

# Notes on Saturday Morning Talk

January 14, 2006

Ven. Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche

Translator: Thomas Doctor  
Boudha Nath, Kathmandu, Nepal

The Saturday Talks are meant to be shared among Rinpoche's students. Please keep them private. Thank you.

[Beginning Prayers]

## The Five Powers

That Buddha Dharma is profound and vast, is something we all know, and particularly we become increasingly aware of it through studying, reflecting, and practicing the Buddha Dharma. Through personal experience we get a sense of profundity and vastness. But sometimes, precisely because the Buddha Dharma is so vast and profound, it seems necessary to receive some pith instructions that will enable us to practice according to the teachings. Otherwise, because the teachings are vast and profound, it may seem to us that we don't know how to take up such a practice, how to become a practitioner, unless we receive such instructions.

Another interesting thing about the teachings is, whether we talk about the teachings, which were directly given by the Buddha himself, or the teachings that come from the masters of the lineage, learned and accomplished followers of the Buddha, all of these teachings are aimed at a single purpose: they are providing methods to tame our mind, to soften our mind, to make it more gentle, to become a better person. That's the universal purpose of all the teachings. Therefore, the result of any studying, may it be at great length, in great detail, for a long time, or not, should be that we become more gentle and soft.

We study the teachings, whether we talk about the ones which were given directly by the Buddha, or the Dharma teachings which are the product of great learned and accomplished masters who produced commentaries to clarify the Buddha's teachings. We study them, we read the books, if we don't understand something or have any doubts, we should clarify them, until we are free of doubts. When we do that we gain the so-called knowledge, insight, or understanding that comes from learning and the insight that comes from reflection. Both of them are just intellectual understanding. But they are excellent, true understanding.

All the teachings are excellent methods so we can achieve this extraordinary insight and understanding, which is the result of learning and reflecting. When studying and reflecting on the Buddhist teachings and commentaries, we achieve an understanding which is extraordinary in the sense that it is very genuine, excellent understanding which came about through reflection and learning. But this itself is not enough. It is not the full fruition, when talking about what we try to reach as students and practitioners of Buddhism. Because based on this type of understanding, this genuine, authentic, accurate, and undecieving insight that we can achieve through learning and reflection, when we take it to heart, when we apply it, we should be able to discover truly noble qualities. We should be able to discover a state of mind which is extremely open, relaxed, careful, flexible, agile, able to rest at ease in all situations, which makes it possible for us to develop compassion, affection for others in a greater and greater extend, as well as intelligence. We need to increase our compassion and intelligence. We need a peaceful mind and contentment. Our contentment should steadily increase. Also our compassion should steadily increase.

But not only that, along with that, a real insight into the nature of things, a perception into the abiding way of things, an insight into the nature of things which has multiple levels and layers, should take place, because there is the intellectual understanding which we gain through learning and reflection, but then there is also the experiential understanding which is achieved based on the former learning and reflecting, based on our studies, through that we are able to ultimately discover a wisdom which is that of enlightenment, meaning one that perceives the nature as it is and also perceives things as they are in all their diversity and multiplicity. That is the ultimate aim.

It is through our excellent insight that we gained through learning and reflection, that we should be able to achieve such qualities.

In short, the Dharma is meant for application, to gain experience. If we are not successful in gaining direct experience with the teachings, if we don't become genuine practitioners, then we could use the example of dying of thirst at the bank of a river. That would be the situation.

All the teachings given by the Buddha are practical instructions, meant for practical application. Wouldn't you agree? [Rinpoche gets a cup of tea.] Is this vodka? Ha ha. I heard on CNN that if you drink coffee you become very smart. They can say anything to make money! I don't believe them. You won't become smarter from coffee, but sort-of drunk. You might be less dull because you sort-of wake up, but smart? How could coffee make you smart? Then anything could make you smart. They might as well say that coke makes you smart, or that cocaine makes you smart, but does it? But nevertheless, whether we are people who have some experience with learning and reflecting on the teachings, or a lot of it, or hardly have any experience, whatever is the case, we can benefit tremendously from oral instructions. And in that regard, we should also remember the value of mind training, "Lojong", which will definitely benefit all of us. Those instructions can be found for example in the "Entering the Way Of a Bodhisattva", the Bodhisattvacharyavatara.

One of my teachers, Kunu Lama Tenzin Gyamtso would reply, when asked what he's practicing, "I'm chanting the Bodhisattvacharyavatara." He was such a learned and highly accomplished master, but he said, "Even this, I don't do well. That treatise as well I'm not able to practice according to that approach. I can't."

In the mind training context there's what is called "the Five Powers". I have taught this on several occasions. Many of you have received it many times from myself or others. And I believe that a fair amount of you are practicing these instructions. But to recapitulate what these Five Powers are, which condense the instructions of mind training, which are a summery of the teachings of mind training:

## 1. The Power of the Resolve

For example, in the morning, when we wake up, we make a commitment, "Today I want to spend my time as a practitioner. I will live this day in accordance to the way of the Bodhisattvas. Today I will spend my time training my mind relying on the Five Powers." When we make this resolve, then, as a natural result, it will be easier for us throughout the day to connect with the practice, to train, to practice during the day. That comes through the resolve that we have made in the morning. In fact, we can say that to the degree to which we are able to make such a really firm resolve in the morning, it will become easier for us during the day to succeed in bringing the training into one's life. So this is something which is very important, obviously, to make the resolve, to remember it repeatedly, that will ensure automatically that we will be able to train in this practice, which basically means to cultivate loving kindness and compassion and insight into the nature of things, the two aspects of Bodhicitta. We'll be able to train in those as a result of our commitment to the training, which is the first of the Five Powers.

## 2. The Power of Habituation

(2) In this way we will be able to join with the main practice of a Bodhisattva, which is the Six Paramitas of generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, concentration, and insight. We should develop these qualities more and more, that is bodhisattva training. When we train in those six, that is the second among the Five Powers, the Power of Habituation, where we take up the training of the Six Paramitas, the two aspects of the mind of enlightenment.

1st Paramita: GENEROSITY: Generosity doesn't have to mean necessarily that we are generous with material things. It is also not confined in something that we train in when relating to people who lack things, who need things. One should develop generosity no matter who one is with, whether one is with poor people or rich people, one should live in a way which is permeated with being generous, and again it doesn't necessarily only mean that we give things, but it can also mean that we relieve others of fear and anxiety, or also that we connect others with spiritual training, allowing them to access the teachings. That is generosity, and we should take it up. Based on our commitment, on how firm our resolve is, if we have the firm resolve that we want to be

generous, then we will have the result that we naturally want to be generous in our daily activities, we will become able to cultivate qualities that come from being generous, not only in our practice session but also in our daily life, whether we walk, sit, eat, or lie down, we will be able to live in a way that is in accord with this training in generosity. Also, supportive states of mind for the practice, such as mindfulness, alertness, and conscientiousness will manifest much easier if we have a firm commitment to begin with.

2nd Paramita: DISCIPLINE: Discipline basically means to refrain from harming others. When we succeed in giving up to harm others and the very basis for doing that, then we are training in discipline. Whether or not we are able to do that depends on how genuine our resolve is, how keen we are really on being disciplined.

3rd Paramita: PATIENCE: The best way of patience or forbearing is to be able to bear with a very difficult situation, when people harm us directly, harming us physically, beating us, or inflicting any other type of physical pain. In such a situation we should be able to accommodate that, to be flexible, patient, forbearing, without getting angry and aggressive. If we can do that, then we are quite successful in being patient. Certainly we should be able to bear with unpleasant words, when people say things that would otherwise irritate us or make us upset. Then in such situations, being practitioners of this path, we should be able to accommodate that type of situation. So when being patient, this is what we train in developing, in really accommodating an understanding state of mind that avoids becoming angry and aggressive.

4th Paramita: DILIGENCE: Diligence is the ability to take up the training with constancy and without interruption, to join the training in a state of delighting in what is virtuous and wholesome. That is what in essence diligence is, and of course whether or not one is able to connect with that training throughout the day depends again on the resolve, how strongly committed one is to this practice. Then through that, if we are genuinely committed to the training, obviously we will be diligent. That is a quite natural cause and effect relationship. If we have that commitment, then certainly we will take delight in what is virtuous.

5th Paramita: CONCENTRATION: Concentration basically refers to Shamata practice, letting the mind abide in peace and all the various means and methods that we have for letting the mind achieve that state.

6TH Paramita: INSIGHT: When talking about the 6th paramita, we talk about the insight into the way things are and the way things appear. It comes down to the ultimate Bodhicitta, the ultimate mind of enlightenment, which is perfect insight, perfect prajna. We train in learning, reflecting, and meditating in order to actualize this perfect insight. All of this we can include in the sixth aspect, of developing knowledge and insight.

Throughout all of this it is key to the Bodhisattva training that one trains without selfish wishes, without hoping to become thereby respected, acknowledged, without hoping to receive an award from one's practice! That is not interesting for a Bodhisattva, quite on the contrary, one deliberately avoids any such expectation of positive response to one's training. For instance, when one is generous, one does so out of genuine love and affection, wishing to help and provide for others, without the wish for personal gain, with no interest in gaining respect or acknowledgment, etc. This is very important for the Bodhisattva training, to become effective and pure, which is what we want. If we start out with a real firm commitment to the practice of the Six Paramitas, then we will be able to achieve an extraordinary state of mind, a mind which is deeply at peace, and permeated, suffused with loving kindness and compassion, an extremely bright and insightful state of mind which will be enjoyable for both oneself and for all others, which will be genuinely wholesome and pure, both in terms of what happens to oneself and in terms of what happens to others.

It is important to be able to notice such a change of our mind, when training the mind, when we are going through this type of Bodhisattva training, then we should keep track of our progress because certain things are supposed to happen when we practice in the genuine way, then if they don't happen, then it's a sign that something is wrong with our practice.

So we should back, for example, thinking about the last year, what did happen to myself? What happened with my view, my experience, my way of relating to everyone, how is it now compared to a year ago? Do the same looking one month back to check how you've improved or not. Also, think back a week, or even a day, "Where was I yesterday? What was I doing? How was my experience?"

How is it now?" If we are very successful, genuine Dharma practitioners, we will be able to notice a positive development from one day to the next!

Otherwise, one should at least see a positive change looking back a month, or at the very least looking back a year. Otherwise, if there's no change noticeable, we are just cheating ourselves, fooling ourselves.

If we train in the Power of Resolve and the Power of Familiarization, which is the training of the Six Paramitas, certain results should appear. It is up to us to keep track if results are manifesting or not.

In short, we should become accustomed to certain qualities. Our mind should be peaceful. Our mind should be kind and loving to everyone. Our mind should also be bright and insightful. These are the three aspects we should become increasingly familiar with.

The perspective of an ordinary sentient being and a Dharma practitioner is very different, is contrary. Ordinary sentient beings have so many wishes, hopes, and little contentment. Dharma practitioners are able to free their minds of selfish aims and pursuits, and instead enjoy and appreciate tremendously in the present moment.

For example, it is said in the Calling The Lama From Afar, "Although I have everything, I want more and more. In this way, I continue to be fooled and deceived by illusory, unreal phenomena." That trap is what a Dharma practitioner is able to avoid. The perspective of a Dharma practitioner is an extremely intelligent perspective, it's the view and experience of someone who is not stuck at the level what merely seems to be but someone who has opened up to how things actually are. That is an intelligent perspective.

We said that as a Dharma practitioner it is important that we notice some real change. We need to see an obvious change from year to year, from months to months, and even from day to day. We must be able to notice a genuinely positive change. The indications are for example, when we practice generosity, if we have the natural wish very often and in a genuine way, not very contrived but quite naturally, to be of help to others, to genuinely and authentically want to help others in a long-lasting way. If we feel that very often, so strongly, then this will make us move in that way, and we are doing things that make others happy, make them have less fear, etc. and again without wanting respect, fame, etc., then this is a good sign that some change is taking place.

If we can avoid, because of having the wish to avoid, bringing harm and pain to others, if we say less and less painful things, avoid saying anything hurtful, then this is a good sign. In the past we would have said certain small things here and there that would hurt others, but if that is happening less and less, then that's a good sign. If we can cope with whatever is said about us, without being angry and aggressive if somebody says something unpleasant, and without exultations if being praised, but are just an equilibrium and are able to maintain ourselves throughout whatever is said about us, maintain ourselves as practitioners of the path, then that's another good sign.

Therefore, there are many indications which tell us whether the change which will happen when training in that way, is actually taken place.

In terms of diligence, how successful we are in practicing diligence, then of course if we can notice that, "Now I really have this natural wish to be good." meaning to have a good and kind intention, and to maintain that, and to then also do things that have positive effects for others, if that impulse, that sense of delighting in what is wholesome, if that comes about more and more, then that is a sign of success in developing diligence.

To be successful in the practice of concentration, basically that comes down to Shamata training and how good one is at that, but also to be alert, conscientious, and mindful is something that pertains to the training of concentration. If those mental states come about more and more often, then this shows some success in the practice of concentration. Isn't it? This is very, very effective Shamata. How much that will help, is one question, if one is just sleepy, for example. But if you are aware moment by moment and go in a good direction is very intelligent Shamata.

Now, when we talk about Vipashana, knowledge, gaining genuine insight, that of course is a tremendously vast topic. It can be a very complex topic. Something that we concern ourselves with for months and years, investigating, examining, learning, reflecting in order to discover

extraordinary insight.

So that is indeed a very vast topic. But we have to do something right now about developing insight and knowledge. So what do we do? There are two approaches. The foremost and perfect way to develop true insight is to acknowledge the state of non-conceptual wakefulness, where we are able to let go in profound emptiness simplicity, without any constructs of existence, non-existence, both or neither, completely beyond any constructs of the mind. If we can acknowledge that state of profound emptiness through non-conceptual wakefulness, then that is perfect insight. We must be successful in that, our practice needs to culminate in that wakefulness!

If we are not able to do that right now, to arrive at such a state of realization, then what can we do? We can nevertheless come up with something that is an approximation of emptiness realization. What is that? It is thinking for example about the fact that everything is illusory and dreamlike, that all phenomena may seem to be real, but are not real in the slightest. This is thinking and this is not non-conceptual wisdom, but it is nevertheless thinking which is in accordance with reality. It is nevertheless a conceptual perspective which accords with the actual nature of things, which in that way is completely different from a mind that thinks that things are real, just as they seem to be, all of these things that appear to me, the objects of my senses, are concrete and real objects, and my experience of them is perfectly valid. I'm in perfect touch with reality when I see the things I see and think the things about them that I do. Such perspective is flawed and mistaken, it is contrary to the abiding way of things. If instead we can come to a conceptual understanding of emptiness, that we can understand that things are not permanent the way they appear to be, but impermanent. And if we can come to an increasing awareness of the lack of reality and the dreamlike nature of appearances, then this is very helpful in terms of gradually approaching the perfect insight which arises with the manifestation of non-conceptual wakefulness. For that to happen, we can rely on the various reasonings that we have at our disposal, those that are taught and explained, for example, the argument of the absence of one and many, which is taught in the Ornament Of the Middle Way, the argument from dependent origination, which is taught in Entering the Middle Way, and so forth. If we can learn those, and once we begin to discover the nature of these arguments and how they work, then to remind ourselves about those arguments and the impact they have on the mind, is an excellent way to give rise to this approximation of emptiness.

So, what is characteristic for the way a Dharma practitioner thinks? One characteristic is the thought, "These things may seem to be lasting, but they are not, they are completely impermanent." That is very characteristic of a Dharma practitioner.

We Dharma practitioners need one type of confidence, that all that we see, hear, and experience is fragile, changing, unreliable, that all of this will be subject to destruction. All of this is subject to destruction! Destruction is the nature of this! Why does that help to think in such a way? Because things ARE in fact subject to destruction! Destruction, disintegration IS the nature of all! It is going to happen! When it then happens, if we have accustomed ourselves to the impermanent nature of things, once it shows itself, it will be easy for us to accommodate. For example, "Things run out, end, things cease to be!" Bring that thought to mind repeatedly, so we can take it when it actually happens. When we do that, if we become increasingly aware of and in tune with the impermanent nature of things, then arrogance, conceit, pride, selfishness in particular will fall away and vanish by themselves.

We can understand, noticing those effects on our mind and experience that such thoughts bring about, then we can understand that there is indeed a purpose to that type of practice, which isn't the perfect practice but an approximation, but that there is nevertheless a very concrete effect, that it naturally brings us closer and closer to the point when we can take up the genuine practice.

### 3. The Power of Virtuous Seeds

(3) We rely on the Power of Virtuous Seeds when we notice that our resolve isn't that strong, and when we notice that we are not good at familiarizing ourselves with the main training of the Six Paramitas. Then we have to rely on further means and methods, some further factors, which are the gathering of accumulations, of putting together favorable circumstances which facilitate training.

In short, there are Seven Branches of gathering accumulations which are to pay homage, to make offerings, to confess, to rejoice, to request the teacher to remain, to request the teacher to turn the wheel of Dharma, and to dedicate. These are known as the Seven Branches.

The first, to pay homage, that is something that we can train in when, for example, we make prostrations, when we think of the objects of refuge and acknowledge their extraordinary powers and qualities and remember the kindness of the Three Jewels, with genuine joy and devotion, one is paying homage, physically and using one's speech, and so forth. This is to remedy very effectively the disturbing emotion of pride. It will take out the energy of pride. Next, generosity remedies stinginess, confession successfully remedies anger, etc. Each of the Seven Branches remedies a particular negative emotion.

Rejoicing remedies jealousy, envy, if we can rejoice in the happiness and success of others. Requesting to turn the Wheel of Dharma and when we request that the teacher remains without passing into Nirvana, then this is a way to remedy wrong views and ignorance. When we dedicate all goodness towards universal enlightenment, the enlightenment of everyone, then among the three types of generosity that is also the so-called "gift of the Dharma", we ensure that all goodness is made inexhaustible, that the energy will remain all throughout the path and into the achievement of enlightenment.

So in this way, we train in what is called the Seven Branches.

We should practice these Seven Branches every day, not just by words, but from the bottom of our hearts, reciting the words with our mouths, while thinking well about their meaning. If we rely on these seven aspects of virtuous practice, if we practice those seven, then the manifestation of the mind of enlightenment, relative and ultimate bodhicitta, will be greatly facilitated. It will become much easier for us to develop the Power of Resolve, the genuine wish to reach enlightenment and to embark on the path to enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. That will become much easier. And through the power of the goodness, the virtue that we create by means of these seven, we will be able to train in generosity, discipline, patience, and so on, the paramitas, with more and more success and authenticity as a result of relying on the Seven Branches. That in short was about the Power of Virtuous Seeds.

## 4. The Power of Revulsion

(4) What does that mean? It means that there is a certain outlook that one should feel revulsion towards, which is what we are used to, the self-centered perspective of "I want to be happy, that's to be honest what is most important, whether others fare well or not, because they are not important compared to me." Identify this attitude as the main culprit which continues to create misfortune for oneself and all others. When we understand that, then a real sense of revulsion will take place, when we look at our selfish perspective, our own state of mind as it is now, and then compare it with what actually should be the case, meaning the complete opposite, that we have no selfish interest, no matter what happens to oneself. The only thing that matters is the happiness, wellbeing, liberation, and enlightenment of all sentient beings! That is a compassionate outlook, and as practitioners of the path we should arrive at THAT view. When we come to see our own perspective, as in complete conflict with what actually we should be able to experience and see unfolding through our practice, then we should feel revulsion as a result. If we feel revulsion, then we won't stick with it, we will move beyond and away from it. Therefore, the power of revulsion is also a powerful factor that we can and should rely on.

## 5. The Power of Aspiration

(5) When we make aspirations, we create a link so that our practice can continue and that it will expand, and that its effects will be felt by more and more individuals. It is important that we don't get stuck at the level of thinking in terms of 'me versus them', 'my group and then the others', and that our intention is not that those identify myself with and I feel close to, that that group only should achieve happiness, success, freedom, and so on. Instead of that, our wish should be truly altruistic, a genuinely good heart that wishes for the happiness, wellbeing, and liberation of ALL sentient beings. If we can develop that view and make aspirations and prayers, then that's very powerful. This is the fifth power of making aspirations.

Those are the five powers, and they contain the oral instructions of the path of mind training.

They are like a summary, a profound summary of the entire path of mind training. They can be applied in the way we just talked about, during this life. There is another way of relying on them during the experience of death. That is something that we can talk about some other day.

These five powers, five strength are very logical and easy to understand and quite applicable. So it's good to remember them and to apply them, because it is very applicable. When we wake up from sleep the first thought is very important, we should think, "Today I'd like to be good, keep a good motivation, and do good actions." Good motivations refers to caring and loving, respecting all beings, not only MY friends and MY family. "I want to serve and help and care for all sentient beings as much as I can!" that is very important. It is important that our motivation is strong and pure. That will encourage us to do good the whole day. The whole day you will think in a good way, say good things, and do good things. That power will lead you from good to better and better. That pure motivation will prevent you from doing bad, because that motivation has so much positive power! With the right motivation, you won't say anything bad, you won't act badly, you will not even think anything bad. That's how powerful motivation is! That is why it is called strength, power.

Secondly, with what do we need to familiarize ourselves? What habits do we need? We need to familiarize ourselves with a loving, kind, caring mind to everyone in an impartial and real way, and genuine way, as much as we can, and in an intelligent way. There are two types of intelligence. One intelligence is to love friends and enemies the same.

The second type of intelligence is to know that nothing is reliable, everything is changing, moving, everything will vanish and disintegrate. We need to accept that. For worldly people this is difficult to hear. If you tell them, "One day you will finish." They think all you want is to criticize them. If you tell them, "One day you will become sick." They think you just want to criticize them. But no, actually these are facts. Dharma practitioners need to accept this, "Yes, everything is changing. Now I'm healthy, but sooner or later I'll get sick. I accept that. I will get old. Anything can happen, because everything is changeable." The most important of all is the power of familiarization. But of course it matters what it is what we familiarize ourselves with. It has to be truly positive familiarization. Therefore, traditional Dharma training has so much power, physically, verbally, mentally, for example, the seven branch practice has a lot of power. But this power is totally based on a pure motivation. If you do thousands and thousands of prostrations but not genuinely from your heart, the effect will be so-so. But even if you don't do many prostrations, but you do them genuinely from your heart, they will have so much power. The same applies to making offerings. Even we can just imagine offerings, if we do it with a pure state of mind, it will have much power. If we offer one flower with pure motivation, it has so much power! It is not the amount, the cost, or beauty that makes the difference, but mental power. If you make offerings of something expensive with a so-so motivation, it won't help much.

The tradition of offering water bowls started in Tibet. It did exist in India, too, but not like in Tibet. One offers water bowls because one won't feel stingy, miserly about water. One won't regret it afterwards, especially not in Tibet in the past, since there was plenty of water. I hope this is similar in other countries, but nowadays in some places people need to buy water. But in those days in Tibet, one didn't have to buy water and the water was pure. When one offered water, it looked good, it was pure, and it didn't cost a single penny, so there was no need to feel miserliness or feel bad or feel regret, but one feels good. These days, if one would offer any other liquid, such as expensive wine, one might start to think, "Why are we wasting this good wine? Ok, I'll rather drink it." Ha ha.

Ok, I think all of you understood [today's talk] quite well, but you are welcome to ask one or two questions. [no questions] Hallo? I'll wait a few seconds. [no questions]

[dedication]

Thank you.

[These are my notes, roughly checked with the audio CD. I apologize for any mistakes. Tina]