



Why is it important to study the five aggregates? It is because the five aggregates of clinging are the truths of suffering which must be fully understood by insight: “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not myself.”

— Sayalay Susilā

Understanding this sutta is important so that we do not get attached to the five aggregates and do not determine any of them to be “my self”. These five aggregates, not clung to, lead to long term happiness and well-being.

The aggregate of **materiality** (*rūpakkhandha*)

Rupa means “keep on changing” and to be subject to deformation and oppression. It is made up of the four great elements (earth, fire, water, and wind) and the 24 derived materialities from these four elements. What causes the arising of the four elements? It is due to past karma, consciousness, nutriment, and temperature — all of these have the ability to influence the four elements which are then seen as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-self, as the body reacts to causes and conditions caused by the four factors.

The aggregate of **feeling** (*vedanākkhandha*)

Dependent on contact, feeling arises. There are six types of contact (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind). Each contact gives rise to three types of feeling (pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral). So in total there are 18 types of feeling. Feelings are always present and we practice observing them as they arise and cease. They are the object of your practice. When we do not contemplate on feelings as they arise, two fetters follow. First, one wrongly identifies feeling as “myself” thereby strengthening the personality view. Secondly, feeling conditions craving and one’s craving increases.

6 TYPES OF CONTACT
x3 TYPES OF FEELING
18 TOTAL

The aggregate of **perception** (*saññākkhandha*)

It perceives the quality of an object by recognizing its “sign.” This sign is a distorted sign, such as we mistake a rope for a snake in semi-darkness. We wrongly perceive the five aggregates as permanent, happiness, and even having an unchanging self. Although we experience in our day-to-day life drama a constant fluctuation in our feelings and emotions, the perception of impermanence still does not deeply imprint on our mind. We fail to contemplate or note “impermanence” at that moment. It will take a long time to correct this perverted perception.

The aggregate of **formation** (*sankhāraakkhandha*)

Its characteristic is forming, fabricating, and constructing. Its function is to accumulate karma. Excluding feeling and perception, the remaining 50 mental factors are grouped as formation aggregates. Its manifestation is intervening and to be interested. Practicing generosity, morality, and concentration are good karmas that prolong samsaric existences. But through Vipassanā, contemplating impermanence, suffering, and the non-self of formations, the mind turns away from the engagement of formations, letting go of grasping, indeed cuts short our samsaric existence.

The aggregate of **consciousness** (*viññānakkhandha*)

Its characteristic is to know the object. Its manifestation is a continuity of process rather than what it seems to be: It seems as if an independent being (a compact rather than a composite entity) is experiencing phenomena. The truth of impermanence is hidden by this continuity, because consciousness is arising and passing away so rapidly. Unable to break down the compactness of continuity, we mistake it for an independent self.

6 TYPES OF CONSCIOUSNESS = EYE • EAR • NOSE • TONGUE • BODY + MIND

FOUR ELEMENTS

