

Characteristic, Function, Manifestation & Proximate Cause

(lakkhaṇa-rasa-paccupaṭṭhāna-padaṭṭhāna)

Four defining devices

To elucidate the nature of any ultimate reality, the Pāḷi commentators propose four defining devices by means of which it can be delimited. These four devices are:

- (1) its characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*), i.e. the salient quality of the phenomenon; (C)
- (2) its function (*rasa*), its performance of a concrete task (*kiCCA-rasa*) or achievement of a goal (*sampatti-rasa*); (F)
- (3) its manifestation (*paccupaṭṭhāna*), the way it presents itself within experience, mode of manifestation (*upaṭṭhānākāra-paccupaṭṭhāna*) or mode of effect (*phala-paccupaṭṭhāna*); (M)
- (4) its proximate cause (*padaṭṭhāna*), the principal condition upon which it depends. (P)

If you want to define each of materiality according to characteristic, etc., you must first analyse the kalāpa which you want to define, for example, eye tenfold kalāpa (eye-decad-kalāpa), and then you must define the materiality which you want to do so, for example, earth-element. In the eye-door, there are fifty-four types of materiality you should define them one by one. In the same way you must try other doors, forty-two parts, etc., as mentioned in previous teachings. Now we would like to translate (explain) them one by one briefly, and you should learn them by heart either in English or in Pāḷi.

The materiality aggregate (28 kinds of materiality)

(1) The earth-element

(It has the characteristic of) hardness.

(Its function is) to act as a foundation for the other coexisting primary elements and derived materialities in its own kalāpa.

(It is manifested) as receiving coexisting materialities in its own kalāpa.

(Its proximate course is) the other three great primary elements in its own kalāpa. (water, fire and air)

(2) The water-element

(C) flowing or trickling or oozing.

(F) to intensify the coexisting materialities in its own kalāpa.

(M) as the holding together or cohesion of material phenomena in its own kalāpa.

(P) the other three great primary elements (great essentials) in its own kalāpa. (earth, fire and air)

(3) The fire-element

(C) heat (or coldness).

(F) to mature or ripen other material phenomena in its own kalāpa.

(M) as a continuous supply of softness.

(P) the other three great primary elements in its own kalāpa. (earth, water and air)

(4) The air-element (The wind-element)

(C) distending or supporting the coexisting material phenomena in its own kalāpa.

(F) to cause motion in the other material phenomena. (pushing)

(M) as conveying to other places.

(P) the other three great primary elements in its own kalāpa. (earth, water and fire)

rūpa-kkhando (aṭṭhavisati-rūpa)

pathavī-dhātu

kakkhaḷatta-lakkhaṇā,
paṭiṭṭhāna-rasā,

sampaṭicchana-paccupaṭṭhānā,

avasesa-dhātuttaya-padaṭṭhānā.

(DhsA.368, Vs.1.362, Vs.2.73)¹

āpo-dhātu

paggharaṇa-lakkhaṇā,
brūhana-rasā,
saṅgaha-paccupaṭṭhānā,

avasesa-dhātuttaya-padaṭṭhānā.

(DhsA.368, Vs.1.362, Vs.2.73)

tejo-dhātu

uṇhatta-lakkhaṇā,
paripācana-rasā,

maddavānuppadāna-paccupaṭṭhānā,

avasesa-dhātuttaya-padaṭṭhānā.

(DhsA.368, Vs.1.362, Vs.2.73)

vāyo-dhātu

vitthambhana-lakkhaṇā,

samudīraṇa-rasā,
abhinihāra-paccupaṭṭhānā,

avasesa-dhātuttaya-padaṭṭhānā.

(DhsA.368, Vs.1.362, Vs.2.73)

¹DhsA.368: Dhammasaṅgaṇi commentary (aṭṭhasālini), Burmese edition (Sixth Saṅgha Council). Page 368.

Vs.1.362: Visuddhimagga, Burmese edition (Sixth Saṅgha Council). Volume 1. Page 362.

(5) The eye-transparent-element

- (C) the sensitivity of primary elements (in its own kalāpa) that is ready for the impact of visible data/object; or the sensitivity of primary elements (in its own kalāpa) originated by kamma springing or sourcing from craving to see.
- (F) to pick up the cognitive-process to a visible data as object, or to fetch the cognitive-process to a visible object, that is, to pull the mind to a visible object.
- (M) as the footing or foundation or base of eye-consciousness and mental factors (mental formations) associated with it.
- (P) the primary elements (in its own kalāpa) born of kamma springing or sourcing from craving to see.

(6) The ear-transparent-element

- (C) the sensitivity of primary elements (in its own kalāpa) that is ready for the impact of sounds; or the sensitivity of primary elements (in its own kalāpa) originated by kamma springing or sourcing from craving to hear.
- (F) to pick up the cognitive-process to the sounds as object, or to fetch the cognitive-process to the sounds, that is, to pull the mind to the sounds.
- (M) as the footing or foundation or base of ear-consciousness and mental factors associated with it.
- (P) the primary elements (in its own kalāpa) born of kamma springing or sourcing from craving to hear.

(7) The nose-transparent-element

- (C) the sensitivity of primary elements (in its own kalāpa) that is ready for the impact of odours; or the sensitivity of primary elements (in its own kalāpa) originated by kamma springing or sourcing from craving to smell.
- (F) to pick up the cognitive-process to odours as object, or to fetch the cognitive-process to the odours, that is, to pull the mind to the odours.
- (M) as the footing or foundation or base of nose-consciousness and mental factors associated with it.
- (P) primary elements (in its own kalāpa) born of kamma springing or sourcing from craving to smell.

(8) The tongue-transparent-element

- (C) the sensitivity of primary elements (in its own kalāpa) that is ready for the impact of flavours; or the sensitivity of primary elements (in its own kalāpa) originated by kamma springing or sourcing from craving to taste.
- (F) to pick up the cognitive-process to flavours as object, or to fetch the cognitive-process to the flavours, that is, to pull the mind to the flavours.
- (M) as the footing or foundation or base of tongue-consciousness and mental factors associated with it.
- (P) primary elements (in its own kalāpa) born of kamma springing or sourcing from craving to taste.

(9) The body-transparent-element

- (C) the sensitivity of primary elements (in its own kalāpa) that is ready for the impact of tangible data; or

cakkhu

rūpā-bhigghātā-rahā-bhūta-ppasāda-lakkhaṇaṃ,
daṭṭhu-kāmatānidāna-kamma-samuṭṭhāna-
bhūtaṭṭhasāda-lakkhaṇaṃ vā,
rūpesu āviñchana-rasaṃ,

cakkhu-viññāṇassa ādhāra-bhāva-
paccupaṭṭhānaṃ,
daṭṭhu-kāmatā-nidāna-kammaja-bhūta-
padaṭṭhānaṃ. (DhsA.349, Vs.2.74)

sotaṃ

saddā-bhigghātārahā-bhūtaṭṭhasāda-
lakkhaṇaṃ,
sotukāmatā-nidāna-kamma-samuṭṭhāna-
bhūtaṭṭhasāda-lakkhaṇaṃ vā,
saddesu āviñchana-rasaṃ,

sota-viññāṇassa ādhāra-bhāva-
paccupaṭṭhānaṃ,
sotu-kāmatā-nidāna-kammaja-bhūta-
padaṭṭhānaṃ. (DhsA.349, Vs.2.74)

ghānaṃ

gandhā-bhigghātārahā-bhūtaṭṭhasāda-
lakkhaṇaṃ,
ghāyitu-kāmatānidāna-kamma-samuṭṭhāna-
bhūtaṭṭhasāda-lakkhaṇaṃ vā,
gandhesu āviñchana-rasaṃ,

ghāna-viññāṇassa ādhāra-bhāva-
paccupaṭṭhānaṃ,
ghāyitu-kāmatā-nidāna-kammaja-bhūta-
padaṭṭhānaṃ. (DhsA.349, Vs.2.74)

jivhā

rasā-bhigghātā-rahā-bhūtaṭṭhasāda-
lakkhaṇā,
sāyitu-kāmatā-nidāna-kamma-samuṭṭhāna-
bhūtaṭṭhasāda-lakkhaṇā vā,
rasesu āviñchana-rasā,

jivhā-viññāṇassa ādhāra-bhāva-
paccupaṭṭhānā,
sāyitu-kāmatā-nidāna-kammaja-bhūta-
padaṭṭhānā. (DhsA.349, Vs.2.74)

kāyo

phoṭṭhabbā-bhigghātārahā-bhūtaṭṭhasāda-
lakkhaṇo,

the sensitivity of primary elements (in its own kalāpa) originated by kamma springing or sourcing from craving to touch.

- (F) to pick up the cognitive-process to tangible object, or to fetch the cognitive-process to the tangible object, that is, to pull the mind to the tangible object.
- (M) as the footing or foundation or base of body-consciousness and mental factors associated with it.
- (P) primary elements (in its own kalāpa) born of kamma springing or sourcing from craving to touch.

(10) Colour (visible data/object)

- (C) impinging on the eye-transparent-element.
- (F) to be the object of eye-consciousness and mental factors (mental formations) associated with it.
- (M) as the resort of that too.
- (P) the four great primary elements in its own kalāpa.

(11) Sound

- (C) impinging on the ear-transparent-element.
- (F) to be the object (objective field) of ear-consciousness and mental factors associated with it.
- (M) as the resort of that too.
- (P) the four great primary elements in its own kalāpa.

(12) Odour

- (C) impinging on the nose-transparent-element.
- (F) to be the object of nose-consciousness and mental factors associated with it.
- (M) as the resort of that too.
- (P) the four great primary elements in its own kalāpa.

(13) Flavour

- (C) impinging on the tongue-transparent-element.
- (F) to be the object of tongue-consciousness and mental factors associated with it.
- (M) as the resort of that too.
- (P) the four great primary elements in its own kalāpa.

(14) The femininity faculty (Female-sex-materiality)

- (C) the female sex.
- (F) to show that ‘this is female’.
- (M) as the reason for the mark, sign, work, and ways of the female; that is, for the sexual structure of the body, for its feminine feature, for the typical feminine occupation, and for the typical feminine deportment.
- (P) the four great primary elements in its own kalāpa.

(15) The masculinity faculty (Male-sex-materiality)

- (C) the male sex.
- (F) to show that ‘this is a male’.
- (M) as the reason for the mark, sign, work, and ways of the male, that is for the sexual structure of the body, for its masculine feature, for the typical masculine occupation, and for the typical masculine deportment.
- (P) the four great primary elements in its own kalāpa.

phusitu-kāmatānidāna-kamma-samuṭṭhāna-bhūtapasāda-lakkhaṇo vā, phoṭṭhabbesu āviñchana-raso,

kāya-viññānassa ādhāra-bhāva-paccupaṭṭhāno, phusitu-kāmatānidāna-kammaja-bhūta-padaṭṭhāno. (DhsA.349, Vs.2.74)

rūpaṃ

cakkhu-pañhanana-lakkhaṇaṃ, cakkhu-viññānassa visaya-bhāva-rasaṃ,

tasseva gocara-paccupaṭṭhānaṃ, catu-mahābhūta-padaṭṭhānaṃ.

(DhsA.355, Vs.2.76)

saddo

sota-pañhanana-lakkhaṇo, sota-viññānassa visayabhāva-raso,

tasseva gocara-paccupaṭṭhāno, catu-mahābhūta-padaṭṭhāno.

(DhsA.356, Vs.2.77)

gandho

ghāna-pañhanana-lakkhaṇo, ghāna-viññānassa visayabhāva-raso,

tasseva gocara-paccupaṭṭhāno, catu-mahābhūta-padaṭṭhāno.

(DhsA.356, Vs.2.77)

raso

jivhā-pañhanana-lakkhaṇo, jivhā-viññānassa visayabhāva-raso,

tasseva gocara-paccupaṭṭhāno, catu-mahābhūta-padaṭṭhāno.

(DhsA.357, Vs.2.77)

itthindriyaṃ

itthi-bhāva-lakkhaṇaṃ, itthi pakāsana-rasaṃ, itthi-liṅga-nimitta-kuttā-kappānaṃ kārāṇa-bhāva-paccupaṭṭhānaṃ,

catu-mahābhūta-padaṭṭhānaṃ.

(DhsA.358, Vs.2.77)

purisindriyaṃ

purisa-bhāva-lakkhaṇaṃ, purisoti pakāsana-rasaṃ, purisa-liṅga-nimitta-kuttā-kappānaṃ kārāṇa-bhāva-paccupaṭṭhānaṃ,

catu-mahābhūta-padaṭṭhānaṃ.

(DhsA.358, Vs.2.77)

(16) The life faculty (Life-Materiality)

- (C) maintaining consascent kinds of materiality (material phenomena) in its own kalāpa at the moment of their presence.
- (F) to make them occur from arising until passing away.
- (M) in the establishing of their presence.
- (P) the four great primary elements (in its own kalāpa) that are to be maintained.

(17) Heart-materiality

- (C) being the material support for the mind-element and the mind-consciousness-element.
- (F) to uphold them. (to be the base of them.)
- (M) as the carrying of these elements.
- (P)* the four great primary elements in its own kalāpa.

(18) Nutriment-Materiality (Edible food)

- (C) nutritive-essence, that is, the nutritional substance contained in gross edible food.
- (F) to sustain the physical body, or to feed kinds of materiality (matter).
- (M) as the consolidating or as the fortifying of the body.
- (P) gross edible food, which is the base of nutritive-essence.

(19) The space-element (Delimiting materiality)

- (C) delimiting matter (materiality-kalāpas).
- (F) to display the boundaries of materiality-kalāpa.
- (M) as the confines (borderline) of materiality-kalāpas; or as untouchedness (untouchables), as the state of gaps and apertures.
- (P) the materiality-kalāpas delimited.

(20) Bodily intimation

- (C) the mode (conformation) and the alteration (deformation) in the consciousness-originated wind-element or the consciousness-originated four great primary elements in which wind-element is predominant that causes the occurrence of moving forward, etc., this mode and alteration are a condition for the stiffening upholding and moving of the consascent material body.
- (F) to display intention.
- (M) as the cause of bodily excitement.
- (P) the consciousness-originated wind-element.

(21) Verbal intimation

- (C) the mode (conformation) and the alteration (deformation) in the consciousness-originated earth-element that causes that occurrence of speech utterance, this mode and alteration are a condition for the knocking together of (vibration in) clung-to matter (or of the vocal apparatus).
- (F) to display intention.
- (M) as the cause of the voice in speech (or of verbal expression).
- (P) the consciousness-originated earth-element.

jīvitindriyam

sahajāta-rūpā-nupālana-lakkhaṇaṃ,

*tesaṃ pavattana-rasaṃ,
tesaṃ yeva thapana-paccupaṭṭhānaṃ,
yāpayitabba-bhūta-padaṭṭhānaṃ.*

(DhsA.359, Vs.2.77)

hadaya-vatthu

*mano-dhātu-mano-viññāṇa-dhātūnaṃ
nissaya-lakkhaṇaṃ,
tāsaṃñeva dhātūnaṃ ādhāraṇa-rasaṃ,
ubbahana-paccupaṭṭhānaṃ. (Vs.2.77)
catu-mahābhūta-padaṭṭhānaṃ.*

kabalīkāro āhāro

ojā-lakkhaṇo,

rūpāharaṇa-raso,

*upatthambhana-paccupaṭṭhāno,
kabalāṃ katvā āharitabba-vatthu-
padaṭṭhāno. (DhsA.368, Vs.2.80)*

ākāsa-dhātu (pariccheda-rūpa)

*rūpa-pariccheda-lakkhaṇā,
rūpa-pariyanta-ppakāsana-rasā,
rūpa-mariyādā-paccupaṭṭhānā,
asamphuṭṭhabhāva-
cchidda-vivarabhāva-paccupaṭṭhānā vā,
paricchinna-rūpa-padaṭṭhānā.*

(DhsA.362, Vs.2.78)

kāya-viññatti

*abhikkamādi-pavattaka-cittasamuṭṭhāna-
vāyo-dhātuyā sahaja-rūpakāya-
thambhana-sandhāraṇa-
salanassa paccayo ākāra-vikāro,*

*adhippāya-ppakāsana-rasā,
kāya-vipphandana-hetu-bhāva-
paccupaṭṭhānā,*

citta-samuṭṭhāna-vāyo-dhātu-padaṭṭhānā.
(Vs.2.78)

vacī-viññatti

*vacī-bheda-pavattaka-citta-samuṭṭhāna-
pathavī-dhātuyā upādinna-
ghaṭṭanassa paccayo ākāra-vikāro,*

*adhippāya-ppakāsana-rasā,
vacīghosa-hetu-bhāva-paccupaṭṭhānā,
citta-samuṭṭhāna-pathavī-dhātu-
padaṭṭhānā. (Vs.2.78)*

* : In commentaries, its proximate cause is not mentioned.

(22) Lightness of materiality (matter)

- (C) non-sluggishness or non-slowness of real materiality produced by consciousness, temperature or nutritive-essence.
- (F) to dispel heaviness of those three types of materiality.
- (M) as light transformability (transferability).
- (P) those three types of light materiality.

(23) Malleability of materiality

- (C) non-stiffenedness or non-rigidity of real materiality produced by consciousness, temperature or nutritive-essence.
- (F) to dispel stiffness or rigidity of those three types of materiality.
- (M) as non-opposition to any kind of action.
- (P) those three types of malleable materiality.

(24) Wieldiness of materiality

- (C) wieldiness (of real materiality produced by consciousness, temperature and nutritive-essence) that is favourable to bodily action.
- (F) to dispel unwieldiness.
- (M) as non-weakness of materiality.
- (P) wieldy materiality.

(25) Growth of real materiality (production of materiality)

- (C) setting up beginning from the first stage of foetus formation until the completed state of all the physical faculties.
- (F) to make material instances emerge in the first instance or for the first time.
- (M) as launching; or
as the completed state of the real materiality.
- (P) grown materiality or materiality produced.

(26) Continuity of real materiality

- (C) occurrence beginning from completed state of the faculties.
- (F) to anchor.
- (M) as non-interruption.
- (P) materiality that is to be anchored.

(27) Ageing of real materiality

- (C) the maturing or ageing or ripening of material phenomena (instances).
- (F) to lead them on towards their termination.
- (M) as destruction and fall or as loss of newness without loss of being or individual essence, like oldness in paddy.
- (P) materiality that is maturing, decaying or ripening.

(28) Impermanence of real materiality

- (C) complete breaking up of material phenomena.
- (F) to make them subside.
- (M) as destruction and falling away.
- (P) materiality that is completely breaking up.

rūpassa lahutā*adandhatā-lakkhaṇā,**rūpānaṃ garu-bhāva-vinodana-rasā,
lahu-parivattitā-paccupaṭṭhānā,
lahu-rūpa-padaṭṭhānā. (DhsA.362, Vs.2.78)****rūpassa mudutā****athaddhatā-lakkhaṇā,**rūpānaṃ thaddha-bhāva-vinodana-rasā,
sabba-kiriyāsu avirodhitā-paccupaṭṭhānā,
mudu-rūpa-padaṭṭhānā. (DhsA.362, Vs.2.78)****rūpassa kammaññatā****sarīra-kiriyānukūla-kammañña-bhāva-
lakkhaṇā,**akammaññatā-vinodana-rasā,
adubbala-bhāva-paccupaṭṭhānā,
kammañña-rūpa-padaṭṭhānā.**(DhsA.362, Vs.2.78.79)****rūpassa upacayo*¹***ācaya-lakkhaṇo,**pubbantato rūpānaṃ ummujjāpana-raso,**niyyātana-paccupaṭṭhāno,
paripuṇṇa-bhāva-paccupaṭṭhāno vā,
upacīta-rūpa-padaṭṭhāno.**(DhsA.363.364, Vs.2.79)****rūpassa santati*¹***pavatti-lakkhaṇā,**anuppabandhana-rasā,
anupaccheda-paccupaṭṭhānā,
anuppabandhaka-rūpa-padaṭṭhānā.**(DhsA.364, Vs.2.79)****rūpassa jaratā****rūpa-paripāka-lakkhaṇā,**upanayana-rasā,
sabhāvānapagamepi nava-bhāvāpagama-
paccupaṭṭhānā vihi-purāṇa-bhāvo viya,
paripacca-māna-rūpa-padaṭṭhānā.**(DhsA.365, Vs.2.80)****rūpassa aniccatā****paribheda-lakkhaṇā,**saṃsīdana-rasā,
khaya-vaya-paccupaṭṭhānā,
paribhijja-māna-rūpa-padaṭṭhānā.**(DhsA.365, Vs.2.80)*

¹ *rūpassa upacayo*, *rūpassa santati* : Both are the arising states of real materiality, but at different moment.