

2016-12-03 Five Powers

Fri, 9/25 10:05PM • 40:07

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

confidence, faculties, dharma, people, power, practice, samadhi, effort, discernment, strength, engage, discerning, mindfulness, stay, mind, day, present, world, concentration, hang

SPEAKERS

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For all this funny talk, the beginning. Okay. So the topic for this talk is power. And there's a list, of course, in Buddhism called the five powers. And these correspond directly to the what's also called the five faculties. And normally in the Vipassana world, when people give talks on these on this list, they talk about them from the point of view of the faculties. But the five faculties means five capacities, or potentials that we have, abilities that we have. And these abilities when they're engaged and develop, become strengths, or powers that we have with us. And I think that one of the things we're looking for in this practice is to develop a certain kind of personal power power in the practice. And these five qualities are five powers that are applicable, applicable in all kinds of circumstances in our life. They are useful in the ordinary, everyday activities, domestic life, they're useful, and the biggest challenges of our interpersonal relationships. They're useful in the great existential issues of human life, when we're sitting and facing our own mortality. They are useful in the great political struggles of our times that we have access to strength, and we can use to engage and meet the challenges around us. So the five powers are confidence, effort, mindfulness, Samadhi, concentration, and wisdom. And these are ordinary faculties of mind, we all have this. And we all utilize them all the time that we don't get to single them out, or don't put them together a nice little list like the Buddhist tradition does. But if you do almost anything, chances are the five faculties have coming into play to some degree. So it takes something ordinary, like maybe baking bread, I don't know, if you've ever baked bread or done you cook something in the kitchen, that you know, you have some confidence that you can do it otherwise you wouldn't even begin. You might not know if you're going to succeed this time, but you have enough confidence to go into the kitchen and get the flour and the yeast and know what you need for it together and start working. And then it takes some effort, you don't just sit there and the kitchen table looking at the ingredients. And just waiting for it to turn into bread. You have to kind of do something, you have to engage and make efforts to measure up the ingredients put together and mix them need them do everything needs to be done. Some effort is needed. And it helps to be mindful. If you're if you're making bread, you'll have less cleanup afterwards. If you're mindful of all that flour going all over, I have to be mindful enough to know to be able to measure the ingredients properly and have the right proportions take some attention and care. And if you're spacey and not paying attention, you know, and you put in three tablespoons of sugar and three cups of yeast. It's not gonna look so not gonna taste very good. So you kind of pay attention to what you're doing. And it helps if you stay focused. You know, especially for some of the activities needing the bread, doing what you're doing, it takes some focus to stay attentive and present what's going on. Especially once you have it in the oven. You need to have some unless you have a timer that reminds you, you have to kind of stay on track, make sure that you're tracking the time and how it's going and be focused enough and then it helps to be discerning to be wise to pay attention and be make wise choices about what you're doing as you're doing it. So you put maybe it needs to live more flour, maybe it needs more water. And so you have to

make that choice. And when it's time to put it on a you know into maybe a bread loaf pan to bake it and you realize it's not an empty stick pan.

So you so I don't care about that. You know, you don't think about it. So you just kind of just, you know, push the dough into it and let it be and then it burns it sticks. You want to be discerning enough to No, this is an auntie stickpin. And so I need some kind of oil or something, or it doesn't stick so I can get it out. So these five faculties, these five capacities are operating in almost all kinds of activities that we are engaged in. And sometimes it's useful to look at what we're doing, and to see, are these in balance? Are they there in the right? proportion? Do we need to have more concentration? Do we need more attention? Do we need more discernment, more wisdom, or we're kind of figuring out what's going on? Do we need to have more confidence in the situation. But these five, as they get developed in different activities, we do become powers, where it's not something we have to call upon and muster and, but they're like strengths, that they're just kind of like, just kind of, you know, they're handy, they're there, they're going to kind of guide us through and, you know, when they make it happen, they become kind of powers that we carry with us. Confidence can be a power, we're boid by it, and held up by it. And it's not a matter of mustering confidence to overcome our fear. It's just like, we're like, you know, force of nature. You know, we're like, this is what we're doing. And we're sure we can do it. The topic of power, where to Bala is also one that's ethically challenging, because once you have power, you want to be able to use it for the right purposes. And in Buddhist practice, Buddhist practice is always for a purpose. And wisdom in Buddhism is wisdom for a purpose. And the purpose is liberation and freedom. And their Dharma purposes. And so the power that we acquire in practice, are meant to be utilized for the purposes of practice. And one of the, for the Dharma. And one of the primary characteristics of the Dharma is an ancient kind of little cliché, little slogan, we're talks about a characteristic of the Dharma, what characterizes the Dharma. And that slogan is that the Dharma is characterized by non harming by himself as a kind of pretty, pretty strong statement. So it's not the Dharma, if it's, if it's himself, it's violent, if it's harming the Dharma is characterized by non harming. And in this Indian languages that are which is a negative also implies the opposite. So ahimsa implies in an ancient world implies compassion. If there's not compassion is not part of the Dharma. So this is kind of the guide or the reference point for understanding how we use power is a compassionate does it avoid causing harm for yourself and for others. And so that plays itself out to particularly with the first one confidence, there are people who have tremendous confidence, and a lot of foolishness that goes along with it. And because of their confidence, they can kind of barrel ahead doing something they think is important and valuable to do. But they can cause a lot of damage in the world. Because a lot of harm, some people confidently do cause harm, because they think that harming people being hostile, is supportive, it gets to get what you want, you're going to get the world in order, and things are getting into right price shape, if we just kind of express enough hostility to people, everyone will shape up. And it's does tremendous damage to our society and people. That kind of confidence that when especially when people have political power over others, but, but to have confidence in a path of non harming, to have confidence in a path of compassion. And to be able to add confidence in the Dharma path is invaluable for what to walk this Dharma path. To really kind of feel this is valuable, what I'm doing, and I'm able to do it, I can engage in this, maybe I can't engage in it in the way that the great maybe some of the great masters have engaged in, in the great stories we hear. But I am confident I can engage in it in my way. With my life and the conditions I have now. I have confidence.

And, and so, some people have a lot of confidence in the practice and the Dharma, but they don't have a lot of confidence in themselves. Some people have a lot of confidence in themselves, but they don't have a lot of confidence in the Dharma. They're casting about looking for something different. Stand. Some people have a lot of confidence in teachers, but they don't have confidence in themselves. Some people have a lot of confidence in themselves, but they don't have any confidence in their teachers,

which sometimes is great. And sometimes is a recipe for disaster. When number one person who, on retreat once I was concerned about him, how he was practicing seemed very imbalanced. And I tried to offer him some guidance. And it's clear that he was brushing me off, he wasn't interested whatsoever. And it looked to me, I tracked them best I could it looked like to me like he got to the end of the treat safely. day or two later, I got a phone call and he was in the hospital for a mental psychotic break. And that break would didn't need to happen if he hadn't been practicing the wrong way. And so he had a lot of confidence, his tremendous, idealistic young confidence his man had, but he wasn't didn't have any confidence in my ability to guide them. So the idea of, you know, having confidence in the right things and be willing to take, you know, to engage is a very important part of practice. And it's a beautiful quality, to have confidence in the Dharma, to have confidence in their practice, to have confidence in the truth, to have confidence in a path of non harming and compassion, to really feel someone's confidence in these really great things, is inspiring to be around and kind of feeds people and supports people to find their own confidence in it, to do it. So how is this confidence developed, so it becomes a power. I think the only way that I know is by practice by doing if you want to have confidence in baking bread, don't just read it a recipes forever, or baking bread, maybe the first few batches will not turn out, right. And that's how we learn and then we can do it again, then eventually, you have confidence in baking the bread. Same thing with practice, Dharma practice, we engage in it. And maybe at first, it doesn't look so good. Maybe at first was floundering, we keep doing it and doing it. And then eventually we get the hang of it. And we get confidence. I think it's helpful in developing confidence to think of doing it in small steps. And not think that we have to kind of, you know, to see how high the mountain is. And think that we're supposed to take one step from the bottom to the top. And, you know, just you know, that's kind of crazy. But to, but to have confidence. Well, I don't know if I can get to the top. But I know I can take one step up the mountain. And then you take one step, I think I can do another one. Now, I think I can go up to the next band. And so to do small steps along the way, and then have confidence, I can do this, I can do this part, I can do this part. And then it grows over time. So we sit in practice, and we have no confidence that we can settle the mind. The mind just seems crazy. But we sit down, we practice, we do a day long like this. And then at some point, it seems that the mind quiets down a little bit more than it was before. Look at that. And so I think I can do this. I don't know what I did. But I showed up and I did my practice as best I could and things quieted down. That's great. You come back the next time. And you feel it happens again, after a while you have confidence, oh, this, this works. This is great. Or you find yourself facing some emotional difficulty and challenge. It seems like it's overwhelming. So you try to bring your practice to try being mindful of its be present for it in the middle of it.

And you find out that you can stay with it longer than you ever have before. In the past, you would escape it somehow or do something unskillful. And but now you've learned or don't you do it with you know, pretty quickly. But now you've managed to stay with this tremendous difficulty for five minutes. That's like a record for you. And so now, you know, I can do five minutes next time. Next time it happens. I'm gonna try for six. And so you start developing some confidence. Eventually, you stay with the difficult emotion long enough to see it transform into something different something you all look at that. It was hard, it's actually seemed impossible. But what happened if I just hung in there? It seems like it changes for the better at some point something resolves or I see something or let go of something. And after a while you start having more confidence in that process. In something new arises that seems emotionally very difficult. And the fact that you've had so many so much success in the past seeing it through means I think I can trust this process. You're willing to add to hang in there to do it interpersonally there's a lot of interpersonal challenges, people have their two small steps to develop confidence in small steps, I can do this, I can do this in political actions, you know, if you're going to solve the problems America has. And that's what you're up against, you feel responsible for all of it. Chances are very few of you have enough confidence, you can do it. And you might get depressed, but

maybe have enough confidence that you can write letters, maybe have enough confidence. We have people here at IMC. On Friday, they went down to the Evergreen Islamic Center in San Jose, during the time of prayer, and lots of the Muslims gathered for prayer there. Because some days before someone had posted a letter on their door, there was a hate letter, there was pretty awful what they wrote about them. And so the people there were afraid. So various clergy and people in the community came to be there and be in attendance, kind of to protect them and offer support. I suspect most of you could do that, too. That's a small step. That confidence, oh, at least I can show up in the parking lot of the mosque and stand there, I can do that maybe, especially if there's a group of people supportive people around me to take small steps, whatever small step is for you, is very important. Because the lack of confidence is a source of depression. It's a source of fear, it's kind of it's a source of even violence in our world, because we lash out sometimes. But to be able to have a feeling of confidence to do something, means you're not helpless and hopeless. And it is very empowering, to feel like you can do Yes, I can. Even if it's small, it does something for the heart does something for the mind, it shifts something, it's harder to succumb to fear, or get lost in fear. If we take steps, small action, small steps. So developing confidence, so it becomes a power. So it's a strength, it's a support that's kind of raring to go, it's like, you know, it's operating, they're like, Yes, I can do this. And then there's a power of effort of engagement. A nice alternative translation of this word is persistence. Tourists Hang in there. And the analogy for this assembly for this is a boiling water. And probably many of you heard this, if you decide to boil the water in your turn the kettle on the flame under the kettle, and let it be on for 30 seconds and decide you should go do something else. And come back an hour later and turn the kettle on again. Then you said well, you know, really, I should go shopping, turn it off and come back A while later and turn it on and turn it off. And never boils, you have to maintain the heat long enough to get it to boil. So same thing in our practice, we have to kind of hang in there. Just keep doing it day in day out. On retreat, keep doing it. And slowly, there's enough momentum or enough continuity that supports it to happen. And I think for me personally,

I don't think of myself as having any particularly innate capacity for concentration practice or being concentrated. And I as a teacher, I've met many people who seem to have a natural capacity. So I can say, wow, that's different than me, that's pretty impressive. But what I have instead, my kind of strength is persistence. And I'll just persist and persist. And in the wake of the persistence comes concentration. And so I've gotten concentrated but because of this, this progress been strong for me is hanging in there, keep doing it, keep doing it stay there. So effort is very important to make effort to learn how to make effort. And that's kind of the big con, the big kind of discovery of practice is that there's no singular right effort. That's going to be right all the time. But rather there's something about the how we make effort, how much strength we put into it, how hard we practice how we lay it back off, how we lighten up, relax into what we do. That's constantly shifting and changing. There are times when it takes you really want to make manual labor work really hard. hard, you know, huff and puff break out into a sweat even sometimes. And other times, you want to just kind of just chill as much as you can maybe no effort at all, just kind of let it be let it be an in between that there's a wide range. And so often in the first period of when people start meditating, it's learning what is the right effort? Or how much effort to make here? Am I making too much am I trying too much am I striving Am I pushing or making too little, just hanging out, I'm complacent, I'm not really kind of into this kind of, you know, just kind of I'll just check in with the mindfulness once in a while and into I need an intravenous 82 and up the energy, I need to tone it down at different times as we learn. And sometimes you'll learn from seeing what we're doing doesn't work. If we can have confidence in ourselves, then it's okay to have a network. Not working doesn't mean you're a failure. Networking means time to learn. Let's Let's learn from this, I've confidence that I can learn and make adjustments and find my way. And as we people get more and more adept in practice, they make smaller and smaller adjustments as we go along. And those adjustments after a while becomes second nature, it can almost have a quality of effortlessness to it,

because it's just so obvious to know what to do with different circumstances. Just like for some people, riding a bicycle, you would say, requires a lot of effort, a lot of energy. But after a while, that making the shifts and effort you have to do becomes second nature, you know, be ready to go up a hill, you know, you have to shift how you're pedaling and how you're pushing, you don't have to think about it just kind of like automatic you do. When you get to the top of the hill, you know that you don't, you don't have to keep pedaling so much anymore, you can coast. And so you kind of let go. So same thing, in practice, as we get more skilled at this, our effort, our understanding of effort becomes a string, and becomes almost like second nature that carries us along. And an effort is a kind of muscle. And so as a muscle of applying yourselves and practice gets stronger, then it's it's strong, it's available, they can do the work, we don't get tired so easily. The third power is mindfulness, the ability to hold things in awareness, to be present, and really, in the present moment, and see clearly recognize clearly this is what's happening now. And this ability to hold things in the present moment is not an easy capacity. We all have the ability. But we also have the ability to get lost in thought. And think about the past in the future. And so which of these do we want to feed, which which we want to strengthen. And for many people, they've spent a lifetime feeding destructive thoughts. And they've been distracting themselves and thinking about things and lost in thought for decades. So that's what's been strengthened.

Luckily, adjusting for that, and strengthening the capacity to be present and aware, can correct for that faster than it took for us to all the time we spent being distracted. So but it still takes time. So we'd start developing the capacity to come back. So first, we're kind of relive we forget, are lost in thought. And then we remind ourselves, let's come back and be mindful. So we're engaging the faculty of mindfulness stays a little bit. We get lost, we engage again. Again, again, at some point, the muscle of mindfulness becomes strong enough, that once we engage it, it's it can stay present. There's a strength there, that's stronger than the strength of distractions. And then when that's strong enough, it becomes easier and easier to stay present. And you find that you can stay for extended periods of time. We can just stay here present and aware of what's going on. And we no longer have to apply effort to be present. The effort at some point becomes more the effort to avoid the effort of thinking, avoid the effort of being distracted and letting go. So we keep coming back to the place of awareness here. And then there's the power of Samadhi. Samadhi is a beautiful word, Indian word and in that it's almost I think it almost has sacred connotations in the Indian, religious kind of world. And some people in India, some religions use the word Samadhi is synonymous with the Buddhist word for me. Bona kind of the ultimate kind of state that you can attain. And it's a state, it's a capacity of having our psychophysical being unified, gathered together collected. So our whole being is connected and involved in the same thing at the same time. Oftentimes, our, our whole psychophysical system is scattered, we have all these different faculties. And they can be kind of all over the place. I could be thinking one thing, I could be intending another thing, I could feeling emotions connected something else entirely different. And my body has it wants dinner. And so my mind is jumping around between all these thoughts, these ideas, dinner obligations, intentions, all this stuff, in some scattered and fragmented the ability to gather them together these faculties and be unified and centered here in this moment. So we're right across purposes with ourselves is part of the function of Samadhi. It's not just a laser focus on the present moment. But rather, it's a centering of ourselves composing ourselves. So the attention is focused on what we're looking at. But it's not like a narrow focus in the sense of, that's all we're doing. It's like we've gathered, our five faculties gathered our awareness together. So it's harmoniously in present and connected. The idea of a concentrated mind is a mind which is soft, mind which is malleable. It's clear, settled, tranquil, focused. It's a beautiful thing to develop Samadhi, it's a tremendous strength to have, because when you have concentration, you can really see much more clearly what's going on. The Buddha said, someone who has Samadhi sees things as they are. So to have that clarity, and that stability of mind. It gives much more support for effort, support for mindfulness support for confidence, support for anything you want to do. And to have that strength of focus that Samadhi provides, is really invaluable.

The last faculty which becomes a power is paññā, usually translated into English as wisdom. But I think that wisdom might give the wrong connotations for the meaning of this, because it's a faculty more than knowledge, it's a capacity of the mind, what's in the mind functioning of the mind, that the mind does activity of the mind, the wisdom activity. And so a very nice translation is the word discernment, to be discerning is the activity of seeing what's happening. And being able to differentiate between what is useful and not useful to do, to kind of look and figure out what's needed here. Or I need to apply more effort here, I think I'm making too much effort, I think I need to relax more now. That's being discerning to, to realize that maybe what I need to do now is to have more confidence. Maybe I need to study where I have lack of confidence where I'm afraid, so I can understand that and work through it and come into a place of confidence. What not what I need now is to pay attention to my emotional life. That's an act of discernment, when I need to do now is to be more focused on my breathing, and not waver so much. And that's an act of discernment. So there's a whole range of way that wisdom functions. When we make wise choices, we discerning we see. One of the very important ways of being discerning is to be discerning about discernment. Because it can sound like suddenly you have to be so busy, you know, analyzing and figuring out what do I do now and, and I can I can just make your more more agitated to do that. So to be discerning about discernment is to notice how you're discerning that you're doing it the right time when it's needed. And you're doing it in such a way that the mind is becoming more tranquil, more peaceful, more, more quieter, a way that supportive of the practice doesn't take you away from the practice. So high so how you're discerning is important instead function of discernment to know that as we become more discerning as we learn to use our mind to ask questions, use our mind to kind of explore and find a way that becomes a power becomes like second nature. And we don't have to kind of wait to someone tells us what to do, we don't have to pray that somehow it's going to work out, okay? We have some confidence that we can kind of engage and find our path find the path for ourselves. And this is one of the great turning points in or is her milestones in someone's Dharma practice, when they have confidence, that they have the discernment to find the path of practice for themselves. They no longer need anyone to tell them what it is. But they can find the Eightfold Path, they can find the way forward in practice. So these five areas, or four can become five powers. And as they become more and more powerful in us, it becomes kind of like, becomes a strength that courses through us, that feels obvious that feels empowering, that feels vitalizing that most importantly, helps us not be a victim of circumstances. Because especially if you have confidence in Dharma practice, that confidence means that you have real confidence in it. You can use it anytime at all, in any circumstance. At the moment of your death. There's a very dramatic fable I guess story. teaching the Buddha gave to some, I think it was a general. And some you bring big, big armies to fight other armies and stuff.

And the Buddha said to him, if the great mountain range on the east begins moving towards you, and the great mountain range to the south starts moving towards you. And the great mountain range on the west that's moving towards you. And then northern mountain range that's moving towards you. Just moving all these, you there's no way you can go to coming and closer and closer. Like, you know, these big walls, you know, you know, I guess in some movies, they have things like that, where people are stuck in this room and the walls are getting closer and closer. And Indiana Jones put some kind of bar across, they somehow get out. But when the mountains these mountains are coming out. I think the idea is it's hopeless, you're going to get crushed. What do you do? What do you rely on? And so if you ever get tested this way, I'll tell you the answer. You rely on the Dharma, the Dharma practice. And you would say, Well, what that how's that gonna save me? Nothing's gonna save you from those mountains. But what the Dharma practice can do, it saves you from yourself. It means in the last moments, minutes that you have, you don't succumb to fear. You don't. You don't succumb to being a victim. That you have the ability to muster presence, awareness, confidence in the value of being present and here to

be focused, to be aware, to be wise about the situation no matter what it is. So you don't give up your power. You don't give up your confidence. You don't give up the sense of efficacy in the ability to do something here to be here. That's a powerful image. Where do we give up our power? Where do we give up where where do we kind of succumb to being a victim? When we don't need to be in that ideation of thought or for me? Is it possible to step into almost any circumstance with Dharma power, we have a practice. That means that we can always have something to be confident in the confident that we can be present and hold ourselves upright. And be you know, just to be is enough just to be present. Look, the danger in the eye, too powerful thing to do, to be focused, mindful, wise discerning. As opposed to being afraid and lost and confused. It said that someone who takes refuge in the Buddha Dharma Sangha has no grounds to ever again complain. That bad news. Maybe you didn't want to sign up for that. You're not ready to give up or complaining. But that's a quite quite a powerful thing. meant, if you really understand what this Dharma is about, there's no room for no need anymore to complain. what's the alternative? So the idea of, of becoming so powerful, have these powers, I think is a very important thing that we can offer our society in the world around us to have some sense of efficacy, that there's something we can rely on and call on. That we are powerful people who have the potential for tremendous power and strength. And there's nothing wrong with developing it, and offering it to ourselves to support our practice. There's nothing wrong with developing an offering society to support our society. In fact, what I hope is the dummer practice creates many people who have tremendous strength to be able to meet the challenges of our world. But to always remember that for Dharma, Dharma practitioners, that the Dharma is always characterized by non harming, and by compassion. So that when we have personal power, ready to meet anything, to have the discernment, the recognition of is it non harming? Is it beneficial, is compassionate, the way I move in the world, the way of how I respond what I do. So all of you, who did this day here today, have some power?

Believe it or not, some of you don't think of yourself as in those terms of power. But to do a whole day, from 830 to five, take certain kind of strength. I don't think it's an easy thing to do. Some of you know, it's not easy thing to do. Because you felt like the better off much through the day. But it's, it's you did it, it takes certain kind of strength to do it. It took certain amount of confidence. Maybe there were poor points in the day where you didn't have much confidence to call upon, but you had enough to stay here and see it through you mustered effort. You couldn't have been the whole day here without some mindfulness, guarantee it. Even if you didn't want to be mindful. This being in a community of people in silence through the day requires your calls forth attention and awareness in a way that many things don't don't in our society. I think there have to be some concentration, present to stick to it through the day, like the day. And I think it took a lot of discernment, he probably didn't think of yourself as being discerning, but you probably made all kinds of little adjustments and changes and figuring, even like deciding where you're going to do what meditation or when or how much or takes little choices. And hopefully you are wise and do yourself in situation well enough to make the right choice, when to take a break. So all of you have these faculties, all of you have engaged them with some efficacy with some strength and some power. And I congratulate you for that, but I appreciate it tremendously. And now you can go out and develop a more. And let them become your strength. Let them carry you and support you as you go through the world. Your Dharma power, Dharma strength. So thank you all very much. And if some of you want to try out your five faculties sooner rather than later, you can try it out to helping us clean the center after the day along. It's all five faculties are needed. It'll go a lot better that way. And it's the custom of IMC that the people that practice here, take care of the practice center. And so we need about six, seven people to take stay by 10 minutes and do the basic cleaning the bathrooms, the kitchen, the floor and the vacuuming and so 1234567 so thank you for all the all of you who offered but probably and Jill is the manager. So if you want to check in with her, she can coordinate a little bit than you need to know where supplies or anything, talk to her. And it's my sincere hope and aspiration, that whatever benefit that has come from this day of practice, whatever strength

we've acquired, that is for the welfare and happiness of all beings everywhere. They all beings be safe
And happy and free.