

AYURVEDIC CLASSIFICATION OF JALA BASED ON *DESHA*, *MRITTIKA*, *PANCHAMAHABHUTA*, AND *RITU* AND ITS THERAPEUTIC SIGNIFICANCE A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Jala occupies a fundamental position in Ayurveda as one of the *Panchamahabhutas* and an essential determinant of health, nutrition, and disease management. Classical *Ayurvedic* texts describe *Jala* not merely as a life-sustaining substance but as a therapeutic agent whose qualities vary according to its source, geographical region, soil, elemental composition, season, and method of processing.

KEYWORDS: *Jala*, *Ayurveda*, *Desha*, *Mrittika*, *Panchamahabhuta*, *Ritu*, *Jala* Classification, *Guna*, *Karma*, Environmental Medicine.

OBJECTIVE

To review the *Ayurvedic* concept of *Jala* with special emphasis on its *Nirukti*, synonyms, and classification based on geographical region (*Desha*), soil (*Mrittika*), *Panchamahabhuta* predominance, and seasonal variations (*Ritu*), and to highlight their therapeutic significance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A comprehensive literary review was conducted using classical *Ayurvedic* texts including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Sangraha*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Bhava Prakasha*, *Amarakosha*, and their authoritative commentaries.

Relevant descriptions concerning the classification and properties of *Jala* were compiled, compared, and critically analyzed.

Nirukti of Jala

✓ जल - जल अपवारणे^[1], जलति आच्छादयति भूम्यादीनिति जलं^[1]

The root *jal* conveys the sense of covering or enveloping (*apavarana*). That which covers or envelops the earth and other entities is termed *jala*.

✓ वारि – वृ आवरणे^[1], वारयति तृषामिति^[2]

Vari (water) is derived from the root *vr* in the sense of covering or enveloping. It is so called because it wards off or alleviates thirst.

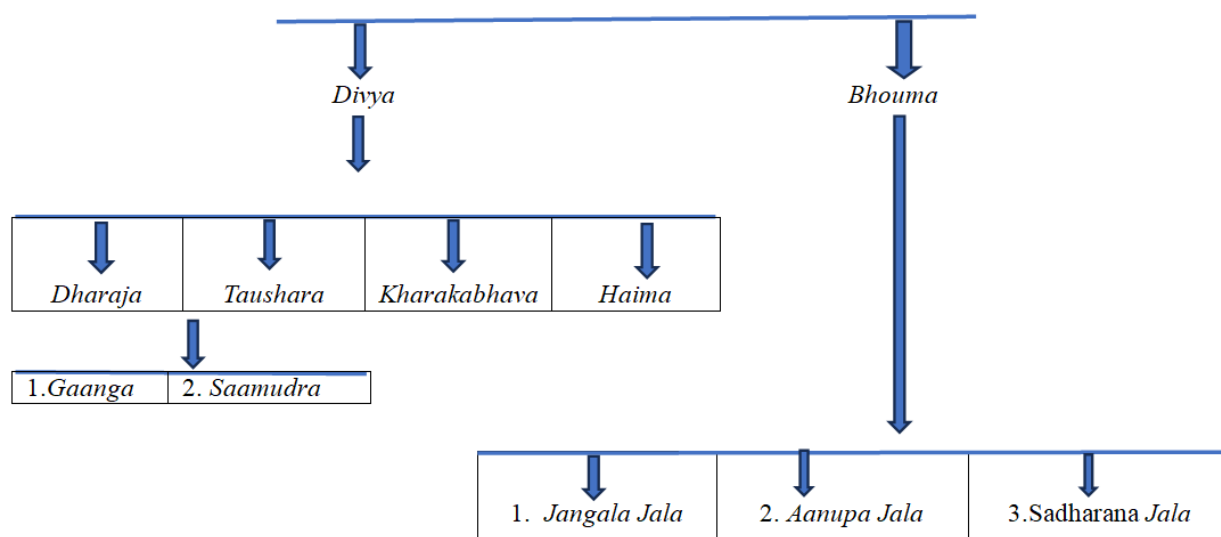
Synonyms of Jala

आपः स्त्री भूमि वार् वारि सलिलं कमलं जलम् ।

पयः कीलालममृतं जीवनं भुवनं वनम् ॥३॥ *Amarakosa*^[3]

Classification based on Geographical Region (Desha)

Jala (Acc to *Bhav Mishra*)^[4]



The properties and therapeutic effects of water (*Jala*) are greatly influenced by the geographical region (*Desha*) from which it is obtained. Different regions possess distinct environmental characteristics such as climate, soil composition, vegetation, and water availability, all of which contribute to variations in the *Guna* (qualities) and *Karma* (actions) of water.

On this basis, classical texts classify water into three major types: *Aanupa Desha Jala* (marshy region water), *Jangala Desha Jala* (arid region water), and *Sadharana Desha Jala* (moderate region water). Each type reflects the inherent nature of its region and exhibits specific influences on the *Doṣas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*), thereby determining its suitability for consumption and therapeutic use.

This classification helps in understanding the regional variations in water quality and guides the selection of appropriate water according to an individual's *doṣa* predominance and health condition.

Table No: 1 Classification & Definition of *Jala* according to *Desha*.

Type of <i>Jala</i>	Region (<i>Desha</i>)	Environmental Features	Disorder - <i>Dosa</i> Association
<i>Jangala Jala</i> ^[5]	<i>Jangala Desha</i> (arid/dry land)	Scanty water, sparse vegetation (<i>Alpa-vrkṣa</i>), dry climate	<i>Pitta</i> & <i>Rakta</i> predominance
<i>Aanupa Jala</i> ^[6]	<i>Aanupa Desha</i> (marshy/humid land)	Abundant water, dense vegetation, marshy, humid	<i>Kapha</i> & <i>Vata</i> predominance
<i>Sadharana Jala</i> ^[7]	<i>Sadharana Desha</i> (moderate/mixed land)	Moderate water and vegetation, mixed climate	

Table No: 1 *Deshaj Jala* Properties according to different *Acharyas*.

<i>Desha</i>	<i>Sushruta</i>	<i>Bhav Prakash</i>
<i>Aanupa desha</i>	<i>Doshyukta</i> , <i>Abhishyandi</i> , contraindicated for use. ^[8]	<i>Abhishyandi</i> , <i>Svadu</i> , <i>Snigdha</i> , <i>Ghana</i> (dense), <i>Guru</i> . It diminishes the digestive fire (<i>vahni-krit</i>), <i>kapha-krit</i> , and <i>Hridya</i> , yet it produces numerous disorders (<i>vikaran karoti bahun</i>). ^[9]
<i>Sadharana desha</i>	<i>Avidahi</i> , <i>Trishnaghan</i> , <i>Deepan</i> , <i>Madhur ras</i> , <i>Sheeta</i> , <i>Laghu</i> , <i>Preetivardhan</i> , <i>Prashasth</i> . ^[10]	<i>Madhura</i> <i>Dipana</i> , <i>Shitala</i> , <i>Laghu</i> . <i>Tarpana</i> , <i>Rocana</i> , and alleviates- <i>Trishna</i> , <i>Daha</i> , and the three <i>Doshas</i> . ^[11]
<i>Jangala desha</i>	wholesome and fit for use. ^[12]	<i>Ruksha</i> , <i>Lavana</i> , <i>Laghu</i> . It alleviates <i>Pitta</i> , stimulates the digestive fire (<i>Vahnikrit</i>), and mitigates <i>kapha</i> (<i>kaphahrit</i>). Being wholesome (<i>Pathya</i>), it alleviates many disorders. ^[13]

Classification Based on Soil (*Mṛttika*)

The nature of soil (*Mṛttikā*) through which water flows or in which it is stored plays a crucial role in determining its quality as water comes in direct contact with the soil, it absorbs various physical, chemical, and subtle attributes, which in turn influence its taste (*Rasa*).

Different types of soil—such as sandy (*reṇu/sarkara*), clayey (*mṛdu*), black soil, or mineral-rich terrain—impart distinct characteristics to water. Classification of water based on *Mṛttika* provides an important understanding of its potability, health impact, and therapeutic suitability, and highlights the significance of environmental factors.

Table No: 3 Classification based on Soil according to different *Acharyas*.

Soil	<i>Rasa</i> (Taste) according to different <i>Acharya</i>		
	<i>Charaka</i> ^[14]	<i>Sushruta</i> ^[15]	<i>Ashtanga Sang</i> ^[16]
White (<i>Shukla</i>)	<i>Kashaya</i>	<i>Kashaya</i>	<i>Kashaya</i>
Pale (<i>pandura</i>)	<i>Tikta</i>	<i>Lavana</i>	<i>Tikta</i>
<i>Kapila</i>	<i>Kshara</i> -	<i>Amla</i>	<i>Ksara</i>
<i>Ushara</i>	<i>Lavana</i>		<i>Lavana</i>
Mountainous region	<i>Katu</i>		
Black soil (<i>krishna</i>)	<i>Madhura</i> (sweet)		<i>Madhura</i>
Reddish soil (<i>lohita</i>)		<i>Madhura</i>	
Bluish soil (<i>nila</i>)		<i>Katu</i>	<i>Kashaya-Madhura</i>
Yellow soil (<i>pita</i>)		<i>Tikta</i>	
Mixed coloured soil			Mixed taste

Classification Based on Five basic elements

All substances in the universe are composed of the five fundamental elements known as *Panchamahabhuta* —*Prthvi* (earth), *Apa* (*Jala*), *Tejas* (fire), *Vayu* (air), and *Akasa* (ether). The predominance of these elements in a particular type of water determines its *Rasa* (taste) which in turn Karma (therapeutic actions).

Although water is primarily dominated by the *Apa Mahabhuta*, the relative contribution of other elements modifies its characteristics. Based on the predominance of these elements, water can be functionally understood and classified, which helps in assessing its effect on *Doṣas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*) and its suitability for dietary and therapeutic purposes.

Table No: 4 Properties of *Jala* according to *Panchamahabhuta* given by different *Acharyas*.

<i>Pradhan Mahabhuta</i>	<i>Sushruta</i> ^[17]	<i>Vriddh Vagbhata</i> ^[18]
<i>Prithvi mahabhuta</i>	<i>Lavana, Amla rasa</i>	<i>Lavana, Amla rasa</i>
<i>Aap mahabhuta</i>	<i>Madhura rasa</i>	<i>Madhura rasa</i>
<i>Teja mahabhuta</i>	<i>Tikta, Katu rasa</i>	<i>Tikta, Katu rasa</i>
<i>Vayu mahabhuta</i>	<i>Kashaya rasa</i>	<i>Kashaya rasa</i>
<i>Akash mahabhuta</i>	<i>Avyakta rasa</i>	<i>Avyakta rasa</i>

Classification Based on Season (*Ritu*)

The properties of *Jala* are not constant but vary significantly with seasonal changes (*Rtu Bheda*). Each season influences environmental factors such as temperature, rainfall, wind patterns, and solar intensity, which in turn alter the *Guna* (qualities) of water. Therefore, water that is wholesome in one season may become unsuitable in another.

Understanding the seasonal variations in water quality is essential for maintaining *doṣic* balance, digestive health, and disease prevention. *Ayurveda* recommends adapting the source, temperature, and method of water consumption according to the prevailing season to ensure its wholesomeness (*Hita*) and therapeutic suitability.

Table No: 5 Properties of *Jala* according to according to *Ritu* (Season) given by *Acharya Charaka*.^[19]

<i>Ritu</i> (season)	Qualities (<i>guna</i>) of <i>Jala</i>
<i>Varsha</i>	<i>Guru</i> , <i>Abhishyandi</i> <i>Madhura</i> , <i>Nava</i> (fresh)
<i>Sharad</i>	<i>Tanu</i> , <i>Laghu</i> , <i>Anabhishtyandi</i> (non-obstructive)
<i>Hemanta</i> (Early winter)	<i>Snigdha</i> , <i>vrishya</i> , <i>Balahita</i> , <i>Guru</i>
<i>Shishira</i> (Late winter)	<i>Slightly Laghu</i> compared to <i>Hemanta</i> , alleviates <i>kapha-vata</i>
<i>Vasanta</i>	<i>Kashaya-Madhura</i> , <i>Ruksha</i> (dry)
<i>Greeshma</i>	<i>Tanu</i> , <i>Laghu</i> , <i>Anabhishtyandi</i> (non-obstructive)

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda regards *Jala* as both a life-supporting substance and a therapeutic agent whose properties vary according to environmental, geographical, seasonal, and elemental factors. The *Desha*-based classification explains that *Jala* from different geographical regions possesses distinct qualities and influences the *Doshas* differently. *Jangala Jala* is light and wholesome, *Aanupa Jala* is heavy and *Abhishyandi*, while *Sadharana Jala* has balanced properties suitable for regular use.

The *Mrittika*-based classification highlights that the soil through which water passes influences its taste and therapeutic properties, reflecting an early understanding of environmental effects on *Jala* quality. Similarly, the *Panchamahabhuta* classification explains that the predominance of the five elements determines the *Rasa* and biological actions of *Jala*, thereby influencing its effects on the *Doshas*.

The *Ritu*-based classification emphasizes that the qualities of *Jala* change with seasonal variations, making seasonal adaptation in water consumption essential for maintaining digestive strength and *doshic* balance.

Overall, the *Ayurvedic* classification of *Jala* provides a scientific and individualized framework for selecting appropriate water according to region, soil, elemental predominance, season, and health status. These principles

highlight *Ayurveda's* advanced understanding of environmental medicine and remain relevant for preventive healthcare and therapeutic water management.

CONCLUSION

The *Ayurvedic* classification of *Jala* reflects an advanced understanding of environmental medicine and preventive healthcare. Variations in geographical region, soil, elemental predominance, and seasonal influences profoundly affect the qualities and therapeutic utility of *Jala*. Integrating these classical concepts with contemporary environmental and public health perspectives may enhance rational *Jala* selection and promote holistic health practices.

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