

The Five Elements

Earth: is shape, form, substance, support, and structure. Too strong and it leads to rigidity, which imprisons. Too weak and it leads to instability or lack of substance, and things never take shape. In reaction, rigidity is often a cover for uncertainty. In response, earth is nurturing, supportive, and free from judgement. Wisdom of Equality / Balance.

Water: is about clarity, flow, fluidity, emotions, adapting. Too strong and it feels like a threat, a wave or current that will carry you away. Too weak, and there is no sense of connection or flow: things are frozen. In reaction, water is evasive, wishy-washy, difficult to pin down. In response, water is clear and transparent. Mirror-Like Wisdom.

Fire: is about heat, warmth, light, passion, and knowing. Too strong and it burns, consuming everything it touches. Too weak, and nothing happens, and all is desolate. In reaction, it turns everything to ash. In response, it warms, motivates, provides the energy for things to happen. Distinguishing Wisdom.

Air/Wind: is about activity, movement, ideas, and strategies. Too strong and it becomes movement for movement's sake, tearing things apart in a whirlwind. Too weak, and it becomes lack of movement, disconnection, loss of identity, loss of meaning. In reaction, it's all over the place, movement without connection. In response, it is effective action, just what is needed. Effective Wisdom.

Void/Space: is about space, the sky, the still point of the turning world, the space which allows things to move, take form, come into being. Too strong and it's the end of the world, earthquakes, tidal waves, volcanoes and hurricanes, one on top of the other. Too weak and it's like death, the dissolution of any form of being, dull, blank, nothing. In reaction, it manifests as confusion and bewilderment. In response, it is presence, the indescribable experience of things just being what they are. Totality Wisdom.

The Five Dakinis

Khyungpo Naljor, a twelfth-century teacher in Tibet, once had a visionary experience in which a lion-headed dakini appeared to him and sang this song about working with dakini energy:

Crystal dakini guards against interruptions.

Jewel dakini increases wealth.

Lotus dakini gathers energy.

Action dakini gets everything done.

When wanting and grasping hold sway

the dakini has you in her power.

Wanting nothing from outside, taking things as they come,

Know the dakini to be your own mind.

The essence of mind is knowing.

Know that the crystal is the non-thought of mind itself

And the crystal dakini guards against interruptions.

Know that the source of wealth is contentment

And the jewel dakini fulfills all wants and needs.

Know that the lotus is the non-thought of freedom from attachment

And the lotus dakini gathers energy.

Know that action has no origination or cessation

And the action dakini gets everything done.

Those who do not understand these points

Can practice for eons and know nothing.

So, the heart of the matter is

To know that the dakini is your own mind.

The meditations on the five dakinis and emptying the six realms fundamentally change our relationship with reactive emotions, the former by transforming the reaction chains into presence, the latter by dismantling the way patterns distort how we experience what arises and view our lives.

— Ken McLeod, excerpt from *Wake Up to Your Life*