

Listen What the Mind Says (Wings reference)

Listen to What the Mind Says

As we walk deeper into yoga and self-discovery, we begin to ask the big questions: *Who am I? Why do I suffer?* In this process, the mind becomes both a trickster and a teacher.

You may have heard—maybe even from me—that the mind is full of false stories, self-limiting thoughts, and recycled worries. And that's true. But here's the twist: the mind is not just a liar. The mind is also a messenger.

Because it's deeply connected to the senses, the mind carries signals from the body into words. When we quiet down and listen closely, the language of the mind can reveal exactly what we need.

The Five Elements

To understand the language of the mind, we need to look at the five elements. Each element carries its own qualities. When they go out of balance, those qualities show up in our thoughts, our bodies, and even the words we use.

Earth

Earth gives us grounding, stability, reliability, and nurture—think of Mother Nature. But Earth can also get heavy, slow, and resistant to change.

Water

Water cools, moves, and reshapes. Rivers carve canyons and reshape the land itself. Water brings flow, but too much can leave us unstable or swept away.

Fire

Fire heats, transforms, and expands. It has the power to ignite change, but it can also burn and destroy. Fire is one of the most potent forces for transformation—if we learn to harness it.

Air

Air is quick, light, and full of movement. Watch how fast clouds shift shapes across the sky. Air fuels creativity and change, but when it's too active, it scatters us into restlessness and overthinking.

Space

Space is the container for it all—the room between thoughts, the pause between breaths, the stillness between actions. Space can give us perspective and separation, but too much leaves us feeling ungrounded or “spaced out.”

The Mind Speaks Through the Senses

When the senses report to the mind, they don't just stay as raw data. They turn into *words*. And those words are clues. They show us what's happening in the elements of our body.

Here are some examples:

- “I feel ungrounded.” → The mind/body is asking for more Earth.

- “I just can’t settle down.” → Again, Earth is calling for stability.
- “I’m so hot my blood is boiling!” → Fire is high, and cooling is needed—maybe from Water.
- “I can’t get moving today.” → Too much Earth weighing us down. A dose of Air or Water could bring energy.
- “I feel so contracted, there’s no space.” → The body is asking for more Space.

Notice: these are everyday words. They slip out of our mouths without us thinking. But if we learn to listen, they become a diagnostic tool. They point us directly to which element is out of balance—and that tells us where to focus our practices.

Cultivate the Opposite — *Pratipaksha Bhavana*

In yoga therapy, there’s a powerful principle called *Pratipaksha Bhavana*. The translation is simple: *cultivate the opposite*.

It means when something in us is out of balance, we bring in its opposite quality to restore harmony.

Think of that classic Seinfeld episode where George Costanza realizes every instinct he’s ever had has led him wrong. So, as an experiment, he decides to do the exact opposite of whatever his gut says. If his instinct says “turn left,” he turns right. If it says “don’t speak up,” he opens his mouth. And suddenly his life flips—he lands the job, gets the date, wins respect. It’s funny, but it also points to a deep truth.

Pratipaksha Bhavana works the same way. We don’t ignore what the body-mind is telling us. We listen carefully. Then, if an element is in excess, we intentionally cultivate its opposite quality:

- Too much Fire? Invite Water’s cooling.
- Too much Earth? Call in Air’s lightness and movement.
- Too much Space? Ground with Earth’s steadiness.

This is how imbalance becomes balance, and how listening becomes transformation.

A Personal Example: Fire and Rain

Let me show you how *Pratipaksha Bhavana* works in my own life.

One element that often runs high in me is Fire. The language that shows up is clear: “I’m hot. I’m annoyed. I’m burned out.” I hear myself saying these phrases, especially in the heat of summer. That’s my mind-body telling me Fire is in excess.

So what do I do? I cultivate the opposite. Fire needs cooling, so I turn toward Water. And for me, Water takes the form of rain.

Why rain? Because it carries deep meaning for me. The sound of rain is soothing. The gray, diffused light is calming. The smell of rain brings me ease. Rain doesn't just cool me down physically—it restores me emotionally.

And it goes deeper: I have memories linked to rain that still bring me joy. As a kid, rainy school days meant we got to stay inside, play games, and feel a sense of togetherness. Later, when I worked construction, a rainy day meant rest—a break from the heat, a chance to sleep in. Those memories are alive in my body, and they bring with them rest, promise, joy, and ease.

So when Fire flares up, I don't just “cool off.” I invoke rain—in my senses, in my memories, in my whole being. And maybe that's why James Taylor's Fire and Rain always hits so deep. It's not just a song—it's a reminder that these two forces live side by side in us. Fire can burn, Rain can soothe, and between them we find the story of our own healing.

That's cultivating the opposite in a way that's not only therapeutic, but deeply meaningful.

Bringing It All Together

So here's the invitation: **listen to what your mind says**. Not the false stories, not the recycled doubts—but the *keywords* that rise from your senses. Those words are signals. They point you to which element is speaking and whether it's in balance or excess.

And once you hear it, you know what to do: *Pratipaksha Bhavana* — cultivate the opposite. Fire meets Rain. Heaviness meets Movement. Scatteredness meets Grounding. Space meets Presence.

The beauty of this practice is that it's not abstract. It's personal. It's tied to the sounds, smells, sights, and memories that already bring you joy and ease. The rain on the roof. The steady ground beneath your feet. The warmth of a fire that transforms without burning.

When we listen deeply, the mind is no longer an enemy. It becomes a messenger. It takes the language of the senses and gives us the map back to balance.

And maybe that's where yoga and music meet. As Paul McCartney and Wings sang:

*“And love is fine for all we know
For all we know, our love will grow
That's what the man said
So won't you listen to what the man said?
He said Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do...”*

So let's listen — to the mind, to the body, to the music of our own being. Because in that listening, love grows, balance returns, and we always find a way to grow.