

Panchmahabhuta

The word panchamahabhuta is made up of three words: ‘pancha’, ‘maha’ and ‘bhuta’. ‘Pancha’ means five, ‘maha’ means great and ‘bhuta’ means that which exists. All the living and non-living objects in the universe are made up of panchamahabhuta..

Therefore, panchamahabhuta are the five fundamental elements responsible for creation of the universe, including humans. Each individual has a unique panchabhautik constitution. This constitution remains in state of equilibrium in health and any imbalance results in disease. It is crucial for healthcare provider to identify panchabhautik imbalance and should have the capability to restore equilibrium.

The word ‘bhuta’ is derived from “Bhu” dhatu(Sanskrit root) and “Kta”pratyaya(suffix). It means existence in the universe. That which can be perceived through the external sense organs is called Bhuta.

Five fundamental elements

The five fundamental elements are

1. [Akasha mahabhuta](#)
2. [Vayu mahabhuta](#)
3. [Agni mahabhuta](#)
4. [Jala mahabhuta](#)
5. [Prithvi mahabhuta](#)

Each of these elements possesses inherent physical properties.

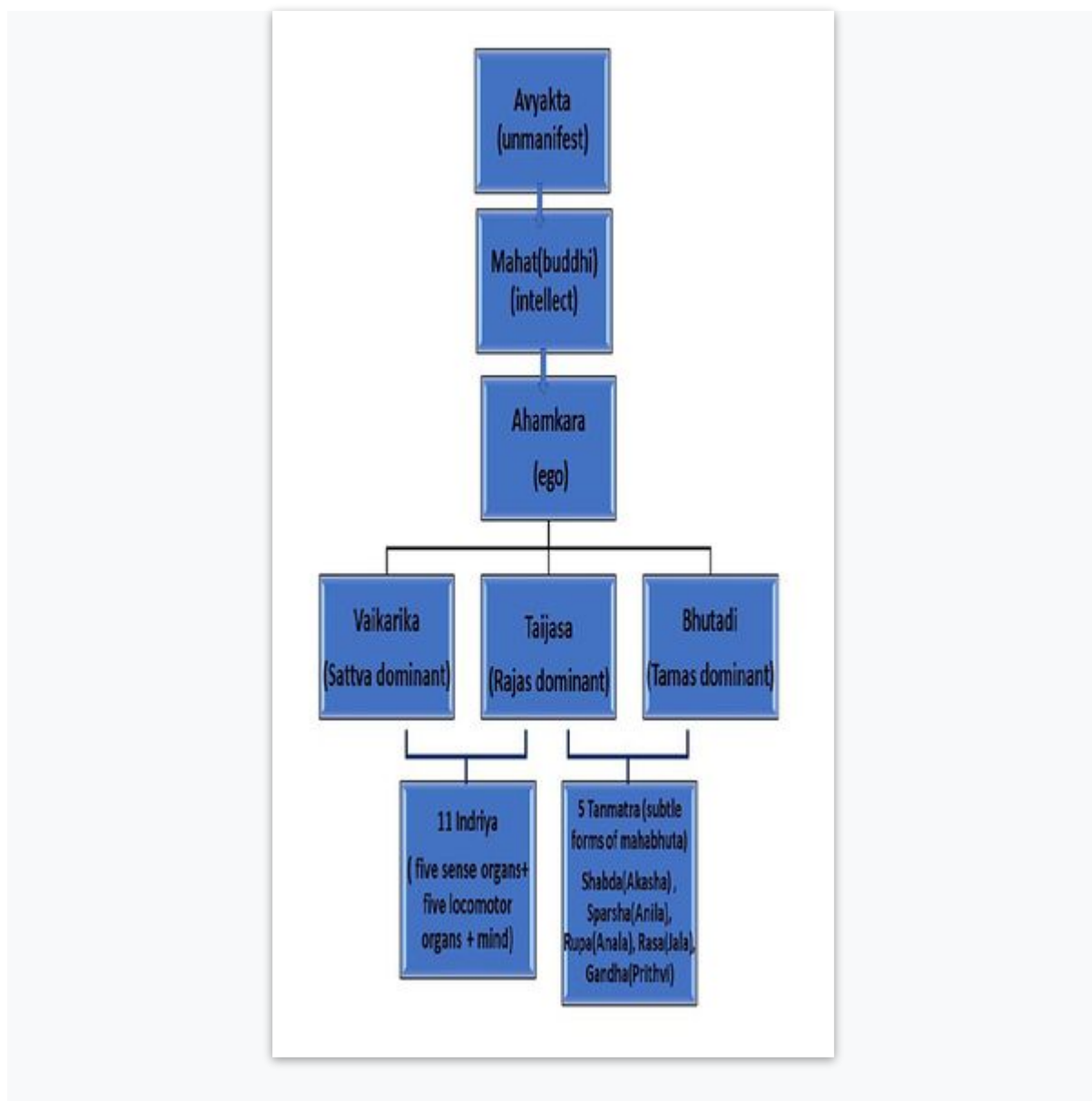
Importance of panchamahabhuta

- Panchamahabhuta are important factors in the creation of the universe. They evolve from the union of tejas (sattva dominant) and bhutadi (tamas dominant) ahamkara. The following diagram shows the evolution and development of the universe.

Evolution of panchamahabhuta

The mahabhuta are evolved from dominance of these specific fundamental constituents of universe as below.

- **Akasha:** Sattva dominant
- **Vayu:** Rajas dominant
- **Agni:** Sattva and Rajas dominant
- **jala:** Sattva and Tamas dominant
- **Prithvi:** Tamas dominant



Relation with human being

The **purusha** holistic human being is formed by unification of panchamahabhuta and consciousness (chetana).

Properties of panchamahabhuta

Each mahabhuta has dominant inherent functions related to the sense organs. The mahabhuta can perceive enhanced other senses due to addition of subtle elements of other mahabhuta as given below

Mahabhuta	Dominant inherent function	Additional general functions due to fundamental composition
Akasha	Sound(shabda)	-
Vayu	Touch (sparsa)	Sound(shabda)
Agni	Vision(rupa)	Sound(shabda), Touch (sparsa)
Jala	Taste (rasa)	Sound(shabda), Touch (sparsa), Vision(rupa)
Prithvi	Smell (Gandha)	Sound(shabda), Touch (sparsa), Vision(rupa), Taste (rasa)

The mahabhuta provide abode for corresponding sense organs to perform their sensory functions. These sense organs are tools to know panchabhautik matter in the universe.

Qualities of panchamahabhuta

Each mahabhuta can be assessed by following characteristic feature

Mahabhuta	Qualities	functions
Akasha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free flow/unobstructability • emptiness • Mruduta (Softness) • Laghuta (Lightness) • Sukshmata (Minuteness) • Vishad (clarity) • Vyavayi (Spreads quickly then assimilated) • Viviktata (porosity) • Avyakta Rasa., 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide smoothness • Provide lightness • Provide hollowness

Vayu	<p>Mobility (Chalatva),</p> <p>Dry (Ruksh)</p> <p>Minute (Suksma)</p> <p>Light (Laghu)</p> <p>Cold(Shita)</p> <p>Touch(sparsh)</p> <p>Quick spreading(Vikasi)</p>	<p>Provide dryness</p> <p>Provide lightness</p> <p>Provide clarity</p> <p>Provide fatigue</p> <p>Promotes and monitors different activities</p>
Agni	<p>Heat (Ushna)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharp (Teekshna) - Minute (Sukshma) - Light (Laghu) - Dry (Ruksha) - Clear (Vishad) 	<p>Burning sensation</p> <p>Digestion and metabolism</p> <p>Provides glow and glitters</p> <p>Provide complexion</p> <p>Provides good colours.</p>
Jala	<p>Liquidity (Dravatva)</p> <p>Oiliness (Singandh)</p> <p>Heavy (Guru)</p> <p>Slow (Manda)</p> <p>Cold (Sheeta)</p> <p>Flow (Shara)</p> <p>Dense (Sandra)</p> <p>Soft(Mrudu)</p> <p>Sticky(Pichial)</p>	<p>Moistness, and wetness</p> <p>Provide lubrications</p> <p>Binds the cell and tissue with each other</p> <p>Provide smoothness</p> <p>Provide satisfaction</p> <p>Produces discharge in and from of srotas</p>

Prithvi	Smell(gandha)	Nourshiment of tissues
	Roughness (Kharatva)	Provides heaviness
	Heavy(guru)	Provides stability
	Hard (kathin)	Provides hardness
	Clear(vishad)	
	Slow(manda)	
	Dense (Sandra)	
	thick(sthula)	
stable(sthira)		

Above mentioned criteria are applied to assess fundamental composition of any element. The signs of increase or decrease of these features in body is observed and applied in diagnosis and therapeutics. For example, if the roughness is increased, then increase in **prithvi** mahabhuta is known.

panchmahabhuta	Body components derived from the bhutta
Akasha	SOUND AUDITORY SYSTEM DIVISION OF CELLS CHANNELS ORIFICES
VAYU	SKIN CIRCULATION OR MOVEMENT FORMATION AND TRANSPORT RESPIRATION
AGNI	SIGHT OPHTHALMIC APPARAT(EYE) METABOLIC ENZYMES
JALA	TONGUE BLOOD (RAKAT) REPRODUCTORY FLUID FAT (MEDA) SWEAT(Sweda) URINE(Mutra)

PRUTHVI	OLFACTORY SYSTEM Asthi (BONES) Kesh (HAIR) Nakha (NAIL) Mamsa (MUSCLE)
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Lok pursha principle

as now we know

“yatha pinde tatha brhamnde “

This verse of Charak Code explains to us that all that is in this universe is in our body too. This physical world is made of five greats-sky, air, fire, water and earth. Similarly, our body is also made of these five great ghosts. When the creature dies, then these five greats are found in their elements.

The quality of air is mobility. Our body is also moving like the air. It comes and goes.

The quality of fire is heat. The heat like fire is in a man, only then he is alive. If his heat ends, he leaves this world.

Water quality is fluidity. Humidity is just like water. Only then because of the virtues of kindness, affection, compassion, he gets shocked to hear the sorrows of others.

The quality of the earth is solidification. Like the earth, man is also solid, otherwise he cannot stand, he will keep swinging in the air. Like earth, there are many types of minerals and salts calcium, potassium, phosphorus, sodium, iron, copper, sulphur etc. are present in the body.

The universe and the body have similarity but the difference is only of thick and subtle. All the special statuses in this world are in human beings. In other words, there is similarity between world or nature and man.

In this way, all the qualities of the five Mahabhuta are in the human. Which can be said in other words that what is in this universe is also in this body.

For more reference purpose see charak verse

The purusha (man/individual)-an epitome/ miniature of the *loka* (universe)

‘पुरुषोऽयं लोकसम्मितः’ इत्युवाच भगवान् पुनर्वसुरात्रेयः । यावन्तो हि लोके (मूर्तिमन्तो)
भावविशेषास्तावन्तः पुरुषे, यावन्तः पुरुषे तावन्तो लोके; इत्येवंवादिनं भगवन्तमात्रेयमग्निवेश उवाच-
नैतावता वाक्येनोक्तं वाक्यार्थमवगाहामहे, भगवता बुद्ध्या भूयस्तरमतोऽनुव्याख्यायमानं शुश्रूषामह
इति । ।३। ।

Lord Punarvasu Atreya said that the *purusha* is similar to the *loka*. Whatever specific *murtimantabhava* (embodiments) are present in the *loka*, the same are in the *purusha*. Similarly, whatever is in *purusha*, is also in the *loka*. Having listened thus to Lord Atreya, Agnivesha said, "We are unable to grasp the idea contained in this aphoristic statement, hence we want to hear a more detailed exposition from you, O Lord!" [3]

Expand

तमुवाच भगवानात्रेयः- अपरिसङ्ख्येया लोकावयवविशेषाः, पुरुषावयवविशेषा
अप्यपरिसङ्ख्येयाः; तेषां यथास्थूलंकतिचिद्भावान् सामान्यमभिप्रेत्योदाहरिष्यामः, तानेकमना
निबोध सम्यगुपवर्ण्यमानानग्निवेश!। षड्धातवः समुदिताः ‘लोक’ इति शब्दं लभन्ते; तद्यथा-
पृथिव्यापस्तेजो वायुराकाशं ब्रह्म चाव्यक्तमिति, एत एव चषड्धातवः समुदिताः ‘पुरुष’ इति
शब्दं लभन्ते॥४॥

Lord Atreya replied, "Innumerable are the specific parts (different unit constituents) of the *loka* and so are innumerable the specific parts (unit constituents) of a *purusha*. I will explain (to you) some of the gross entities common (to the *loka* and *purusha*) because it is very difficult to mention all of them, but the rest you understand yourself by inference.

Attentively, listen to me O Agnivesha! The aggregate (collective combination) of the six *dhatu*s, viz. *prithvi*, *apa*, *tejas*, *vayu*, *akasha* and unmanifested *Brahman* is termed as *loka* (universe) and (similarly these) six constituents also make the *purusha*. [3-4]

Identity of *avayava* /parts/ factors of *samyatva* (similarity) in *purusha* (man) with those of *loka* (universe)

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तस्य पुरुषस्य पृथिवी मूर्तिः, आपः क्लेदः, तेजोऽभिसन्तापः, वायुः प्राणः, वियत् सुषिराणि,
ब्रह्म अन्तरात्मा। यथा खलु ब्राह्मी विभूतिर्लोके तथा पुरुषेऽप्यान्तरात्मिकी विभूतिः, ब्रह्मणो
विभूतिर्लोके प्रजापतिरन्तरात्मनो विभूतिः पुरुषेऽसत्त्वं, यस्त्विन्द्रो लोके स पुरुषेऽहङ्कारः,
आदित्यस्त्वादानं, रुद्रो रोषः, सोमः प्रसादः, वसवः सुखम्, अश्विनौ कान्तिः, मरुदुत्साहः,
विश्वेदेवाः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि सर्वेन्द्रियार्थाश्च, तमो मोहः, ज्योतिर्ज्ञानं, यथा लोकस्य सर्गादिस्तथा
पुरुषस्य गर्भाधानं, यथा कृतयुगमेवं बाल्यं, यथा त्रेता तथा यौवनं, यथा द्वापरस्तथा स्थाविर्यं,
यथा कलिरेवमातुर्यं, यथा युगान्तस्तथामरणमिति। एवमेतेनानुमानेनानुक्तानामपि
लोकपुरुषयोरवयवविशेषाणामग्निवेश! सामान्यं विद्यादिति॥५॥

In the person, *prithvi*, embodiments, *tejas*, *vayu*, *akasha* and *Brahman* are represented in the form of embodiments, moisture, heat, vital breath, space and the Self (*atman*) respectively. As is the magnificence of the *Brahman*, the super-consciousness, in the universe so is that of the *atman* in the person. While in the universe, the splendour of the *Brahman* is personified by Prajapati, the *atman* in the *purusha* is represented by the mind. Similarly, Indra in the universe is represented by ego in the person, Aditya (the sun) is represented in the processes that consume nutrients, Rudra in agitation, Soma (the moon) in cheerfulness, Vasu in happiness, Marut (the air) in enthusiasm, Ashwin in luster, Vishvadeva in all sense organs and their objects, darkness in ignorance, light in knowledge. just as there is act of creation in the universe, so also in man there is conception. Corresponding to *krita yuga* (the first age of universe), there is childhood. Corresponding to *treta yuga* (the second age), is youth. Corresponding to *dwapara yuga* (the third age), there is old age. Corresponding to *kali yuga* (the last age), is infirmity or diseases. Thus, corresponding to the end of world cycle, is death in man. Thus, O Agnivesha, analogies between various features and phenomena could be drawn from the macrocosm to understand the microcosm (and vice versa). [5]

Universal phenomena	Corresponding phenomena in man
1. brahama	1 atma
2 prajapati	2 mind
3. Indra	3. Ahankara(ego)
4. Aditya	4. Accumulation
5. Rudra	5. anger
6. Soms (Moon)	6. pleasure
7. Vasus	7. happiness
8. The Asvins	8. Complexion
9. Marut	9. enthusiasm.
10. visvdeva	10. all the senses and objects of senses. UNGLASS
11. Tamas (darkness)	11. ignorance.
12. Jyoti (light)	12. knowledge.
13. beginning of creation	13. impregnation.

14. Krut age	14. childhood.
15. Treta age	15. Youth.
16. Dvapara age	16. middle age.
17. Kali age	17. old age. . ,
18. Deluge	18. death