

## Basis of the sense of self (*ātmavastu*)

[following *Abhidharma-samuccaya I.1*]

What makes things so?

Making them so makes things so.

--Chuang Tzu

- 1) **The occupant:** the one who **inhabits** the body. MATERIAL FORM  
*saparigrahadeh-ātmavastu*  
*sa*-(with); *pari*-(complete); *graha*-(grasping); *-deha* (the body)  
= the sense of being complete identified with or co-terminous with the body.
- 2) **The beneficiary:** the one who **experiences** pleasure and pain. FEELING  
*upabhog-ātmavastu* *upa* + √*bhuj* = to enjoy  
= the enjoyer, the recipient, the one to whom experience happens.
- 3) **The artiste:** the one who **expresses** herself or himself. PERCEPTION  
*abhilāp-ātmavastu* *abhi* + √*lap* = to prate, to talk much, to chatter  
= the narrator, the creator, the origin of creative expression
- 4) **The agent:** the one who **does** right and wrong acts. FORMATIONS  
*sarvadharmādharmābhisamskāra-ātmavastu*  
*sarva*-(all); *dharma*-(righteous); *adharmā*-(unrighteous); *-abhisamskāra* (constructions)  
= the do-er of the deed, the sense of originating action, “the one who..” acts freely.
- 5) **The essence:** the one who **consists** of that. CONSCIOUSNESS  
*tadāśray-ātmavastu*  
*tad*-(that); *ā* + √*śri* = resort, adhere, depend; *āśraya*=that upon which something depends  
= the sense of completely belonging to or consisting of one’s experience; “I am that which..is aware; that which..sees, hears, thinks, etc.”

As a response to these five bases, one forms a view of self, built around the primary assumption:

- 6) **The owner:** the one to whom it all belongs.  
*sakkāya-diṭṭhi* *sat*-(true, real, existing); *-kāya* (body, used figuratively);  
*-diṭṭhi* (view, opinion, concept) = the stance adopted towards all experience:  
“This is mine, this I am, this is my self.”  
[aka: I-maker (*ahaṅ-kāra*); mine-maker (*mama-kāra*); becoming a self (*atta-bhāva*)]

### This is the way leading to the origination of personality:

One regards [all experience] thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self.’

### This is the way leading to the cessation of personality:

One regards [all experience] thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’ (M 148)