

Rupa Notes

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Rupa

Rupa is one of the 4 Ultimate Realities or Paramattha Dhamma, the others being citta, cetasika and Nibbana. The first three are conditioned and can be experienced by all. They arise and fall away due to conditions. The last one, Nibbana, being unconditioned, can only be experienced by enlightened beings.

Rupa is also one of the five aggregates that make up a being, the others being vinnana, sanna, sankhara and vedana.

The term Rupa is derived from the Pali 'ruppati' which means to be deformed, broken, knocked about, oppressed. To judge from the various aspects of rupas, 'matter' is the nearest equivalent translation.

However, the meaning of rupa, or material phenomenon, is different from matter in conventional sense, such as table, chair, or book. Rupa in fact, comprises the characteristics of matter as well as energy.

Rupa may change state, form and appearance on account of temperature just as matter does. It also has the characteristics of energy, eg. due to its elements of heat and movement. Although form and mass becomes apparent when a lot of rupa has been accumulated, rupa in the ultimate sense is formless and shapeless just as energy is.

Scientists now know that matter and energy are just two forms of the same thing, as proven by Albert Einstein with his famous equation, $E=mc^2$.

But unlike the law of conservation of mass and energy which states that matter and energy can neither be created or destroyed, Abhidhamma explains that rupa arises and perishes incessantly at short intervals measured by small instants called 'khana'.

The life span of a rupa endures for 17 conscious moments, so what is formed is almost instantly gone. Rupa is incessantly produced from four main sources, namely, kamma, citta, utu (heat) and ahara (nutriment).

Two-fold Division

There are 28 types of rupa and these can be considered two-fold by way of :

- i. 4 Essentials (bhuta-rupa)
- ii. 24 Derivatives (upadaya-rupa)

The Four Great Essentials (maha-bhuta rupas) :

1. Pathavi dhatu (earth element)
2. Apo dhatu (water element)
3. Tejo dhatu (fire element)
4. Vayo dhatu (air element)

Dhatu in Pali means that which carries its own characteristic marks or attributes. Element is the closest equivalent for dhatu.

The four great essentials are the fundamental material elements which exist together and which are inseparable.

Every material substance, ranging from the minutest particles to the most massive object, is made up of these four elements which possess specific characteristics as described above.

The 4 maha-bhuta rupas are also called upada- rupas. All the other 24 rupas, or upadaya-rupa, have to depend on these 4 maha-bhuta rupas. Maha-bhuta rupas are the base for all rupas including themselves.

The 24 upadaya-rupas are derived material phenomena. This is because they are derived from, or arise dependent on the 4 Great Essentials. The Four Great Essentials are the primary elements and can be compared to the earth, while the derived material phenomena can be likened to the trees and shrubs growing from the earth.

11 Classes of Rupa

The 28 rupas can be grouped into 11 Classes. These 11 classes can be divided into 2 groups :

- i. 7 Concretely produced matter groups (Nippanna-rupa)
- ii. 4 Non-concretely produced matter groups (Anippanna-rupa)

Concretely produced possess intrinsic natures and are suitable for contemplation and comprehension by insight. Non-concretely produced matter are called as such as they are more abstract in nature. Also, they do not arise directly from the 4 causes of material phenomena but exist as attributes of concretely produced matter.

Types of Rupa

Concretely produced matter (18 rupas)

i. Great Essentials (Maha-bhuta)

1. Earth element (Pathavi-dhatu)
Has the characteristics of extension and solidity. Hardness and softness are modes of the earth element.
2. Water element (Apo-dhatu)
Has the characteristics of fluidity and cohesion. It causes the other forms of matter to hold together. According to the Abhidhamma, it is not possible to physically sense the water element and its presence can only be inferred.
3. Fire element (Tejo-dhatu)
Has the characteristics of heat. It has the two modes of heat and cold. The less the fire element present, the colder is the object as perceived.
4. Air element (Vayo-dhatu)
Has the characteristics of distention and pressure. Its presence allows motion, or movement, in material phenomena.

ii. Sensitive phenomena (Pasada-rupa)

5. Eye sensitive matter (Cakkhu-pasada)
6. Ear sensitive matter (Sota-pasada)
7. Nose sensitive matter (Ghana-pasada)
8. Tongue sensitive matter (Jivha-pasada)
9. Body sensitive matter (Kaya-pasada)
These are the five types of sensitive matter located in each of the five sense organs. In the Abhidhamma, this is distinct from the gross sense organ which forms the support of the sensitive matter. For example, the eye as conventionally known is referred to in the Abhidhamma as the composite eye. Each of the other sensitive materials are located in their respective physical bases, with the body sensitive material extending over the whole body.

iii. Objective phenomena (Gocara-rupa)

10. Visible form (Rupa-rammana)
11. Sound (Sadda-rammana)
12. Smell (Gandha-rammana)
13. Taste (Rasa-rammana)
- *. Tangibility (Photthabba-rammana)
These are the types of material phenomena that impinge on the senses and are the objects of sense consciousness. Tangibility is not numbered as it is perceived due to the presence (or absence) of the earth, fire and air elements. The water element is too subtle to be sensed by touch.

iv. Sexual phenomena (Bhava-rupa)

14. Femininity matter (Itthi-bhava)

15. Masculinity matter (Purisa-bhava)

These faculties are manifested in a person being male or female. Their presence is displayed in the physical structure, features, characteristics and sexual orientation of a person.

v. Heart phenomena (Hadaya-rupa)

16. Heart base (Hadaya-vatthu)

This is the physical support for the mind and supported by the life faculty. In the Abhidhamma, the heart base is said to be the blood in the heart cavity.

vi. Life phenomena (Jivita-rupa)

17. Life faculty (Jivita-rupa)

This is the material counterpart of mental life faculty. It is characterized as life or vitality, and maintains the co-existence kinds of matter at the moment of their presence.

vii. Nutritional phenomena (Ahara-rupa)

18. Nutriment (Kabalika-ahara / oja)

This is the edible material in food which sustains the physical body and allows it to grow and survive.

Non-concretely produced matter (10 rupas)

viii. Limiting phenomena (Pariccheda-rupa)

19. Space element (Akasa-dhatu)

This element enables material phenomena and groups of material phenomena to be separate and distinct. It delimits matter and can be understood to be the gaps between different types and groups of matter.

ix. Communicating phenomena (Vinnatti-rupa)

20. Bodily intimation (Kaya-vinnatti)

21. Vocal intimation (Vaci-vinnatti)

These two types of material phenomena enable the types of physical movement and verbal expression that allows communication. Both have the function of displaying intention and can be understood to be the nerve impulses of the body.

x. Mutable phenomena (Vikara-rupa)

22. Lightness (Lahuta)

23. Malleability (Muduta)

24. Wieldiness (Kammannata)

*. Plus 2 communicating phenomena

This group represents special modes or manifestations of concretely produced matter. Lightness counters the heaviness of matter. Malleability dispels rigidity

and allows pliability and suppleness. Weldiness helps to overcome awkwardness and allows manageability and ease of movement. The two types of communicating phenomena are included in this group as they both have the characteristics of movement and changeability.

xi. Characteristics of matter (Lakkhana-rupa)

- 25. Production (Upacaya)
- 26. Continuity (Santati)
- 27. Decay (Jarata)
- 28. Impermanence (Aniccata)

In this group, production and continuity are both terms for the arising of matter. Production is the first arising of a material process whereas continuity is the repeated arising of the process. Decay is understood to be the maturing or aging of the material process, leading to its termination. Impermanence characterizes the eventual breaking up and falling away of the material process.

Groupings of Rupa

Rupas never occur in isolation but in groups or clusters called kalapas. A kalapa can contain from 8 to 13 elements. All kalapas must contain at least 8 rupas which together is called a 'pure octad' or the 'eight inseparables', consisting of :

4 Primary elements

- 1. Earth (pathavi)
- 2. Water (apo)
- 3. Heat (tejo)
- 4. Air (vayo)

4 Derived elements

- 5. Colour (vanna)
- 6. Smell (gandha)
- 7. Taste (rasa)
- 8. Nutriment (oja)

All kalapas have the following four features :

- 1. Common genesis - all the rupas in a kalapa arise together
- 2. Common cessation - they cease together
- 3. Common dependence - they are dependent on the four great essentials present in the kalapa for their arising
- 4. Co-existence - they are so thoroughly mixed that they cannot be distinguished separately

The 'pure octad' or 'eight inseparables' are called avinibbhoga-rupas whereas the rest are called vinibbhoga-rupas.

Causes of Material Phenomena

There are four causes which produce rupa :

1. Kamma
2. Citta
3. Utu
4. Ahara

There are altogether 21 groupings of kalapas that can arise in the Kamavacara plane. These groupings can be divided into the 4 groups as above, based on the causes they originated from (rupa-samutthana or modes of origin).

1. 9 produced by Kamma (kammaja-kalapas)

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| i. Vital nonad | = pure octad + jivita |
| ii. Eye decad | = pure octad + jivita + cakkhu pasada |
| iii. Ear decad | = pure octad + jivita + sota pasada |
| iv. Nose decad | = pure octad + jivita + ghana pasada |
| v. Tongue decad | = pure octad + jivita + jivha pasada |
| vi. Body decad | = pure octad + jivita + kaya pasada |
| vii. Female decad | = pure octad + jivita + itthibhava rupa |
| viii. Male decad | = pure octad + jivita + purisabhava rupa |
| ix. Heart decad | = pure octad + jivita + hadaya vatthu |

25 types of kamma are capable of producing kammaja-rupas. These are the moral and immoral kammās pertaining to the kamma and rupa spheres which are the 12 unwholesome cittas, 8 wholesome cittas and the 5 fine material wholesome cittas. These kammaja-kalapas arise concurrently with the rebirth linking consciousness (patisandhi-citta) and will stop arising 17 moments before the death consciousness (cuti-citta). Therefore the kammaja-rupas will all fall away simultaneously with the cuti-citta.

For womb-born beings in the human plane, there are 3 kalapas of kammaja-rupas originating from kamma, arising together with the rebirth linking consciousness. These are the body decad, heart decad and one of the sexual decads. As the new being develops, the eye, ear, nose and tongue decads will arise in time.

For beings of spontaneous birth such as devas, petas, asuras and hell-beings, all the 7 decads of kammaja-kalapas will arise at once together with the patisandhi-citta.

However, if the kamma of the being does not have the condition for the arising of specific rupas, then these will not arise at birth or during the course of the being's life. For beings born spontaneously in the Brahma realms, only the four kammaja-kalapas of vital nonad, heart decad, eye and ear decad will arise. However, while the physical attributes of nose, tongue and body are present, these will not be functional.

For beings born in the formless Brahma realms, rupa does not arise. The exception are the non-percipient beings where mind (nama) does not arise and only the vital nonad arises. Such beings will remain in this form until they pass away, the next rebirth being conditioned by past kamma.

2. 6 produced by Citta (cittaja-kalapas)

- i. Pure octad
- ii. Pure octad + bodily intimation
- iii. Pure octad + vocal intimation + sound
- iv. Pure octad + 3 mutables
- v. Pure octad + 3 mutables + bodily intimation
- vi. Pure octad + 3 mutables + vocal intimation + sound

75 types of consciousness are capable of producing cittaja-rupas. The 14 cittas that do not produce cittaja-rupas are the 5 pairs of sense consciousness and the 4 arupa vipaka cittas. Cittas that also do not produce cittaja-rupas are the rebirth linking consciousness and the dying consciousness of the arahant.

When the rebirth linking consciousness of the new being has fallen away, cittaja-rupa is then produced at the arising moment of the first bhavanga citta and also after that throughout the course of life. Cittaja-rupas cease being produced after the cuti-citta.

3. 4 produced by Utu (utuja-kalapas)

- i. Pure octad
- ii. Pure octad + sound
- iii. Pure octad + 3 mutables
- iv. Pure octad + 3 mutables + sound

The heat (tejo) element which comprises both heat and cold, on reaching its static stage, produces cittaja-rupas and continue producing cittaja-rupas at every small instant both internally and externally. At the death of a being, this process will cease only when the corpse turns to dust.

4. 2 produced by Oja (aharaja-kalapas)

- i. Pure octad
- ii. Pure octad + 3 mutables

Food or nutritive essence (oja) produces aharaja-rupas only when it is absorbed by the body. Aharaja-rupa can only arise in the bodies of animals and humans. It ceases being produced after the cuti-citta.

Rupa classified by number of causes

One cause	:	11	(8 faculties, heart-base, 2 intimations)
Two causes	:	1	(Sound)
Three causes	:	3	(3 mutables)
Four causes	:	9	(8 inseparables, space)
No causes	:	4	(4 characteristics)

Total	:	28	

Number of rupas produced by each cause :

Kammaja-rupa – 18

- 8 kalapas
- 5 senses (pasada)
- 2 sexes (bhava)
- 1 heart base (hadaya-vatthu)
- 1 life faculty (jivita)
- 1 space (akasa)

Cittaja-rupa – 15

- 8 kalapas
- 3 mutables
- 1 bodily intimation
- 1 vocal intimation
- 1 sound
- 1 space

Utuja-rupas – 13

- 8 kalapas
- 3 mutables
- 1 sound
- 1 space

Aharaja-rupas – 12

- 8 kalapas
- 3 mutables
- 1 space

Octad - collection of 8 things

Nonad - collection of 9 things

Decad - collection of 10 things

Undecad - collection of 11 things

Dodecad - collection of 12 things

Tridecad - collection of 13 things

Characteristics of Rupa

All rupas have the following eight single-fold characteristics :

1. Rootless (ahetuka)

No association with roots, as association with roots is restricted to mental phenomena.

2. Causes (sappaccaya)

All are related to the four causes of : a) kamma, b) citta, c) utu and d) ahara.

3. Defilements (sasava)

All serve as objects for defilements.

4. Taints (sankhata)

All are subject to the four taints of : a) sensual desire, b) attachment to existence, c) wrong views and d) ignorance.

5. Conditioned and mundane (lokiya)

There is no rupa that transcends the world of the five clinging aggregates.

6. Sense sphere (kamavacara)

All rupa is of the sense sphere. Although matter exists in the fine-material sphere, it pertains by its nature to the sense sphere because it is the object of sensual craving.

7. Objectless (anarammana)

Unlike mental phenomena, rupa cannot know objects.

8. Not to be abandoned (appahatabba)

Rupa cannot be abandoned (unlike the defilements) by the four supramundane paths.

All rupas can also be classified by the following nine manifold characteristics :

1. Five kinds of sensitive material phenomena (ajjhattika-rupa)

These are called ajjhattika (internal), and the remaining 23 rupas are called bahira (external), because the five sensitive organs (sense doors) are essential for seeing, hearing, smelling, etc.

2. Six kinds of bases (vatthu-rupa)

The five sensitive material phenomena (pasada- rupa) together with the heart base (hadaya-vatthu) are named vatthu-rupa while the rest are called avatthu-rupa. The six bases act as seats of consciousness and are the physical support through which the cittas and cetasikas gain access to their respective objects during the cognitive process.

3. Seven kinds of doors (dvara-rupa)

The five sensitive material phenomena together with the two media of intimation (vinnatti-rupas) are called dvara-rupas while the rest are called advara-rupas. The five pasada-rupas serve as doors and the two vinnatti-rupas are the places and the means for performing bodily actions (kaya-kamma) and verbal actions (vaci-kamma).

4. Eight kinds of faculties (indriya-rupa)

The five sensitive material phenomena, the two sexual phenomena (bhava-rupas) and life faculty (jivita-rupa) together form eight indriya-rupas while the remaining 20 rupas are termed anindriya-rupas. 'Indriya' means 'faculty' which has controlling power in its sphere. For instance, cakkhu-pasada controls seeing, sota-pasada controls hearing, and so on. Itthi-bhava controls femininity and purisa-bhava controls masculinity.

5. Twelve kinds of gross material phenomena (olarika-rupa)

The five sensitive material phenomena and the seven gocara-rupas together form 12 olarika-rupas, while the remaining 16 rupas are termed sukhuma-rupas. 'Olarika' means 'gross, proximate or impinging'; 'sukhuma' means 'subtle, distant, and non-impinging'. Because of their grossness and coarseness, the sensitive organs and the five sense objects can be easily seen and understood. For example, a visual object striking the eye-door.

6. Eighteen kinds of material phenomena born of kamma (upadinna-rupa)

The 18 kammaja-rupas are called upadinna-rupas (clung-to); the rest are termed anupadinna-rupas. The 18 rupas produced by kamma are grasped by kamma as its resultants, due to craving (tanha) and false view (ditthi).

7. Visible form (sanidassana-rupa)

Object of form (ruparammana) is called sanidassana-rupa, because it can be seen by the eye. The remaining rupas are called anidassana-rupas, because they cannot be seen by the eye.

8. Five kinds of material phenomena that take objects (gocaraggahika-rupa)

The five sensitive material phenomena can take external sense-objects. They are called gocaraggahika-rupas while the rest are called agocaraggahika-rupas.

Eye and ear, as not reaching (the object), and nose, tongue and body, as reaching (the object), are five kinds of material phenomena that take objects. The others do not.

9. Eight kinds of material phenomena that are inseparable (avinibbhoga-rupa)

The four great essentials and colour, odour, taste and nutritive essence are the eight kinds of material phenomena that are inseparable; the rest are separable (vinibbhoga-rupas).

Types of Birth

Four kinds of birth :

1. Egg born beings (andaja)
2. Womb born beings (jalabuja)
3. Moisture born beings (samsedaja)
4. Beings having spontaneous birth (opapatika)

Woeful beings in the hell realms have spontaneous birth only.

Petas and asuras are born either by womb or spontaneous birth.

Animals can be born by any of the 4 modes*.

Human beings are first born spontaneously at the beginning of the world, and later by either womb or moisture*.

Earth born devas are born either by womb or moisture.

Celestial devas and brahmas are born spontaneously only.

* These are the beliefs of early Buddhists only.

28 Rupa

Concretely produced matter (18 rupas)

i. Great Essentials (Maha-bhuta)

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3. Fire element (Tejo-dhatu)
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iii. Objective phenomena (Gocara-rupa)

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iv. Sexual phenomena (Bhava-rupa)

14. Femininity matter (Itthi-bhava)
15. Masculinity matter (Purisa-bhava)

v. Heart phenomena (Hadaya-rupa)

16. Heart base (Hadaya-vatthu)

vi. Life phenomena (Jivita-rupa)

17. Life faculty (Jivita-rupa)

vii. Nutritional phenomena (Ahara-rupa)

18. Nutriment (Kabalika-ahara / oja)

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*. Plus 2 communicating phenomena

xi. Characteristics of matter (Lakkhana-rupa)

25. Production (Upacaya)

26. Continuity (Santati)

27. Decay (Jarata)

28. Impermanence (Aniccata)