

RUPA - The Four Great Elements

Intuitive Experiential Qualities of Materiality

Earth — is the element of extension, giving the qualities of hard- ness and solidity to material things.



* The feeling of solidity in the body — the physical hardness — is the earth element. Feel the solidity of the ground we sit on and walk on. Earth has the quality of supporting by offering resistance. In water there is a supporting solidity when we swim and similarly in the air — consider a sail or a propeller. The nature of earth is to receive, to allow beings or vegetation to rest on it. It receives us all.

Internal earth elements include head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bone, organs, intestinal material, etc

Water — is the element of cohesion which holds things together.



* Water element flows forth. In rivers and streams and the flowing of blood and saliva in the body. Water gathers things together and strengthens them by holding them together. Powder paint will not stick to paper until it is bound by water; cement is another example. This gathering together gives it its cleansing properties, binding impurities together and washing them away.

Internal water elements include bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, nasal mucus, urine, semen, etc.

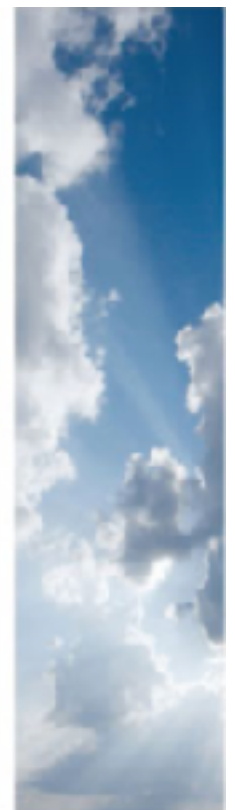
Fire — is the element of heat — warmth or coldness — of matter. The quality of



* We can feel temperature — fire element — in ourselves whenever we turn our attention to the body. It is warm or cold. Fire element is in all living things and in all matter in the various degrees of heat. It has the quality of causing change through maturing, e.g. plants grow and as the heat increases with the change in season, the plants' growth also changes. They mature and flower, change to fruit and seed, wither and die. We can also feel this warmth during digestion as the food we have eaten is transformed inside us.

Internal fire elements include those bodily mechanisms that produce physical warmth, ageing, digestion, etc.

Air — is the element of distension and movement of matter.



* There is air going in and out of us as we breathe. It can be felt as distension of the lungs when we breathe in, like a balloon becoming distended when it is blown up and full.

Also, it has the quality of causing movement — this can be seen again with the breath or a balloon, and especially when the leaves shimmer in a light breeze, or in the sail of a boat when it fills. It is said to be manifest by way of bringing forth or supporting through movement.

Internal air elements includes air associated with the pulmonary system (for example, for breathing), the intestinal system ("winds in the belly and bowels"),