



Mindfulness, Meditation, Zen Nothing More



The Five Skandhas - Proposed theme for the Autumn Practice period 2022

The skandhas are the foundation of our sense of mental and physical existence, and thus of our convictions about the reality of self etc? Sounds a bit technical perhaps, but if you are challenged by the palpable non-sense that you (as in an individual self) is a delusion (as in a no-self) getting to grips with the skandhas will make it seem less barmy. The skandhas offer a way to understand that every aspect of our lives is assembled from constantly changing experiences. There is no one element that is truly unique, solid, or permanent. Everything changes. Everything depends upon multiple causes and conditions. Here is Dōgen on the subject:

When you turn *{address}* the four elements and the five skandhas and practice sincerely, you attain the way. When you turn grass, trees, tiles, and walls and practice sincerely, you attain the way. It is so because the four great elements and the five skandhas, as well as grass, trees, tiles, and walls, practice together with you. They have the same nature, the same mind and life, the same body and capacity as you.

Saying that the self returns to the self is not contradicted by saying that the self is mountains, rivers and the great earth. All buddhas are wind and rain, water and fire.

Dōgen reader p126-27

Check this too:

skandha, (Sanskrit: “aggregates”) Pāli Khandha, according to Buddhist thought, the five elements that sum up the whole of an individual’s mental and physical existence. The self (or soul) cannot be identified with any one of the parts, nor is it the total of the parts. They are: (1) matter, or body (rūpa), the manifest form of the four elements — earth, air, fire, and water; (2) sensations, or feelings (vedanā); (3) perceptions of sense objects (Sanskrit: saṃjñā; Pāli: saññā); (4) mental formations (saṃskāras/sankhāras); and (5) awareness, or consciousness, of the other three mental aggregates (vijñāna/viññāṇa). All individuals are subject to constant change, as the elements of consciousness are never the same, and man may be compared to a river, which retains an identity, though the drops of water that make it up are different from one moment to the next. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/skandha>

And this:

What are you made of? According to Buddhism, people are made of five aggregates, or “heaps.” These are known in Sanskrit as the skandhas. They are referred to as heaps because they’re merely collections of parts without any central core. The five skandhas are:

1. **Form** Your physical body—traditionally, these are listed as the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.
2. **Feeling** The sensations you experience in your body, including all pain and pleasure.
3. **Perception** You have sense organs, and each of them has objects. Put them together—eye and light, nose and smell, etc.—and you have perception.
4. **Mental formations** All your concepts and thoughts, from the most mundane to the most grandiose.
5. **Consciousness** Simply put, this is your awareness of skandhas 1 through 4.

With reflection and practice, you can begin to understand that all of these are fleeting. Like all conditioned phenomena, the five skandhas are subject to change and decay. When you are at peace with this fact, you can be free from suffering. <https://www.lionsroar.com/what-are-the-five-skandhas/>