EVERYTHING that we know as physical creation – our body, the planet, the universe, the trillions of forms that life has donned – is just the mischief of five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. With five simple ingredients, what utter magic! This is the sheer brilliance of creation.

In the yogic system, it is understood that with mastery over these five elements, you take charge not only of your health, well-being and prosperity, you are also offered a key to the deepest mysteries of the universe. The elemental composition of the human body is 72 per cent water, 12 per cent earth, 6 per cent air, 4 per cent fire, while the remainder is akash or ether. Although fire constitutes a small part of you quantitatively, its unique nature makes it qualitatively significant.

The element of fire is closely connected with ether or akash. The akashic dimension becomes more accessible where there is fire – particularly if certain fuels are used. When you enhance the akashic element in any atmosphere, a certain sense of bonding and communication is enhanced, which explains why traditional storytellers always sat around a campfire. With an oil lamp, a very strong and beneficial akashic field can be created. Candles generally do not have the same effect, especially when they are made of chemical wax. In southern India, ghee or sesame oil is used when lighting a lamp. Especially for children, pregnant women, invalids, and for health in general, it can be hugely beneficial to have an oil lamp burning in your home.

Fire functions within our body in different ways. Three forms of fire burn within us: jatharagni, chitagni, and bhutagni. Jathara means stomach or digestive process. If jatharagni, the digestive fire, is well-nourished, it can transform into reproductive fire. Chitagni refers to the fire of chitta, the dimension of intelligence within us that transcends the limitations of the physical form. The intelligence of genetic and karmic memory govern our physical form. However, chitta is pure intelligence, the living mind of the cosmos, that functions untainted by memory. If your chitagni is burning bright, cravings for food, sexuality and other matters of the body will recede. It is a transcendence rather than a renunciation. The next dimension is bhutagni, elemental fire. If your elemental fire is on, the circus of both the body and mind will not make much sense to you. Your interest will shift to a more fundamental aspect of creation – the source of life itself.

If you take charge of jatharagni, you will have a healthy, robust body. If you take charge of chitagni, you will have a phenomenal mind at your command. If you take charge of bhutagni, you gain fundamental mastery over the process of life. The play of elements traverses the entire creation; if you become conscious of the dimension of bhutagni, you will be a boundless being.

Yogis would strive to completely master their jatharagni and chitagni in order to become pure bhutagni. Such people would always maintain their own personal fire, or adhuni. The yogis would use the dhuni to slowly develop a relationship with the fire element, which could then enhance their receptivity. It would help them to cast out the grossness of the physical body and draw in the subtlety of another dimension.

Beyond these three fires, is sarvagni. It touches that dimension where there are no elements or physical creation whatsoever. The physical dimension of existence comprises less than 5 per cent of the whole. The rest is unmanifest, referred to as dark energy in modern terminology. This is a very cool fire, but the ultimate fire which holds all other fires within itself. Unlike the digestive fire which is a very obvious fire, chitagni is more subtle, and bhutagni more subtle still. The sarvagni almost feels absent, but it is fundamental. Without it, nothing would happen. Sarvagni is everywhere; if you just become available to it, the entire universe pervades you.