

THE FIVE POWERS

Trust
Energy
Mindfulness
Calm
Wisdom

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Alessandro Sanna



Born in 1975 in Nogara, Italy, Alessandro Sanna today lives in Mantua where he works at his studio in Casa di Rigoletto. Sanna dedicates himself to teaching illustration and drawing in the Fine Arts academies of Bologna and Verona.

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Sanna's art works are published all over the world, through publishers such as Rizzoli, Einaudi, Emme, MeMo, Corraini, Mondadori and in the magazines *Gioia* and the French edition of *Vanity Fair*. He has also been featured in *The New York Times Book Review* and the *New Yorker*. He has won the Andersen Prize three times.

'I believe in things that do not exist,

for this reason I draw them.' A.S.

Stephen Fulder

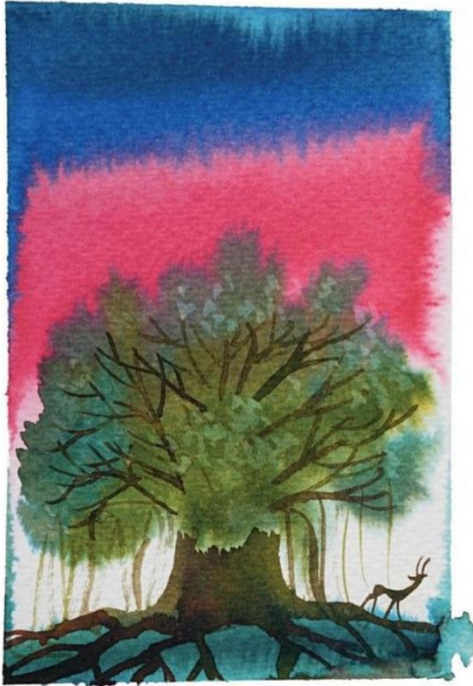


Dr Stephen Fulder was born in London in 1946. A graduate of Oxford University, he has a PhD in molecular biology and is an expert in herbal and complementary medicine, on which he has published fourteen books.

Involved in dharma practice since 1975, Fulder has spent years in India and has been guided by a variety of teachers from India, Burma and the West. Fulder has been teaching mindful meditation for a quarter of a century and leads countless retreats, courses and classes, especially for advanced practitioners around the world.

Stephen Fulder is the founder and senior teacher of Tovana, the largest Israeli insight meditation society, making Mindfulness, Vipassana meditation and dharma teachings widely available.

Introduction



It can all feel a bit too much.

We find ourselves occupied, from morning till night - reacting, responding and coping with uncontrollable and often difficult circumstances.

Life can seem an endless Sisyphean struggle, as we push the rock uphill only to watch it roll down once again. How can we rise above challenges such as stress, anxiety, depression, frustration and the myriad of other conflicts and unhappiness that can assail us, meeting them from a place of greater equanimity and expansion? How do we perform a restart? Is it possible to radically transform our daily life? How do we emerge from this sense of endless struggle? How can we invite deeper meaning and more ease, steadiness and freedom into our lives?

There is a Zen story: a seeker wandered far and wide in search of liberation. After many arduous travails, he learnt of an enlightened master that might help him. He found the master, a simple old man walking along a path carrying a large bundle of firewood on his back. The seeker asked him: 'How do I become completely free?' The master eyed him intently and put down the bundle he was carrying. He didn't say a word. Time passed. The seeker impatiently asked: 'Is that it? Then what?' The master picked up his bundle, hoisted it on his back and continued on his way.

Our burdens can seem very difficult to put down. We keep trying to fix things and control events. The result is often more rainbows to chase, further goals to pursue with an increasing sense of futility - they fail to bring real peace or make a radical difference. Putting down our burdens isn't just a matter of wishing to drop them, nor of imagining they have been dropped, nor of denying them, or escaping from them into belief systems or distractions. We need something else. As Einstein said: 'You

can't solve problems with the same mind that created them.' We need some help because the stress is so integral to our life that when trying to clean it, we find we are always washing ourselves with dirty water.

What is the source of these teachings?

The Buddhist teachings are a vast resource of refined and clearly developed sets of tools to transform the way we experience life. There is something extraordinary and awe-inspiring about these teachings. They have been developed over millennia yet remain well-preserved, easily transportable and adaptable, highly practical and direct. We do not need to carry out onerous intellectual archaeology: digging for the treasure under layers of interpretations, ritual, special languages, commentaries and control by a priesthood. Other sacred books and teachings, such as the Judeo-Christian Bible or the Hindu Upanishads, are rich resources of knowledge, but at the same time accounts of events and myths. In contrast the thousands of Buddhist texts, called *suttas*, are all basically instructional, giving a myriad of simple and direct tools for living with *Wisdom*, joy and freedom.

Such teachings and practices have been trickling into the modern world from the monasteries of the East for not much more than half a century. One sign of their arrival is that they have become an integral part of the culture. For many of us, the gateway to these teachings is *Mindfulness*. This has become a hugely popular personal resource in the last few years, reaching into hospitals, prisons, schools, European parliaments and psychology clinics. One personal example: since September 2016, I have been invited to dozens of bars and pubs for sessions we have titled 'Buddha at the Bar', talking to and engaging with thousands of people who are struggling to find meaning and

offering them new ways to look at their lives. To me, this is an indication of the thirst for another, more insightful and transformative way of looking at life. It is also an expression of how these teachings are no longer esoteric but are fully available within our culture.

The Five Powers: going beyond mindfulness

There are many qualities, methods, spiritual paths and practices in the world's spiritual heritage. Were we to ask teachers from different traditions what basic teachings and practices they would recommend to help us in our inner journey:

- A Buddhist monk might prioritise *Mindfulness* and Awareness
- A Hindu swami might say: *Calm* and Concentration
- An inspiring philosopher would call for *Wisdom* and Insight
- A Tibetan lama might suggest Faith and *Trust*
- A psychologist could encourage Positive *Energy*

However, we don't need to collect these key tools from diverse paths and cultures. They are already here, compiled and available in the Buddhist teaching of The Five Powers: highly developed, extraordinarily effective, sophisticated and yet crystal clear. *Mindfulness* is just one of the five. The other four are equally powerful and effective, but less often examined.

These are The Five Powers, along with their original name in the Pali language, the language of the ancient texts, regarded as the original teachings of the Buddha.

1. *Trust, Faith, Confidence* - *Saddha*
2. *Energy, Aspiration, Determination* - *Viriya*
3. *Mindfulness, Presence, Awareness* - *Sati*
4. *Calm, Serenity, Concentration* – *Samadhi*
5. *Wisdom, Insight, Awakening* - *Pannya*

In various traditions, such as the Indian chakra system, these powers also have corresponding colours. White is *Trust* because it is the great embrace, the big heart, which includes all the colours of the rainbow. Blue is mindful awareness, like the still waters and the ocean within. Green is *Energy*, the growth, creativity and abundance of nature. Red is the steadiness and base of the earth, the colour of the root chakra. Yellow is the power and purity of interconnected *Wisdom* like the rays of the sun that shines on all, or incorruptible gold.

When these powers are not yet developed, they are traditionally described as The Five Spiritual Faculties. As capacities they are given a high status in the Buddhist teachings and are part of a list of human abilities that are described in Pali as *Indriya*, from the Sanskrit name of the chief Vedic God Indra, indicating both their divine quality and their life-changing potential. These are virtues that we all already possess and manifest to some extent. In Bhikkhu Bodhi's words: 'appearing initially in mundane roles in our everyday lives... as trustful confidence in higher values, as vigorous effort towards the good, as attentive awareness, as focussed concentration, and as intelligent understanding. The Buddha's teaching... transforms these commonplace mental factors into spiritual faculties, mighty instruments in the quest for liberation that can fathom the profoundest laws of existence...' When these five faculties are developed in this way, they become transformative powers, *Bala* in Pali.

The Five Powers work together to amplify and empower each other. Each is required to achieve a complete and harmonious whole. They have been described as five horses working together to skilfully draw the carriage of our being to states of contentment and liberation. *Mindfulness* is the lead horse, showing the way. Behind it, *Trust* and *Energy* are paired and then the two steeds of *Calm* and *Wisdom*. It is obvious that these

powers need to be balanced. For example, faith without *Wisdom* can lead us blindly into unfounded and unwise beliefs, illusions and expectations; while *Wisdom* without a trusting heart can lead to an excessively analytical, conceptual and judgemental mind. *Calm* without *Energy* can lead to passivity and laziness; but *Energy* without *Calm* and concentration leads to agitation and a grasshopper mind. Without *Trust*, *Calm* and *Mindfulness* can be mechanical and limited; *Trust* without *Calm* can lead us to fruitlessly chase the rainbow. *Mindfulness* is the lead horse throughout the journey because it will show us how to work with all the powers in a balanced way.

We may find that we have a greater inclination, or are more naturally gifted with respect to one or more of the faculties. We may inherently be more curious and alert, calm and serene, vigorous and energetic, reflective and wise, or heartfelt and devotional. The traditional advice is to work with and develop whichever quality is easiest for us: this can take us far and show us great possibilities, while the other powers can be recruited along the way.

The Five Powers work together to amplify and empower each other. Each is required to achieve a complete and harmonious whole.

Let's take a walk up the mountain

There is a temptation to regard these powers as inner muscles that we need to develop, as if we are going to some sort of spiritual gym that will help us succeed and get on in life. Our motivations, like the impetus that drives much of the current interest in *Mindfulness* practice, may be for immediate benefits. In principle, there is nothing wrong with aspirations such as these. It is completely understandable to want to be, for example, a better manager, therapist or accountant. Indeed, there are great spiritual teachers who started their journey by going to a monastery because they wanted to deal with some acute problem such as stress or headaches. But that should be just the beginning.

As our practice develops limited goals are extended and refined. Just as when you ascend a mountain, the motivations for your climb may evolve as you progress. At the start of the climb, you may simply want to clear your head or address a particular issue or problem that is bothering you. As you continue on your way, you enter into the swing of things, the joys of the open road: for the first time you notice the delicate blue flowers lining the path, you may become motivated by curiosity and interest in the world around you. Ascending further, you lift your head and wonder at the grandeur of the clouds.

In the same way, as one treads the path of self-discovery and development one comes to glimpse one's own inner beauty and potential. That's when motivations can transmute from the palliative to the more expansive: psychological freedom and well-being, and, as the path leads us ever on, a spiritual longing for total freedom. Eventually that too dissolves. There is no need for any motivation based on the wish to be somewhere other than where and who we really are. The mountain vanishes and climbing is the same as being.



Let's stay with this analogy. What do The Five Powers feel like on our journey and how do they help us climb? *Mindfulness* helps us to notice where and how we are on the path and to discern the rocks and flowers along the way. As awareness and inner freedom expand, we are no longer mired in the issues, limitations and obstructing tribulations of daily life. Heart-opening *Trust* and confidence support our body and mind, bringing hope to the climb and faith in the view. *Energy* and

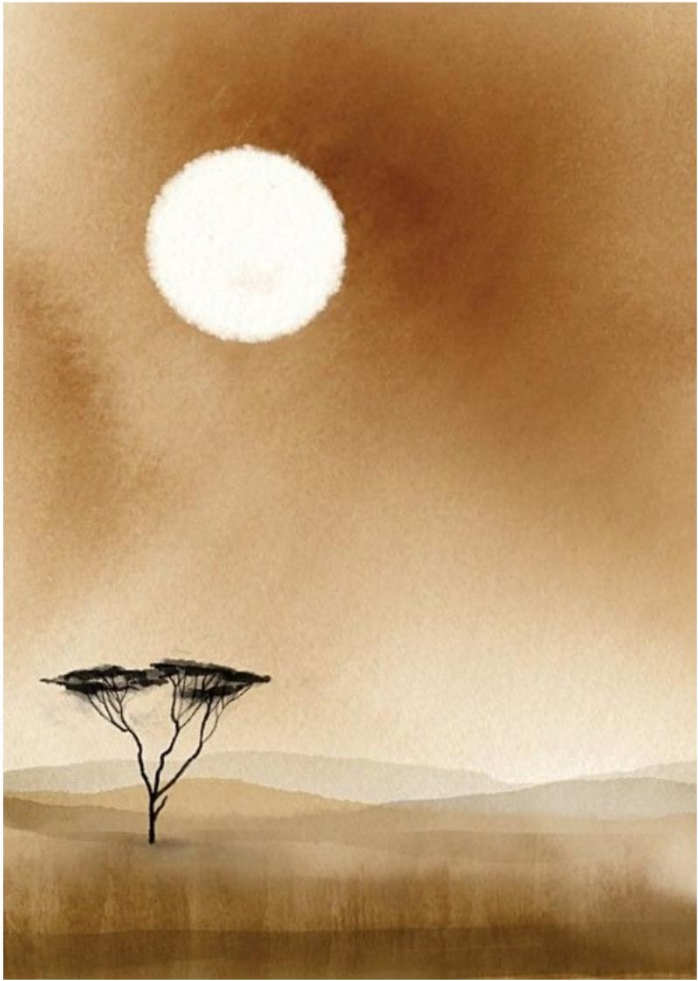
motivation help us to skip rather than crawl. Serenity and concentration keep us steady and focused, so we don't wander off, give up or become overly distracted. And *Wisdom* is all the things we learn on the way: from the understanding of our capacities and limitations, to precious insights and realisations; from a deep silence and sense of oneness with the mountain, to the glory of the sunrise at the top.

As we explore each of these teachings, it may be helpful to keep at the back of the mind the idea that there is a much bigger context to these qualities and powers. The Five Powers are embedded in a rich kaleidoscope of Buddhist teachings working together - a great ecological field of liberating insights and practices. While we cannot take on the vast body of all the teachings in one fell swoop, we do need to be curious and open to the hints that might arise as you read this book. For example, a basic understanding of The Five Powers may at first see them as qualities that we develop within ourselves. However, we might come to realise that the harmony and purity of our actions and our heart in relation to the world are an essential support and grounding for practice. This, in turn, could lead us to consider and explore how the Buddhist teachings include ethical sensitivity as a basis for personal development.

The way I have described and explored The Five Powers in this book is an expansion of their very precise Buddhist definitions, which usually involve a formulation of specific methods of spiritual practice. The word 'saddha' for example, in its traditional sense means faith or conviction. I have extended it to include *Trust*, acceptance, confidence, and even a touch of love. The usual way samadhi is understood and practiced in the tradition is as concentration and meditative focus. But I have extended it to include serenity, *Calm*, and steadiness. In fact, a broader understanding of these powers is included in the tradition as a description of the fruits of practice, not just the

practices themselves. It implies a way of life in which practice and the fruit of practice merge together. For example, the fruit of the practice of samadhi is portrayed as the serene presence of those that center themselves in calm, concentrated attention.

It is important to realise that these powers are relevant to all of us: we don't need to be card-carrying members of the Buddhist club. The Buddha himself taught qualities, tools and a view of reality, and specifically stated that they should be adapted to whatever culture, environment, and language was appropriate. The Buddha was not a Buddhist. The Five Powers are in the end a toolkit for transformation, for a liberated life, not a set of principles or distant ideals. If we live them, we will gradually become them and manifest them in thought, word and deed. This will utterly transform both ourselves and the world around us.



The First Power

Trust

Saddha

TRUST | FAITH | CONFIDENCE



why is trust so important?

It is Trust that empowers us to embrace life rather than constantly struggling against it. Instead of shutting our doors, we can fling them open to let in any and all the guests that come knocking – even those who are somewhat challenging. It is Trust that helps us to rejoin others and rejoice with them, to reconnect ourselves to our world. It is an attitude that welcomes experience and allows things to be the way they are.

It is possible for us to develop a trusting heart with which to engage fully with life, opening up to joy, positivity and love. By reducing our own basic insecurity, we transform the tension, aggression and conflict in our world. With Trust, we step easily along the path to transformation and inner freedom. We do not succumb to helplessness and uncertainty. Trust gives us the strength to explore the uncharted territories of our spiritual life.

Trust is traditionally listed as the first of The Five Powers. This is because we need to be able to relax a little, to reduce the level of anxiety and concerns just enough so as to practice and explore the other powers. It would give us the space and ease to apply a little effort and motivation, the second power of Energy, which leads to the third power namely the practice of Mindfulness. It is hard to begin to develop Mindfulness if there are too many ants in our pants and bees in our bonnets. A primary instruction of teachers of Mindfulness, whether today or at the time of the Buddha, would be to enter a safe space and to some extent reduce fretting for or about the world. This would then permit settling down and collecting ourselves into the here and now.

A readiness to welcome whatever life brings is essential

equipment for our inner journey. Our initial motivation, whatever it is, will help us take the first steps forward, but what we need to keep going is Trust. It is an engine that drives transformation by constantly clearing the path, sweeping away lack of confidence, paralytic doubt or hopelessness.

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