

**AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE ON PHYSIOLOGY BASED ON THE  
PANCHAMAHABHUTAS****Dr. Ritu Rathore\***

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**ABSTRACT**

Ayurvedic physiology is deeply rooted in the concept of *Panchamahabhutas*—the five fundamental elements: *Prithvi* (Earth), *Ap/Jala* (Water), *Teja/Agni* (Fire), *Vayu* (Air), and *Akasha* (Space). These elements serve as the building blocks of the human body and regulate all structural and functional processes. This article explores how each *Mahabhuta* contributes to human physiology, how they combine to form *doshas*, *dhatu*s, and *srotas*, and how the *Panchamahabhuta* theory offers a holistic understanding of health, disease, and balance. It also analyzes how the *Panchamahabhutas* relate to biochemical processes, detailing their expression in the body and their role in sustaining health.

**KEYWORDS:** *Panchmahabutas*, Physiology, elements, human body, health.**INTRODUCTION**

According to Ayurveda human body and the universe both are made up of similar components. Central to this worldview is the theory of *Panchamahabhutas*, which provides a qualitative explanation of bodily structure, metabolic processes, movement, perception, and transformation. While modern physiology describes functions through cellular and biochemical mechanisms, the Ayurvedic Jalaproach emphasizes elemental qualities and their interactions leads to the formation of doshas which afterwards performs all the functions in the body. These principles also explains how harmony between these elements maintains the health and imbalance leads to disease.

**Understanding the *Panchamahabhutas* in Human Physiology****1. *Prithvi Mahabhuta* (Earth Element)****Role in the Body***Prithvi* provides firmness, stability, and structure.

It contributes to.

- Formation of solid tissues (bones, muscles, teeth, skin)
- Physical strength and endurance
- Structural integrity of organs

**Functional Significance**

Without *Prithvi*, the body would lack form and support. It represents the anabolic and growth-promoting aspects of physiology.

**2. *Ap/Jala Mahabhuta* (Water Element)****Role in the Body***Jala* governs fluidity, adhesion, and nourishment.

It is dominant in.

- Plasma, lymph, interstitial fluids
- Saliva, mucus, synovial fluid
- Moisture of skin and internal organs

**Functional Significance**

*Jala* maintains hydration, regulates temperature, facilitates biochemical reactions, and ensures lubrication in tissues. It supports nutrient transport and tissue nourishment.

**3. *Teja/Agni Mahabhuta* (Fire Element)****Role in the Body***Agni* is responsible for transformation and metabolism.

It influences.

- Digestive and metabolic fire (*Agni*)

- Enzymatic and hormonal activity
- Body temperature and metabolic rate
- Visual perception

#### Functional Significance

*Agni* represents the transformative force that drives digestion, assimilation, energy production, and biochemical reactions.

#### 4. Vayu Mahabhuta (Air Element)

##### Role in the Body

*Vayu* governs movement and dynamism.

It controls

- Breathing and circulation
- Nervous system impulses
- Movement of limbs, bowels, and thoughts
- Sensory and motor functions

#### Functional Significance

*Vayu* enables all forms of motion—voluntary and involuntary—making it essential for the continuity of bodily functions.

#### Elemental Dominance in the Dhatus

Dhatu	Dominant Mahabhuta	Physiological Significance
Rasa	Jala	Nourishment & hydration
Rakta	Agni	Oxygenation & vitality
Mamsa	Prithvi	Structure & strength
Meda	Jala + Prithvi	Lubrication & energy storage
Asthi	Prithvi + Vayu	Support & movement
Majja	Jala	Filling of spaces & neural nourishment
Shukra	Jala + Akasha	Reproduction & vitality

#### Panchamahabhutas and Srotas

Every channel in the body is governed by the *Mahabhutas*:

- *Akasha* provides space for flow.
- *Vayu* drives movement.
- *Jala* maintains fluidity.
- *Agni* regulates transformation.
- *Prithvi* gives structural boundaries.

Disturbance in any element affects *srotas* function, leading to disease.

#### Clinical Relevance of Panchamahabhuta Theory

Understanding the elemental basis of physiology helps in:

- Assessing an individual's constitution (*prakriti*)
- Diagnosing disease based on elemental imbalance
- Planning personalized diet and lifestyle interventions.
- Choosing herbs and therapies appropriate for the dominant element.
- Designing Panchakarma treatments to restore balance.

Examples

- Dryness, anxiety → ↑ *Vayu*

#### 5. Akasha Mahabhuta (Space Element)

##### Role in the Body

*Akasha* represents space and subtlety.

It is present in.

- Body cavities (mouth, ears, GI tract, thorax)
- Intercellular and intracellular spaces
- Neural pathways and sensory channels

#### Functional Significance

*Akasha* provides room for other elements to function and enables communication within the body.

#### Panchamahabhutas and the Doshas

The *doshas*—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*—emerge from specific combinations of the five elements:

- *Vata* = *Vayu* + *Akasha* (movement, communication)
- *Pitta* = *Agni* + *Jala* (transformation, metabolism)
- *Kapha* = *Jala* + *Prithvi* (structure, stability, lubrication).

This elemental combination gives each *dosha* its unique qualities and physiological roles.

- Acidity, inflammation → ↑ *Agni*
- Edema, lethargy → ↑ *Jala/Prithvi*

Thus, disease expression becomes an extension of elemental imbalance.

#### CONCLUSION

The *Panchamahabhuta* theory offers a profound, holistic lens to understand the human body. Its emphasis on elemental qualities—structure, fluidity, transformation, movement, and space—captures physiological complexity in a simple yet powerful way. By combining the *Panchamahabhuta* philosophy with modern principles, a complete and harmonious view of human physiology emerges. This union enriches our understanding of wellness and pathology, inspiring innovative practices in integrative medicine. Merging time-honored traditions with scientific inquiry allows Ayurveda to thrive as a relevant global healing system.