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THE FIVE GREAT ELEMENTS (PANCHMAHABHUTAS)

Dear student, in the last lesson you've learned Vedic opinion about the creation. In this lesson you will be able to get general information about the five great elements. The creation has originated from these five great elements. On this subject, you can also talk to your parents, grandparents or any elder member of the family. Earth, water, fire, air and sky are called the five great elements.



OBJECTIVES you will be able to:

- get to know about the five great elements ;
- to understand the power (existence) of the great elements.

2.1 THE FIVE GREAT ELEMENTS (PANCHMAHABHUTAS): EARTH AND NATURE

The word bhut is formed by the sum of the kt affixes in bhu sattayam (ground metal). Bhut means one who has power (existence) or one who exists. Bhut are not the work of any other

person, that is, there is no reason for their origin, but the existence of everything else as a factor cause of the great elements.

According to Maharishi Charak, these great elements are very small and difficult to identify by the senses.

अर्थाः शब्दादयो ज्ञेया गोचरा विषमा गुणाः

(Charak shastra 1/32)

The great elements are called mahabhuta -

“महन्ति भूतानि महाभूतानि”

Because of their importance or grossness, they are known as mahabhuta. The body and non living substances of all living beings are made from them.

इह हि द्रवयं पञ्चमहाभूतात्मकम्

These are the five great elements:

1. Sky
2. Air
3. Fire
4. Water
5. Earth

Sky- The sky has been considered to be eternal. One of the properties of the sky is- shabd. Just as the sky is eternal, so is its property - "shabd" is also everlasting.



Fig. 2.1 Sky



Notes



Wind- The origin of air is assumed to be from the sky. “आकाशद्वायुः” air is also considered to be eternal. The air has its own property of touch and the quality of the sky shabd. In this way the two properties of air - touch and word are everlasting.



Fig. 2.2 Wind

Fire- fire is also called tej. The origin of fire is believed to be from air.

Fire is considered to be “वायोराग्नि”. Fire has three properties of



Fig. 2.3 Fire

shabd, touch and form. All three qualities are eternal. Such are the three properties of fire.

Aap- aap is called water. The origin of water is assumed to be from aap - "अग्रेरापः". aap is considered to be everlasting.



Notes



Fig. 2.4 Water

Water has shabd, touch, form and taste properties. All four properties are eternal.

Earth- Earth is believed to originate from water. Amazing earth. shabd, touch, form, taste, smell are the five properties of earth.



Fig. 2.5 Earth



Notes

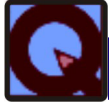
Apart from the above basic essential properties, there are some other characteristics in these mahabhutas which we can feel through our senses, for example in the earth, water, light, air respectively, we can infer the characteristics of smell, liquidity, consistency etc. Similarly, we can see the experience of resistance in the sky.

The Five Great Elements	Properties
Sky	shabd
Air	shabd, touch
fire (tej)	shabd, touch, form
aap (water)	shabd, touch, form, taste
Earth	shabd, touch, form, taste, smell

The manifestations of Sattva, Rajas, Tamas qualities are described in the five great elements. As per the nature of their qualities, the predominance of sattva quality in the sky, rajo quality in air, sattva and rajo quality in fire, sattva and Tamas qualities in aap (water) and tamas quality in the earth can be seen.

Five great elements	Predominance of sattva, rajas, tamas
Sky	Sattva predominance
Wind	Rajas predominance
fire	Sattva + Rajas predominance
aap	Sattva + Tamas predominance
Earth	tamas predominance

The entire universe is created by these five elements.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.1

1. "Bhu Sattayam" - By which affix is the word bhut formed in the ground metal?
2. How many great elements are there?
3. Is the sky temporary or eternal?
4. What is the quality of the sky?
5. The origin of air is considered from which great element?
6. What are the properties of air?
7. Write down the properties of fire ?
8. How many properties does aap (water) have?
9. The properties of the great elements are continual or impermanent?
10. Write the properties of the Earth.



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

- The five great elements- Water, fire, air, sky and earth.
- The five great elements and their properties are continual.
- The creation of the universe is made from these five elements.



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Write the names and properties of the five great elements?
2. Write the predominance of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas in the five elements.



Notes



Notes



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

2.1

1. kt affix
2. five
3. Continually
4. shabd property
5. Sky
6. shabd and Touch
7. shabd, Touch and Form
8. Four
9. Continuous
10. shabd, touch, form, taste and smell

