimittassa manasikārā rāgo cittaṃ anuddhaṃsessati

MN 5

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MA 87, EA 25.6, T 49

Although the three parallels to MN 5 come to the same conclusion that the desire will invade the citta; there is no mention of "nimitta" in those three parallels.

MĀ 87 and T 49 express the same by describing that he will not guard the sense-doors. While the Ekottarika-āgama version points out that such a person will not try to attain what still has to be attained.

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NOT A CONVINCING PARALLEL

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Pursuit of an attractive nimitta is a thorn to one intent on meditation on the nimitta of the unattractive.

asubhanimittānuyogaṃ anuyuttassa subhanimittānuyogo kaṇṭako

AN 10.72

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MA 84

Speaks about the attractiveness of bodily ornaments.

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A TENUOUS PARALLEL (on "attractiveness")

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I see no nimitta on which any recluse or brahmin or god or Māra or Brahmā or anyone else at all in the world could, in accordance with the Dhamma, accuse me thus: 'While you claim to be fully enlightened, you are not fully enlightened about these things.' And seeing no nimitta for that, I abide in safety, fearlessness, and intrepidity.

‘Sammāsambuddhassa te paṭijānato ime dhammā anabhisambuddhā’ti. Tatra vata maṃ samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā devo vā māro vā brahmā vā koci vā lokasmiṃ sahadhammena paṭicodessatīti nimittametam, sāriputta, na samanupassāmi. Etamahaṃ, sāriputta, nimittam asamanupassanto khemappatto abhayappatto vesārajjappatto viharāmi.

AN 4.8 (MN 12?)

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Not seeing any nimitta (for that) the Realised One dwells, having attained safety, having attained fearlessness,...

Nimittam-asamanupaśyaṃs-Tathāgataḥ kṣema-prāpto viharati abhaya-prāptaḥ...



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GOOD PARALLEL

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Venerable sir, as we abide here diligent, ardent, and resolute, we perceive both light and a vision of forms. Soon afterwards the light and the vision of forms disappeared, but we have not been affected with that nimitta for that.”

“You should be affected with that nimitta, Anuruddha" (said Buddha).

So kho pana no obhāso nacirasseva antaradhāyati dassanañca rūpānaṃ; tañca nimittaṃ nappaṭivijjhāmā”ti.

"Taṃ kho pana vo, anuruddhā, nimittaṃ paṭivijjhitaṃ (cf. vijjhati\*)."

MN 128

\* vijjhati = व्यध् √ vyadh = to inflict, attach to, affect with (acc. of pers. and instr. of thing) (RV. AV. Br. Up).

Paṭi = towards.

Note: what one should be affected with, are not the causes and conditions of this manifestation (nimitta) of disappearance, but the expression (the manifestation) itself of these causes & conditions.

Being affected by this manifestation of disappearance, then one will turn to its causes and conditions.

Here, for instance, doubt is the underlying part of the sign (the cause & condition [intended?]); and the disappearance is the expressed part of the sign (the nimitta - the expression/manifestation of that doubt).

There are several causes & conditions in this case, but only one nimitta (the manifestation/expression of disappearance) .

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Anuruddha (both in MN 128 & MA 72,) described that he and his companions experienced light (radiance) and saw forms, which then disappeared.

In MA 72, Buddha answered to them:

汝等不達此相 (you all, should not pass through [達] this nimitta).

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MN 128 & MA 72 almost agree on the mental obstructions to the establishment of citta (9 out of 11 - the differences are: longing vs. conceit & excessive meditation on forms vs. not contemplating forms).

But these obstructions are not nimittas (only their causes & conditions).

MN 72

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GOOD PARALLEL (as far as nimitta is concerned).

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"When one knows and sees thus, Rāhula, then in regard to this body with consciousness, and in regard to all external nimittas, I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit no longer occur within" .

evaṃ kho, rāhula, jānato evaṃ passato imasmiñca saviññāṇake kāye bahiddhā ca sabbanimittesu ahañkāramamañkāramānānusayā na hontī”ti. ekādasamaṃ.

SN 18.21, SN 18.22, SN 22.91, SN 22.92.

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羅睺羅！作如是知、如是見我此識身及外一切相，令我、我所、我慢使繫著不生。羅睺羅！如是我、我所、我慢使繫著不生者。

"Rāhula, engaging in knowing like this and seeing like this, in this body of mine with consciousness within, and all external nimittas, [the sense of] 'I', 'mine', and the underlying tendency, fetter, and attachment to the I-conceit are not caused to arise" .

SA 198, SA 199, SA 23/SA 198, SA 24/SA 199.

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PERFECT PARALLEL

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Just as when a woman or a man, young, youthful, fond of ornaments, on viewing the image of her own facial nimitta (mukhanimitta) in a clear bright mirror or in a basin of clear water, sees a smudge or a blemish on it, she makes an effort to remove it.

SN 22.83

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譬如士夫手執明鏡及淨水鏡，自見面生...

Just as a person who holds in his hand a clear mirror or clean water in a bowl as a mirror and clings to it to see his own face, who sees because of clinging to the mirror, not without clinging to it.

SA 261

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NOT A CONVINCING PARALLEL (as the Agama does not particularly addresses the concept of nimitta) - This holds for the other suttas with this extract.

SN 46.55/SF 186 & AN 5.193/SF 186 seem to be better parallels (about mukhanimitta).

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Householder, you have the aspects (ākārā), characteristics (liṅgā), and nimittas of a

householder.

Te hi te, gahapati, ākāra, te liṅgā, te nimittā yathā taṃ gahapatissā.

MN 54

汝有相標幟如居士

You have the nimitta of a householder (居士).

MA 203

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PERFECT PARALLEL

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Bhikkhus, there are these three characteristics (lakkhaṇāni) of a fool, nimittas of a fool (nimittāni), presentations (padānāni) of a fool.

MN 129

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云何愚癡法？愚癡人有三相愚癡標、

Why is it said foolish behavior? - there are three nimittas to define the existence of a fool.

MA 199

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Although the three "evilnesses" are the same (to think, speak, and do evil), MA 199 considers the three expressions (manifestations) of evilness as nimittas only; (no mention of lakkhaṇa or padāna).

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A SOMEWHAT GOOD PARALLEL

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A bhikkhu - not attending to the perception of the base of nothingness, not attending to the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception - attends to the animitta dependent on the animitta establishment of citta...

MN 121

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MĀ 190 actually speaks of "nonexistent perception of the establishment of the citta", 無想心定. And the Tibetan version differs in as much, as it speaks of the signless "element" or "sphere".

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NOT A GOOD PARALLEL AT ALL (don't even know why I am mentioning it).

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I do not see even a single kind of form, Ānanda, from the change and alteration of which there would not arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair in one who lusts for it and takes delight in it. However, Ānanda, there is this abiding discovered by the Tathāgata: to enter and abide in voidness internally, by not turning the mano to all nimittas.

Ayaṃ kho panānanda, vihāro tathāgatena abhisambuddho yadidaṃ – sabbanimittānaṃ amanasikārā ajjhataṃ suññataṃ upasampajja viharituṃ.

MN 122

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According to the Chinese and Tibetan versions, however, the Buddha's own practice was rather a dwelling in external emptiness after overcoming perceptions of form.

- MĀ 191 : “overcoming all perceptions of form, I abide in external emptiness” - 度一切色想, 行於外空.

- Tibetan counterpart : “having fully passed beyond any perception of form, I dwell having directly attained external emptiness” (Analayo's translation).

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Perceptions are not nimittas. Perception entails more than a nimitta.

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NOT A RELIABLE PARALLEL (although interesting).

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For direct knowledge of lust, three things are to be developed. What three? Emptiness establishment [of citta] (suññato samādhi), animitta establishment (animitto samādhi), and wishless establishment (appaṇihito samādhi).

AN 3.183

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無想三昧

samadhi with no mental images.

EA 24.10

Instead of animitta (no manifestation) establishment, the Chinese version speaks of no mental image. Mental images are an expression (a manifestation); yet this is a bit belittled.

QUITE A REDUCTIVE PARALLEL

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When a bhikkhu has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, three kinds of contact touch him: emptiness-contact (suññato phasso), animitta-contact (animitto phasso), undetermined-contact (appaṇihito phasso).

SN 41.6

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प्रणिहित praṇihita [pra-ni-hita]

- ascertained (determined) Mn.

हित hita (p.p. of √ dhā)

- put , placed , set , laid , laid upon RV. AV. Up

觸不動、觸無相、觸無所有

Contact with the imperturbable, contact with no nimitta (相), emptiness [nothingness?] contact (lit. contact with nothing existing >> non-existent).

SA 568

Although there is a difference between undetermined-contact (appaṇihito) in SN 41.6, and contact with the imperturbable (不動) in SA 568 - and a possible difference between emptiness and nothingness - the existence & meaning of nimitta & 相, seem to be "manifestation" for both.

PARTIAL PARALLEL (good, as far as nimitta is concerned).

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Whenever, Ānanda, by not directing the mano towards all nimitta and by the cessation of certain feelings, the Tathāgata enters and dwells in the animitta establishment of ceto [a step toward the establishment of the pristine citta], on that occasion, Ānanda, the body of the Tathāgata is more comfortable.

Yasmiṃ, ānanda, samaye tathāgato sabbanimittānaṃ amanasikārā ekaccānaṃ vedanānaṃ nirodhā animittaṃ cetosamādhiṃ upasampajja viharati, phāsutaro, ānanda, tasmīṃ samaye tathāgatassa kāyo hoti.

SN 47.9 & DN 16

yan nv ahaṃ tata ekatyā vedanā vīryeṇa pratiprasrabhya sarvanimittānāṃ amanasikārād (not directing the mano towards all nimittas) ānimittaṃ cetaḥsamādhiṃ (establishment of citta) kāyena sāksīkṛtvopasampadya vihareyam.

SF 245

PERFECT PARALLEL

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There are two conditions (paccayā) for the attainment of the animitta deliverance from ceto (animittāya cetovimuttiyā samāpattiyā): not directing the mano towards all nimittas

(sabbanimittānañca amanasikāro) and directing the mano towards the animitta element (animittāya dhātuyā manasikāro - term unique to this sutta).

MN 43

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MĀ 211 speaks of 無想定, which literally translated would be: “with no establishment of ideation”.

想定 could be considered as a "manifestation" or "expression" (nimitta) of an idea. Although this would not entirely correspond to 相 (nimitta), and be quite reductive.

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DUBIOUS PARALLEL

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Dawn, bhikkhus, is the forerunner, the earlier nimitta, of sunrise.

Sūriyassa, bhikkhave, udayato etaṃ pubbaṅgamaṃ (act. गम् gam) etaṃ pubbanimittaṃ, yadidaṃ— aruṇuggaṃ

SN 45.55

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如日出前相，謂明相初光。

Like the (nimitta of the) sun, prior to emerge, is the (nimitta of) the early dawn and the beginning of light.

SA 748

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PERFECT PARALLEL

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Bhikkhus, this is the forerunner and precursor of the rising of the sun, that is, the dawn. So too, bhikkhus, for a bhikkhu this is the forerunner and precursor of the breakthrough to the Four Noble Truths as the really are, that is, right view.

Sūriyassa, bhikkhave, udayato etaṃ pubbaṅgamaṃ etaṃ pubbanimittaṃ, yadidaṃ— aruṇuggaṃ. Evameva kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno catunnaṃ ariyasaccānaṃ yathābhūtaṃ abhisamayāya etaṃ pubbaṅgamaṃ etaṃ pubbanimittaṃ, yadidaṃ—sammādiṭṭhi.

SN 56.37

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譬如日出，明相先起。如是正盡苦亦有前相起？謂知四聖諦。

For example, when the sun is rising, first arises the prior nimitta of the early dawn.

In the same way what is the prior nimitta to the end of suffering? - to know the four noble truths.

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PERFECT PARALLEL (as far as pubbanimitta is concerned)

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I leave DN 30 to the ones who would like to study the MA 59 parallel.

I consider volumes 2 & 3 of DN, as somewhat late stuff.

Maybe interesting though, if parallel there is.

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Here, by not directing the mano towards all nimittas, a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the nimitta-less establishment of ceto (a step to reach the pristine citta [cit]),. This is called the nimitta-less establishment of ceto.

idha bhikkhu sabbanimittānaṃ amanasikārā animittaṃ cetosamādhīṃ upasampajja viharati.

Ayaṃ vuccati animitto cetosamādhī'ti.

SN 40.9

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若有比丘不念一切相，無相心正受，...

If it were bhikṣu that you would not attract to yourself (念 as स्मृ smṛ, as v.l. of √ spr = attract to one's self) all nimittas, you would have a nimitta-less citta and mental unity,...

SA 502

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GOOD PARALLEL

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The measureless liberation from ceto (before reaching the pristine citta [cit]), the liberation from ceto by nothingness, the liberation from ceto by emptiness, and the animitta liberation from ceto.

Appamāṇā cetovimutti, yā ca ākiñcaññā cetovimutti, yā ca suññatā cetovimutti, yā ca animittā cetovimutti,

SN 41.7

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有無量心三昧、無相心三昧、無所有心三昧、空心三昧。

The (total) establishment (of citta [not ceto, the still "polluted" cit]), by the existence of an immeasurable citta - the (total) establishment through animitta - the (total) establishment by nothingness - the (total) establishment by emptiness.

The Pali text speaks of the animitta liberation from ceto through (relying on) animittā. While the Chinese text speaks about the establishment of citta through animittā.

Why establishment of citta & not liberation from ceto? - because samādhi as 三昧, goes a bit further than samādhi as 定 (to establish); which are the two ways to write samādhi in the Chinese texts. When one is in the 三昧 (sānmèi) samādhi, one is in citta, not ceto anymore. One is in the realm of the "three concealment" [ 三 sān = three, 昧 mèi = conceal, hide, ignorant ]. One is in the realm of the last ignorances (nāmarūpa, viññāṇa, saṅkhārā nidānani). While the liberation from ceto is the prior step to the establishment of citta. Yet, both steps use the same means.

#### GOOD & INTERESTING PARALLEL

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While he dwells contemplating the body in the body [ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world], his citta becomes established, his corruptions are abandoned, he picks up that nimitta.

(Idem for feelings in feelings ... phenomena in phenomena)

Tassa kāye kāyānupassino viharato cittaṃ samādhīyati, upakkilesā pahīyanti. So taṃ nimittaṃ uggaṇhāti.

“That wise, competent, skilful bhikkhu gains pleasant dwellings in this very life, mindfulness and clear comprehension. For what reason? Because, bhikkhus, that wise, competent, skilful bhikkhu picks up the nimitta of his own citta.”

Sa kho so, bhikkhave, paṇḍito byatto kusalo bhikkhu lābhī ceva hoti diṭṭheva dhamme sukhavihārānaṃ, lābhī hoti satisampajañña. Taṃ kissa hetu? Tathā hi so, bhikkhave, paṇḍito byatto kusalo bhikkhu sakassa cittassa nimittaṃ uggaṇhātī”ti.

SN 47.8

身身觀念住，斷上煩惱，善攝其心，內心寂止，正念正知，得四增心法，現法樂住，得所未得安隱涅槃，是名比丘點慧辯才，善巧方便，取內心相，攝持外相，...

While contemplating the body in the body, eliminating afflictions, well apprehending the citta, the citta is quiet, correctly mindful and accurately knowing, gaining the four increases of the dharma of citta, abiding comfortably in the manifest world (現法), attaining what was not [previously] attained, namely the quiet hidden nibbāna (涅槃). It is called worldly wisdom, skillful means, obtaining the nimitta of the "citta within" (內心) [note: to be differentiated with "ceto"], to contain the external nimittas, ...

SA 616



Both texts refer to the particular "expression" of the citta.

While SN 47.8 mentions the expression of "one's own citta" (sakassa cittassa nimittam), the Chinese text cites the expression of the "citta (as it is) within" (內心相).

Although these two cittas don't clearly mean that they are totally established - (they refer mostly to the 3rd jhāna) - they seem to represent the same kind of citta at a point of their development towards total establishment. We are in the realm of the adhicitta; no more in the realm of the "polluted" ceto.

GOOD PARALLEL

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Bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu is devoted to the higher citta (adhicitta), from time to time he should direct his mano to three nimittas. ...the nimitta of establishment (samādhinimitta), ...the nimitta of seizing (paggahanimittam - √ ग्रह grah), and ...the nimitta of equanimity (upekkhānimitta)...

AN 3.102

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√ ग्रह grah

- to take on one's self RV. MBh.

- to seize RV. AV.

- to perceive ( with the organs of sense [or with mānas/mano]) RV. VS. ŚBr. MuṇḍUp. ŚvetUp.

SA 1247 refers to three nimittas to think upon (reflect with the mano - 思惟,) at the appropriate time:

- 時思惟止相 , the nimitta of stopping to think (the flow of thoughts >> established meditation >> 禪定).

- 隨時思惟舉相, the nimitta about seizing (舉 = saṃ-grah - tr. Muller)

- 隨時思惟捨相, the nimitta of thinking equanimously.

GOOD PARALLEL

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MN 122

I could not check the "samādhinimitte" parallel in the Tibetan (Tib ed 70) text, as I know nix about the language - However, there is nothing of a sort in MN 191.

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And what is striving by protection?

Here, a bhikkhu protects himself with a produced good nimitta for the establishment: the perception of a skeleton, the perception of a worm-infested corpse, the perception of a livid corpse, the perception of a festering corpse, the perception of a fissured corpse, the perception of a bloated corpse.

Katamañca, bhikkhave, anurakkhaṇāppadhānaṃ?

Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu uppannaṃ bhaddakaṃ samādhinimittaṃ anurakkhati aṭṭhikasaññaṃ puḷavakasaññaṃ vinīlakasaññaṃ vicchiddakasaññaṃ uddhumātakasaññaṃ.

AN 4.14

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云何隨護斷？

若比丘於彼彼真實三昧相善守護持，所謂青瘀相、脹相、膿相、壞相、食不盡相，...

And what is elimination through being on guard?

If a monk maintains a protection through whatever good, real, genuine nimitta for the establishment - (viz.) the nimitta of a blue contusion, the nimitta of the tumefaction of a corpse, the nimitta of pus, the nimitta of decay, the nimitta of the impurity of food,...

SA 879

GOOD PARALLEL

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There are, bhikkhus, these three kinds of unwholesome thoughts: sensual thought, (kāmaṅgaṅga), thought of ill will (byāpādaṅga), thought of harming (vihiṃsāṅga). And where, bhikkhus, do these three unwholesome thoughts cease without remainder? For one who dwells with a citta well established in the four establishments of mindfulness (catūsu vā satipaṭṭhānesu suppatiṭṭhitacittassa viharato), or for one who develops animitta samādhi. This is reason enough, bhikkhus, to develop animitta samādhi.

Tayo me, bhikkhave, akusalavittakā—kāmaṅgaṅga, byāpādaṅga, vihiṃsāṅga. Ime ca bhikkhave, tayo akusalavittakā kva aparisesā nirujjhanti? Catūsu vā satipaṭṭhānesu suppatiṭṭhitacittassa viharato animittaṃ vā samādhiṃ bhāvetu. Yāvañcidaṃ, bhikkhave, alameva animitto samādhi bhāvetuṃ.

SN 22.80

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Monks, there are three unwholesome thought conditions. What are the three? They are thoughts with lust, thoughts with hatred, and thoughts of harming.

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What is their complete cessation?

If the mind is well settled in the four establishments of mindfulness (於四念處繫心) or abiding in the animitta establishment (住無相三昧).

SA 272

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GOOD PARALLEL

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I haven't checked the DN1, DN2 & DN 14 & MN 117 parallels, because that Brahmins & ascetics divining by nimittas, or hinting (nemittikā), is of no interest whatsoever in Buddhism.

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