

Philosophy of Ayurveda



Beshara School, Chisholme
House

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Aims of lecture



- To give a general introduction to Ayurveda including
- Historical & philosophical background
- Approach to health
- Key concepts of 5 elements & 3 doshas

What is Ayurveda & where does it come from?

- 5,000 yr old medical system from India
- roots ancient, from time of the Vedas
- Relation to yoga
- influenced medicine in Tibet, China, Persia, Greece, Arabia and now coming to west

What are the Vedas?



- Vedas – original sacred scriptures from India.
- Revealed to Himalayan rishis in form of sanskrit mantras.
- Said to manifest the wisdom of the cosmic mind , the vibrations of the Divine Word
- Outwardly concerned with rituals and sacrificial rites to the gods – symbolic language

6 Darshanas – schools of Vedic Philosophy

1. Nyaya – **Logical school** – Gautama
2. Vaisheshika – **Atomic school** – Kanada
3. Samkhya – **Cosmic principle school** – Kapila
4. Yoga – **yoga school** – Hiranyagarbha
5. Purva mimamsa – **ritualistic school** – Jaimini
6. Uttara Mimamsa/Vedanta – **Theological or Metaphysical school** – Badarayana

Schools of Vedanta



- a) Advaita - non dualistic Vedanta. Shankara 7th Aimed mainly at paramatman (the supreme soul) and Brahman (the Absolute). Emphasizes the yoga of knowledge
- b) Dvaita dualistic Vedanta. Concerned with inquiry into the nature of God and our relationship with Him. Emphasizes devotion.
- c) qualified non-dualist Visishtadvaita school of Ramanuja (12th century). Krishnamacharya was of this line.

Variety of beliefs within Vedic philosophy



- Vedic teachings contain teachings which resembles theism, emphasizing the single creator of the universe
- Other teachings resemble pantheism
- Other teachings are monistic, emphasizing one reality or absolute called Brahman meaning 'beyond God, the soul or the universe'
- Many teachings combine reconcile or find a place for each view

Ayurveda as a sister science to yoga



- Definition of yoga. From sanskrit yuj – yoke . Union . Yoga as a state of being
- Yoga as a path to that state of being
- Ayurveda and yoga complementary vedic sciences.

5 primary yogic paths



- Jnana yoga –inner knowledge and insight
- Bhakti yoga –devotion and divine love
- Karma yoga – through selfless work & sacred ritual
- Raja (royal) yoga – Yoga Sutras of Patanjali emphasize meditation and the mind
- Hatha yoga (of technique) –a combination of asana, pranayama, mantra & meditation

Historical background



Dhanvantari of Varanasi



Classical texts of Ayurveda



- **Charaka samhita.** 300BC –Internal medicine
- **Sushruta samhita** - surgical school.
- **Ashtanga Hridayam.** 500AD 3rd of great classical texts by Vagbhatta of Sindh

Charaka



500BC to present day



- *Classical period* 500BC – 1000AD
- Spread through India as part of classical culture. Taken up by Buddhist, Jain religions. Reached as far west as Greece and east to SE Asia.
- *Medieval period* – invaders from Central Asia conquered India
- 1750-1947 British rule in India
- *Modern period*

What does the word Ayurveda mean?

- Ayur – life (ayus), longevity.
- Veda – science, knowledge.

Ayur: the 4 aspects of life

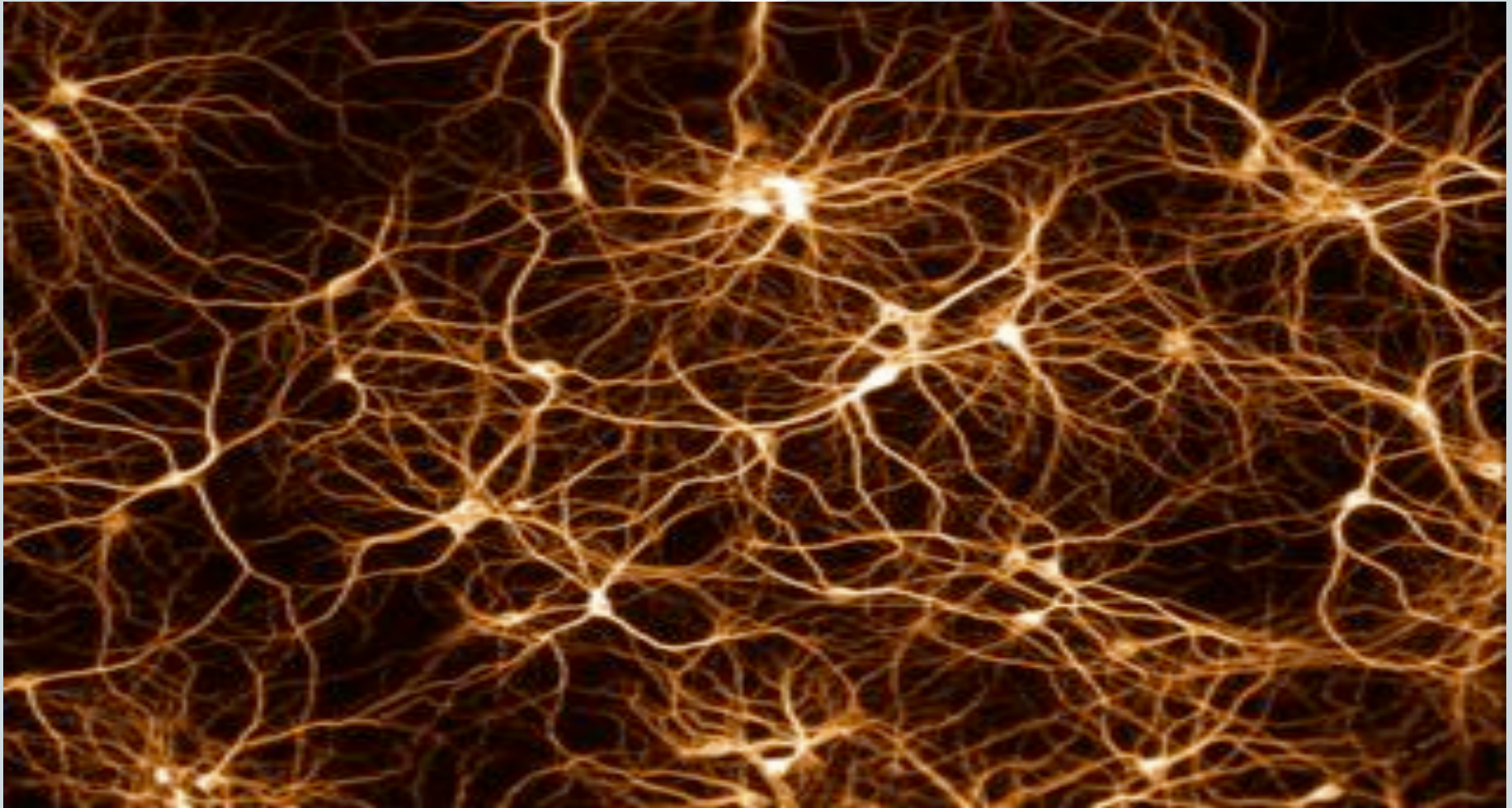


- Life is the intelligent coordination of
Soul, inner being (jiva atma/purusha)
+ mind (sattva),
+ senses (indriyas),
+ physical body (sharira)
with the totality of life.

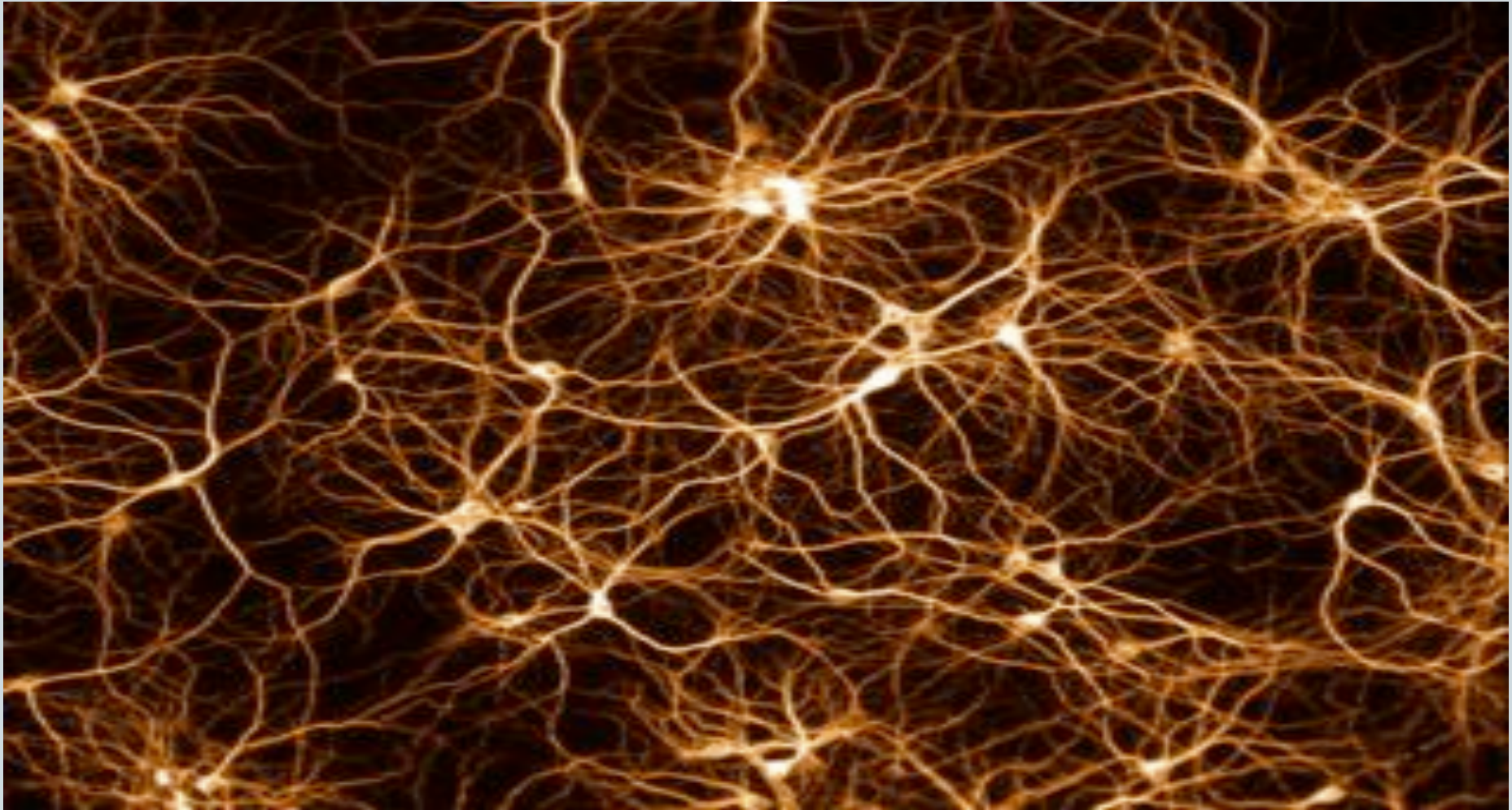
Ayurveda's view of health

- Ayurveda is a science of living that encompasses the whole of life, physical, mental and spiritual
- It relates the life of the individual to that of nature and the entire universe.
- creates a way of life in harmony both with world of nature & our higher self

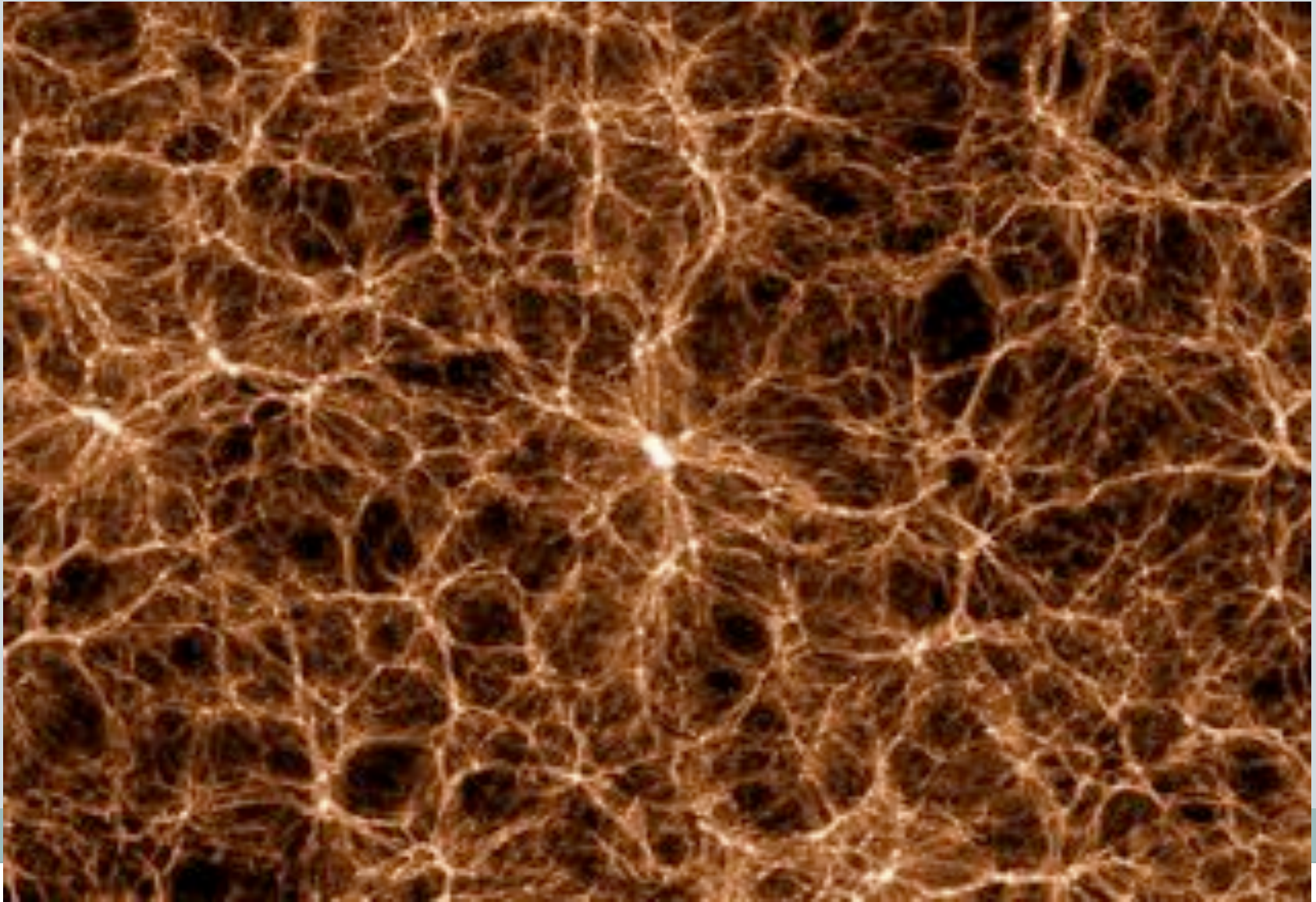
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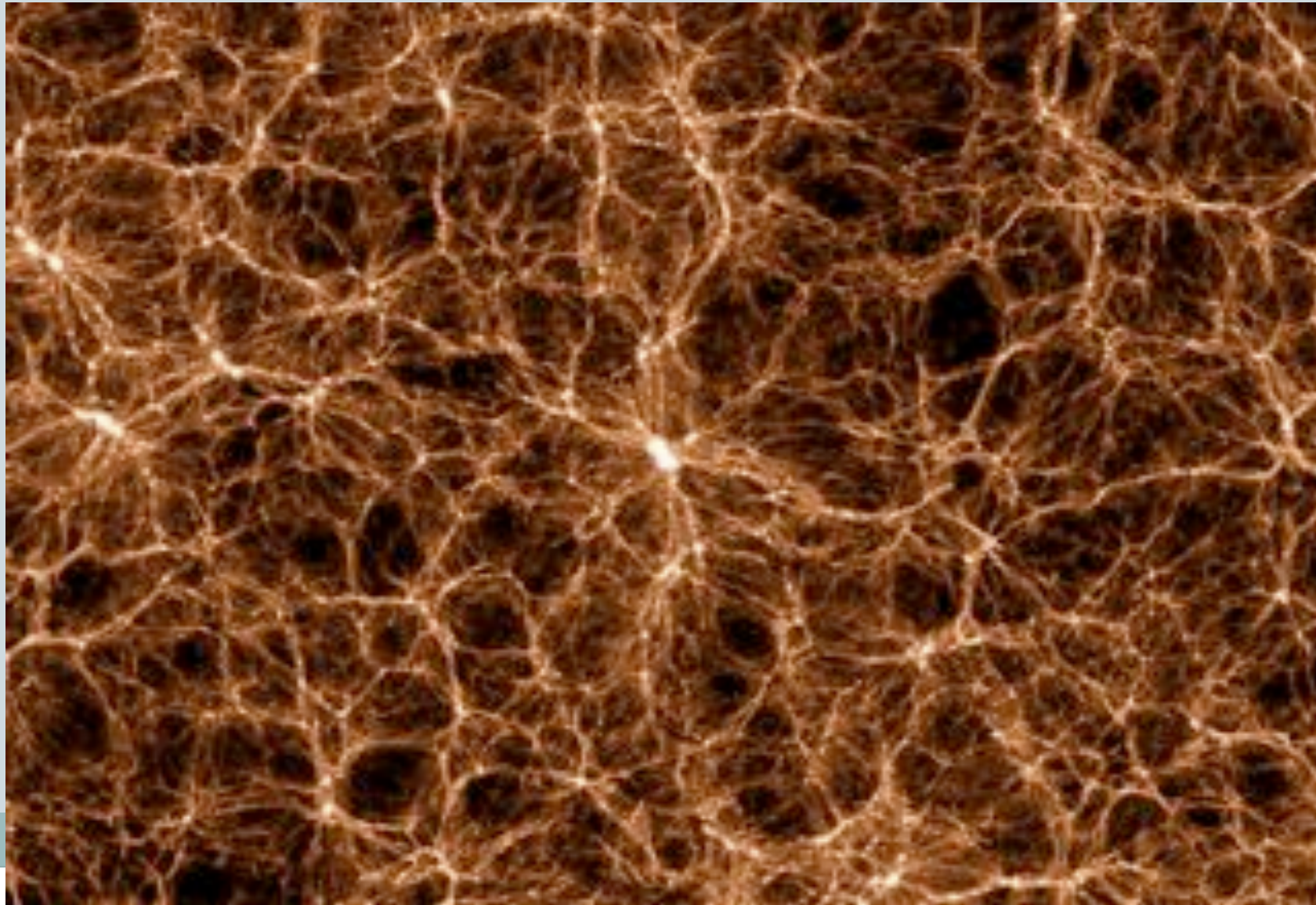
Structure of the brain: neurons and synapses 2mm across



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Structure of the Universe, 1 billion light years across.
Each bright pixel is a galaxy. (Max Planck Institute)



What is the aim of Ayurveda?



To provide a state of optimal health for 4 goals of life

- kama
- artava
- dharma
- moksha

What is the Ayurvedic approach?



- Prevention of disease.
- Find the *cause*

What is the Ayurvedic approach contd....?



- Treat the individual person
- Determine your unique constitution or metabolic type
- Learn to take responsibility for your own health

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What are the methods of Ayurveda?



- nutrition
- lifestyle
- herbs

Philosophical/cosmological background to Ayurveda



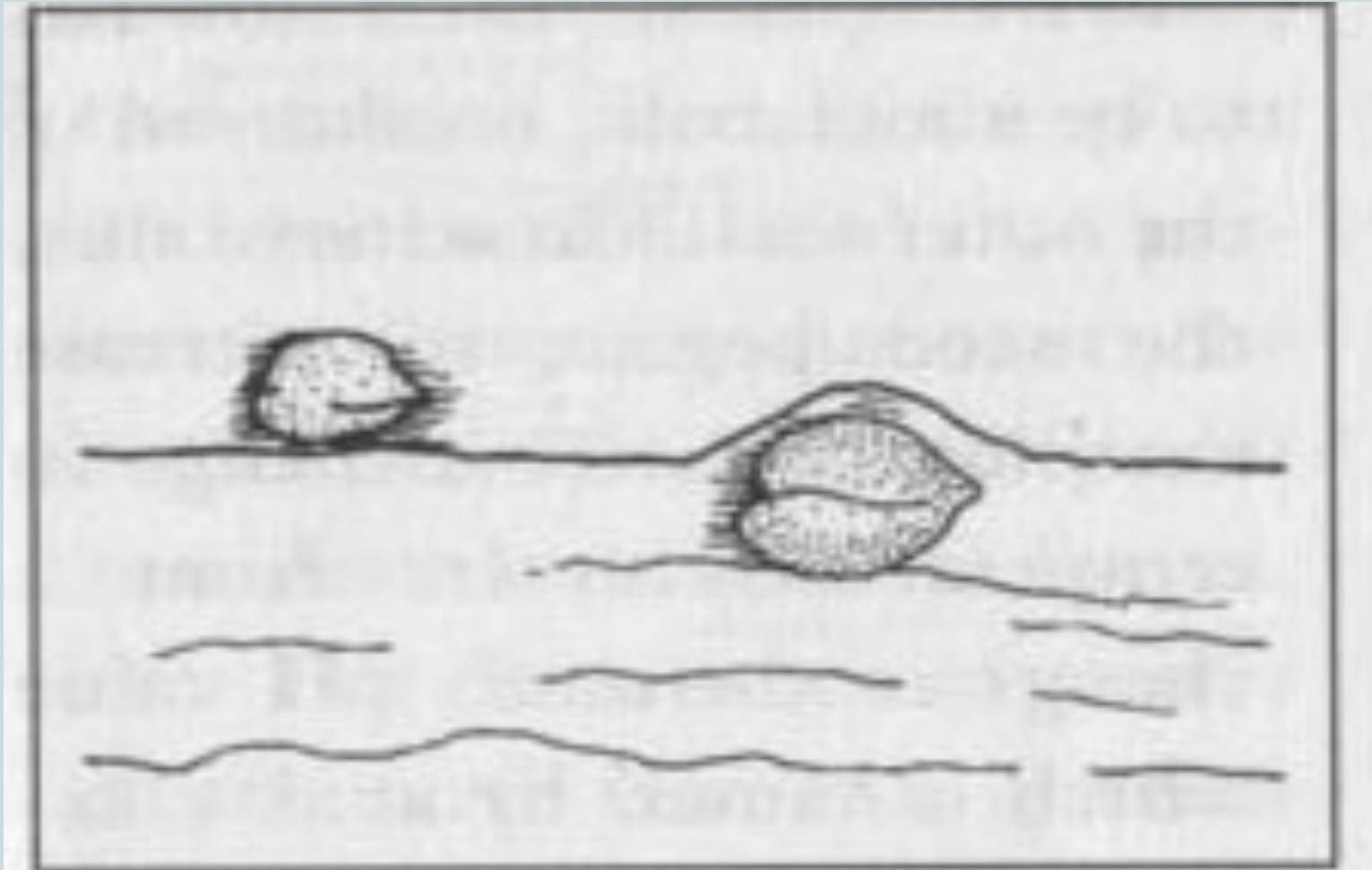
- The devolution of consciousness into the myriad forms of the material world is explained in *Samkhya* philosophy

Panchamahabhuta The 5 'elements' (states/ categories of matter)



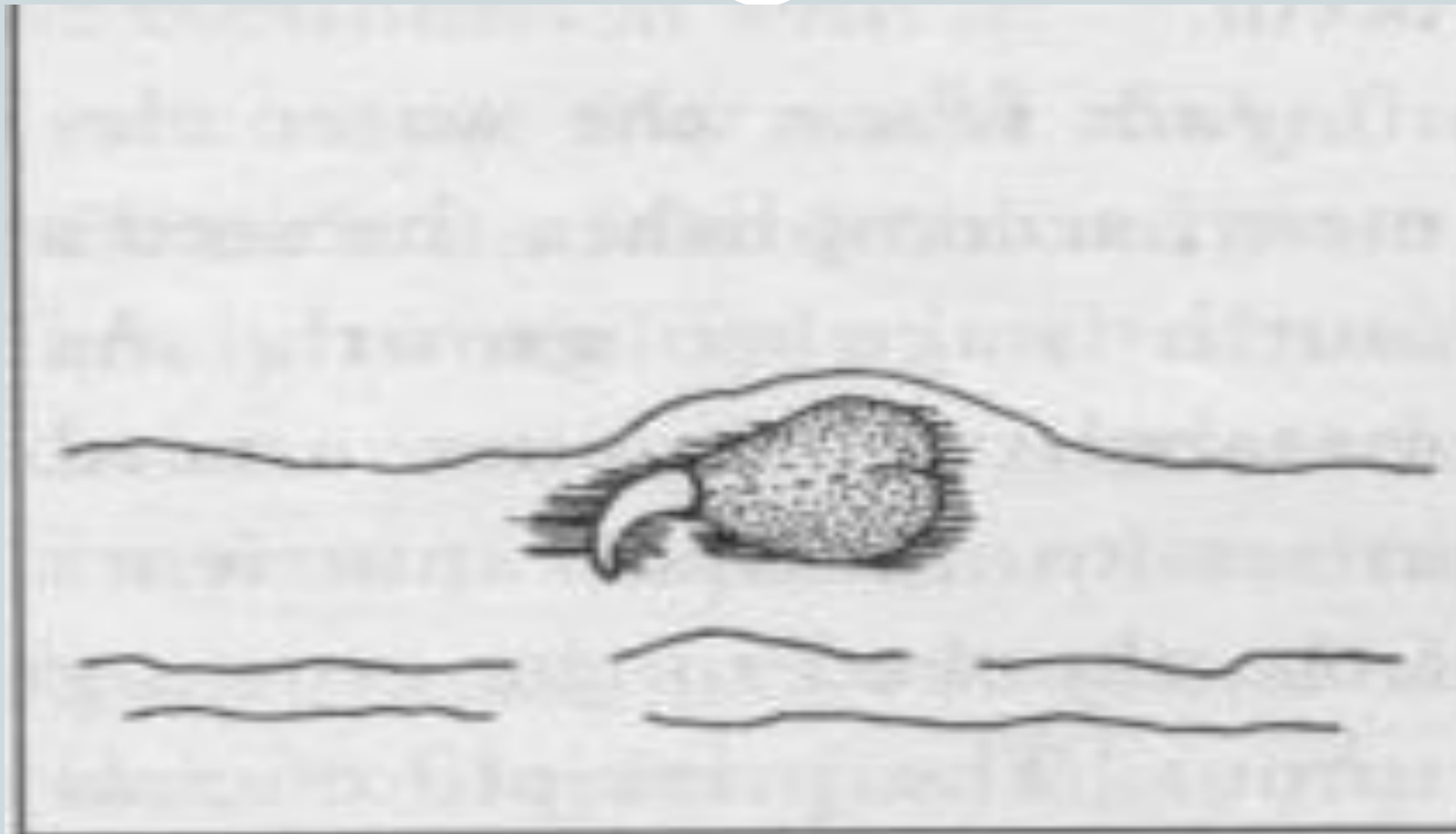
- underlying organising principles of the physical creation that govern how nature functions
- Space – air – fire –water– earth
- Sequential unfoldment of bhutas from most subtle to most material

1. Seed starts to expand in all directions



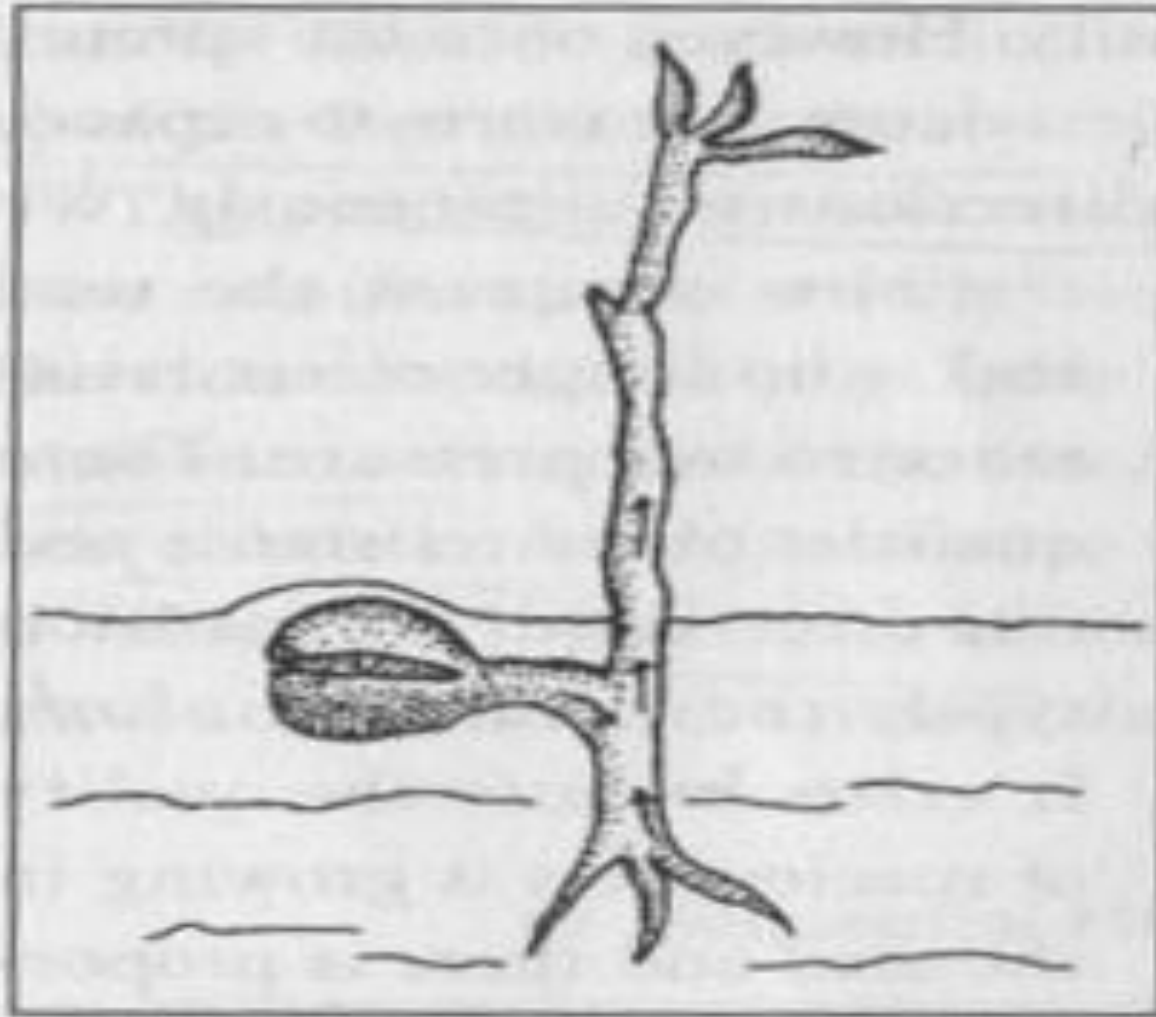
Seed in its *Akash* manifestation

2. Movement of expansion becomes uni – directional



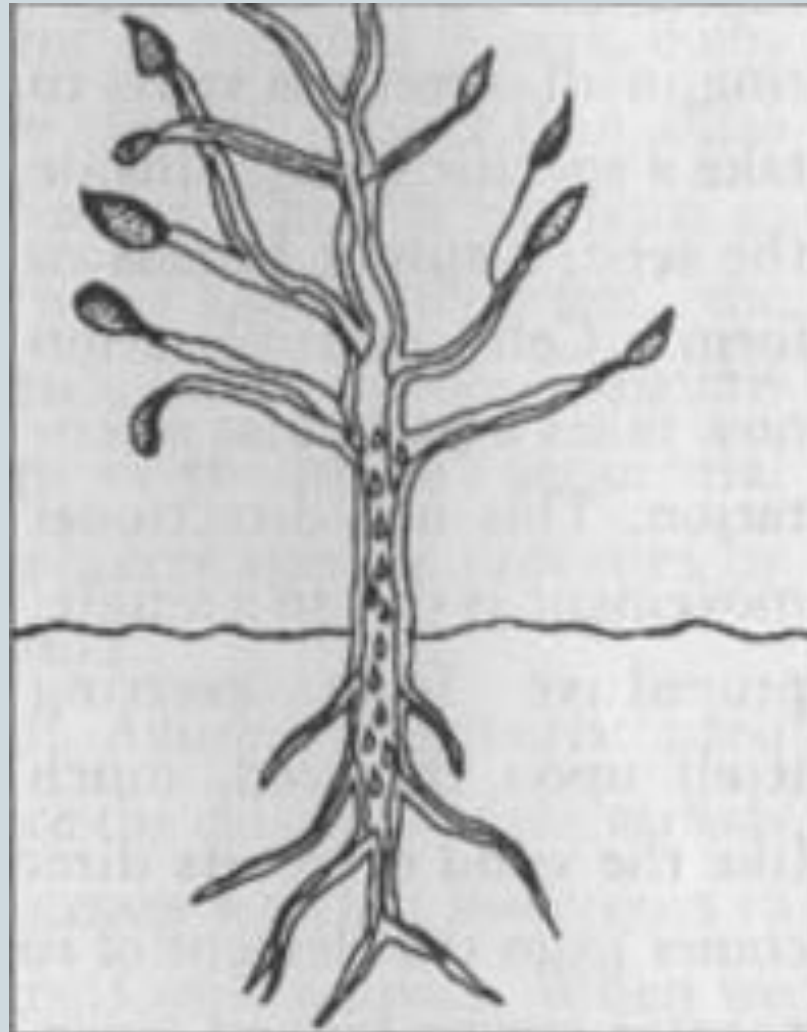
Seed in its *Vayn* manifestation

3. Increase in temperature, metabolic change



Seed in its *Agni* manifestation

4. Water (sap) carries nutrients to growing sprout



Seed in its *Jala* manifestation)

5. Plant acquires shape and structure



Seed in its *Pritivi* manifestation

Space (akash)



- Most subtle element
- **Non resistance** - omni directional expansion
- Provides matrix for other bhutas to manifest
- **Corresponding Sense = Sound.** The ear is corresponding sense organ

Air/wind (vayu)



- Governs **movement** and direction
- Drying quality, separates & disintegrates
- Corresponding sense = **Touch**. **Skin** is corresponding organ

Fire (agni)



- manifests as heat and light
- causes all **conversion and transformation** in nature
- corresponding sense = **sight**. Sense organ is the eye

Water (jala)



- Governs **liquidity, cohesion** and **growth**
- Protects and lubricates
- Corresponding sense = **Taste**. Sense organ is the **tongue**

Earth- (prithvi)



- Most gross of elements. Gives **solidity**
- governs shape and **structure**
- Corresponding sense = **smell**. Sense organ is the **nose**.

The 3 doshas – vata, pitta, kapha



- The doshas are the 5 elements in the body
- Each dosha comprised of 2 elements.
- Vata – Space & air
- Pitta – fire & water
- Kapha – water & earth
- Interrelationship of doshas determines our individual constitution
 - a) our metabolic functioning
 - b) our psychological profile too.

20 gunas (attributes)



- Cold/Hot

Heavy/Light

- Wet/Dry

Gross/Subtle

- Static/Mobile

Dense/Flowing

- Dull/ Sharp

Soft/Hard

- Smooth/Rough

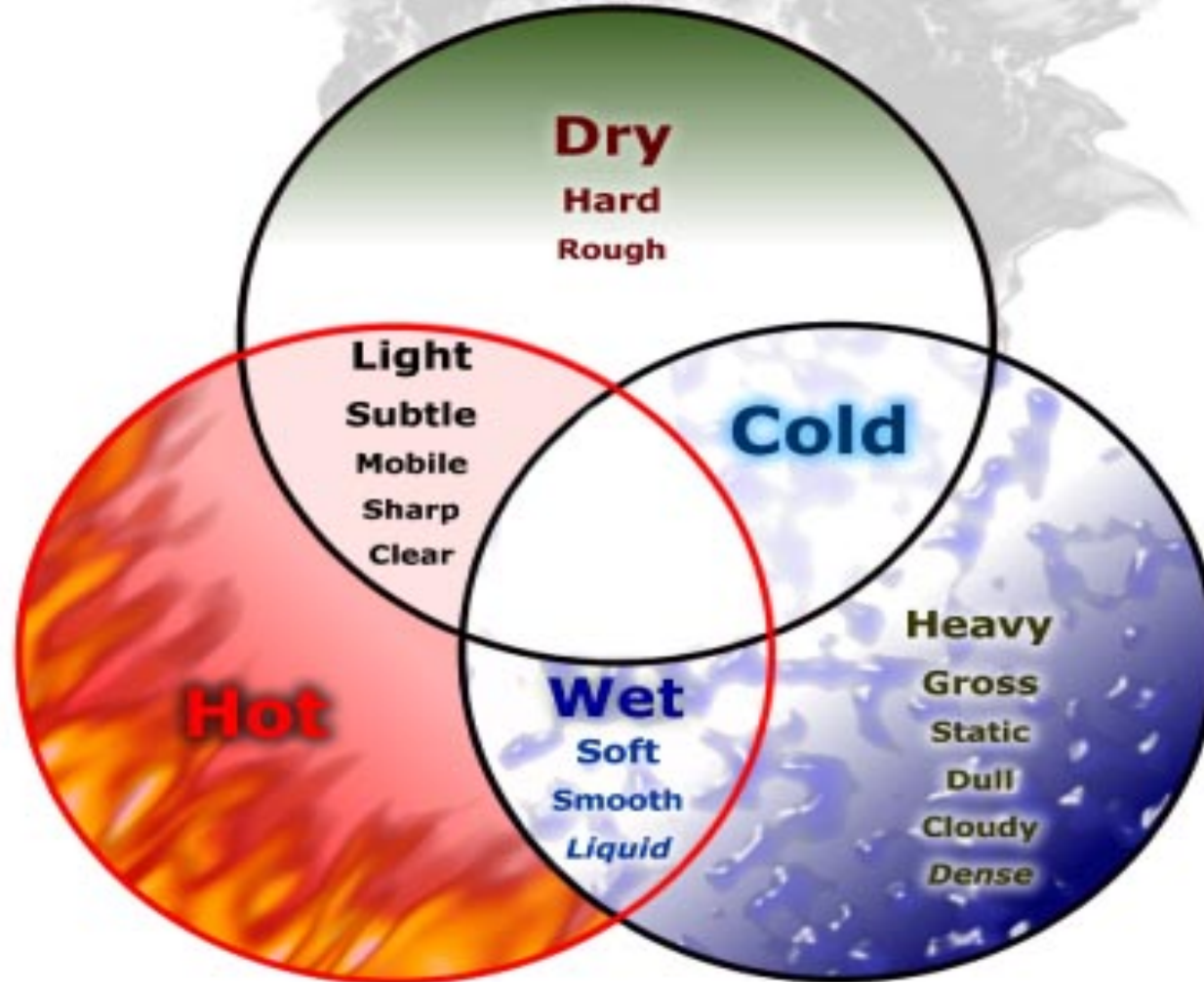
Clear/ Cloudy

vata (Wind)

Air (Touch) + Ether (Sound)

Principle of Movement

Gravity Superfield



Pitta (Bile)

Fire (Sight) + Water (Taste)

Principle of Transformation

Gauge Superfield (Radiation)

Kapha (Phlegm)

Water (Taste) + Earth (Smell)

Principle of Cohesion

Mass Superfield