

1. The Tripitaka: Sutra, Vinaya, Abhidharma

2. Abhidharma: “Mind Science”

a. Long textual history of development, going back to the time of Shakyamuni Buddha (5th-4th Century bce);

b. The most widely influential Abhidharma text in Tibet is

Vasubhandu’s Treasury of Abhidharma

(Abhidharmakosakarika), about 600 verses written in

Sanskrit in the 4th or 5th Century ce, and Vasubhandu’s

own commentary on this root text, the

Abhidharmakosabhasyam

- i. Memorized by many Tibetan monks, scholars, and practitioners
 - ii. The primary text for Abhidharma taught in most monastic colleges.
- c. Another influential text was written at around the same time by Vasubhandu's older brother **Asanga** is the ***Compendium of Higher Teaching (Abhidharmasamuccaya)***
- i. Generally considered to be a text of the Yogacara school;

ii. Tends to be more studied in the Nyingma and Kagyu lineages than in the Sakya and Gelugpa, but is studied by all.

d. The sourcebook widely used for the study of Vasubhandu's text is the *Ornament of Abhidharma*, known in Tibetan as the *Chimzö* or *Great Chimzö*, a commentary composed in the 13th or 14th Century c.e. by a Kadam scholar, Chim Jampalyang.

i. English translation by Ian James Coghlan (Jampa Ignyen), who trained as a monk at Sera Je

ii. Published by Wisdom Publications, Library of Tibetan Classics Book 23

e. The skandhas are the first subject of Vasubhandu's *Compendium of Higher Teachings*

3. Why study the Skandhas?

- a. Could just be information, a way to increase your general knowledge about Buddhist concepts;
- b. It will help you when you read Buddhist texts (like the Heart Sutra), because the Skandhas are frequently referred to one way or another;

c. The Skandhas can function as objects of meditation to illuminate and provide direct knowledge about the nature of reality.

i. As an example: “The Wheel of Analytical Meditation That Thoroughly Purifies Mental Activity” by Mipham Rinpoche

ii. Available free at:

<https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/wheel-of-analytical-meditation>

4. What are the Five Skandhas?

a. Skandhas: Aggregates, Heaps, Collections (Tibetan: *Phungpo*)

b. The Elements (*dhatu*)

c. The Psycho-Physical Constituents

d. Name and Form

e. All knowable conditioned things in the phenomenal world.

5. Enumeration of the Skandhas:

Sanskrit	English	Tibetan
rupa	Form; Materiality	zug
vedana	Feeling; Feeling-Tone; Sensation	sor wa
samjna	Discernment; Perception; Discrimination	du she
samskara	Mental Formations; Formations; Conceptions; Dispositions; Karmic Formations; Conditioning Factors; Predispositions	dub ye
vijnana	Consciousness; Empirical Consciousness; Cognition	namshe

From the Heart Sutra:

“Also at that time, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara looked upon the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.”

My Sources:

Abhidharmakosa (Library of Tibetan Classics 23) by Chim

Jampalyang translated by Ian James Coghlan

Abhidharmasamuccaya by Traleg Kyabgon

The Inner Science of Buddhist Practice: Vasubandhu's Summary of

the Five Heaps with Commentary by Sthiramati translated by

Artemus B. Engle

Gateway to Knowledge by Mipham Rinpoche

Glimpses of Abhidharma by Chogyam Trungpa

The Buddhist Psychology of Awakening by Steven Goodman

Entry on the skandhas from the *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*: “Of these five, only rūpa is material; the remaining four involve mentality and are collectively called “name” (*nama*), thus the compound “name-and-form” or “mentality-and-materiality” (*namarupa*). However classified, nowhere among the aggregates is there to be found a self (*atman*). Yet, through ignorance (*avidya* or *moha*), the mind habitually identifies one or another in this collection of the five aggregates with a self. This is the principal wrong view (*dristi*), called *satkayadristi*, that gives rise to suffering and continued existence in the cycle of rebirth (*samsara*).