

# Notes on Saturday Morning Talk

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

[Beginning Prayers]

## Using the Five Powers When Dying

All of you know already that when receiving Dharma teachings it is very important what motivation and what intent one has with respect to receiving instructions. That is important not only when receiving Dharma teachings, but also when thinking about the Dharma, and it's also very important when one practices meditation that one does so with a particular wholesome intent. And what is that intent? Well, of course it is the altruistic wish that everyone will be free from suffering and will be able to arrive at the level of complete enlightenment. Everyone meaning everyone without exception, all sentient beings, my mothers from the past. In order to give them happiness and freedom that is why I want to learn, reflect, and meditate.

The Buddha's teaching is subsumed under four headings, which the Buddha gave himself to mark what is his teaching, to give the characteristics of his teaching. Those four maxims, those four headings, are as follows:

1. *Everything conditioned is impermanent.*
2. *All that is defiling is painful.*
3. *All phenomena are empty and devoid of self.*
4. *Passing beyond suffering is peace.*

So those are the Four Seals that mark whatever is the teaching of the Buddha. This is the mode of the teaching of the enlightened one. It is always concerned with these four issues. What this also tells us is that impermanence is a central topic in Buddhism, that the understanding of the fact of impermanence is considered to be something very important for a spiritual practitioner. And that impermanence is a fact is something that we can quite easily verify for ourselves. We know from our own experience that things do not last. What the Buddha then says is that everything that is conditioned, everything that is the product of causes and conditions, is bound to disintegrate. That is the nature of such conditioned phenomena that they do not last. What this means is also that anything that is born has to die, and that includes of course ourselves as sentient beings who were born into this world. We also have to die. That insight, and that this is a universal fact is eluded to in a poem by the great master of India Ashvagoshya, when he says,

Have you ever seen someone, or heard about someone, or even entertained the thought that there just might be someone who was born and yet did not die?

So with this kind of rhetorical question, he points to the fact that everyone who is born, by virtue of being born, is also bound to die. Birth ends in death. That is a fact. That is the nature of impermanence. That is how it has been in the past. Whoever was born, did not live on forever. There is no one that we can encounter now who in this way attained immortality. And if we look at the condition of how it is right now then wherever we look we see further evidence of this fact that sentient beings because they were born also have to die. There is no one who lives on defying this impermanent nature of things. And because that is just a natural fact, because that is the nature of everything, that is the product of causes and conditions, that it does not last and that it is impermanent, what this means is also that this is how it will be in the future. We do not need to wonder whether there will come a time when birth does no longer imply necessarily death. That is how it will always be, just as it was in the past, just as it is now, so it will be also in the future.

This that were created through causes and conditioned, they are conditioned phenomena and also impermanent. So as one understands this fact, a certain sense of uncertainty begins to come up because understanding on the one hand that we will have to die, we will also acknowledge that we do not know when we will die, and what the circumstances surrounding our death will be. So while it is a fact that we will not live forever we have no certainty whatsoever as to when precisely it is that we are going to die. And it is also undeniable that there is such a thing as sudden death. It does indeed happen that death comes very suddenly and unexpectedly.

A spiritual practitioner is someone who prepares for that event, is someone who trains, prepares oneself in order to deal with that situation in a skillful way. Knowing that this time will come, one prepares oneself, so that when the time should come one should be able to pass beyond in a way that is beneficial for what comes after, so that one is able to die in a way that is in accordance with the teachings, and a way that also will in itself serve as a circumstance for one's being able to continue with the practice also in the lives that come after this life.

Last week, I talked about the Five Powers, which one relies on as a practitioner of the Great Vehicle. It was said that it was the Five Powers which subsume the training of a Bodhisattva. One relies on these Five Powers to train the mind. While skillfully using the Five Powers, or Five Forces, Five Strength in this life, there is also a way of using them at the time of death. This is precisely how it is, one can transfer the consciousness according to the Mahayana way, as it is explained in the instructions, there is a way of transferring consciousness, or going through the transition from one life to the next which is in accord with the approach of the Mahayana. That is again then one that uses these Five Powers. Just the sequence is slightly different when one uses the Five Powers at the time of death, yet what we are working with is precisely the same.

Since we are all sentient beings, and therefore our lives are all conditioned and of impermanent nature, it is important for us to know how to die in a skillful way. This is what we are going to talk about today.

On one hand it is quite depressing to think about death, but then on the other hand, it is the very truth that we all need to face death one time, each of us. But when we are going to die is not sure, that makes it worse. If we were sure, then ok, we could plan. But actually, we don't really want to know for sure, and even if somebody says that you will die when you are eighty years old, you still will think that eighty is not a nice number. You don't want to accept it.

[Somebody offers flowers to Rinpoche. Rinpoche puts them in front of himself, so he suddenly disappears behind the flowers. "They are much more beautiful than my face," he says laughing. Trying to find a space for the flowers, he puts them in front of Thomas, who also disappears behind the bouquet. Finally Rinpoche found a space on a big chair so that everyone can enjoy the flowers.]

Shantideva also said, "We all need to die, but giving up everything, leaving everything behind, is quite painful." Because even right now if we have to give up a small thing, if we have a certain amount of attraction to it, it will be difficult for us to give that small thing up, to give them away. We get sort-of uneasy or even a little bit angry, and a bit unhappy. Don't you know that feeling? But at the time of death, we have to give up not just some things, but everything without a single exception. That definitely is a difficult situation, yet it is going to happen. There will be such a day.

Shantideva continued, "What help will at that point my friends be able to give me? What can my friends, my relatives, and all my things do for me at the time of death? At that time, there is only one helper, which is my own merit, and yet I have not relied on it." Here "merit" means, to make it simple, "good heart." We can say that Shantideva was saying "merit" but talking about a good heart, because whenever one keeps a good heart one is on the good path!

[Looking again at the flowers, Rinpoche says: "Flowers are a very good example for impermanence. After a few days you can see how the flowers look like. Right now they look beautiful, but after a few weeks, how will they look and how will they smell? Flowers are really a good example for impermanence, much more effective than evergreens, which won't teach us about impermanence that quickly. Flowers teach us very quickly.]

As spiritual practitioners it is important that we deal with the fact that we are going to die and also that there is such a thing as sudden death. We need to be able to accept that thought. It needs to be something that we can keep in mind, accommodating that thought in our mind. Because it will be a reminder for us of the importance of spiritual practice, and it will ensure that we learn a

way of practicing that we can apply then when the time of death comes. It is important to know how to deal with the experience of death once it happens. We need to be familiar with a particular type of practice that will help us in that situation. Familiar to the extent that we can practice then very easily and naturally during that experience of death. So it is important first of all that we have a practice. Secondly, we need to be familiar with that practice, and we need to be able to apply it successfully. Otherwise we might have received a practice, but if we are not familiar with it, we may know of the practice but not to the extent that we can actually apply it. Therefore both points, having a practice and being familiar with this practice, are important.

When we rely on the Five Powers in this life, then we will become familiar with spiritual practice. Then when the time of death comes, we will be able to go through that kind of experience in a very wholesome way. All we need to do then at the time of death, is to simply rearrange the sequence of the Five Powers. Otherwise there is nothing new for us to learn and nothing new for us to do.

Death is a painful experience, and the states after death, the intermediate states called bardo, there are many different types of bardo, they can also be terrifying. Death is so painful because of our self-cherishing, our self-centered attitude, which is the basis for fear and for feeling pain at death and afterwards. Selfishness is the main creator of fear and pain! This self-centered attitude is one such problem maker.

Also attachment and grasping make death a difficult experience. What are we attached to? We can be attached to so many things: to our friends, relatives, family, things, possessions, our status, etc. Some are very attached to certain people, others are very attached to things. Again others are very attached to people as well as things. Grasping and attachment of the mind expresses itself in different ways, yet it is the same emotion.

We need to be able to die in a way that facilitates spiritual practice, and is not a hindrance to it. We need to ensure that there are no hindrances to our practicing when the time of death arrives. One hindrance is great attachment and grasping during death, because it will make it difficult for us to practice. Whatever it is that we are attached to, we should try to loosen that attachment and grasping! Then we have eliminated one obstacle that makes dying a difficult process.

To be attached to friends and dear ones at the time of death is not going to be helpful in any way and it is not going to make the process of dying easier, it won't facilitate spiritual practice. But quite the contrary, that feeling of attachment will be a cause for many disturbing emotions and fuel for delusion. Our perception of things will be distorted and this will make it very difficult for us to see things clearly. So at the time of death, give up the impulse of wanting to stay with friends and family, but let that attachment dissolve, give them good advice and make good wishes and aspiration prayers for them.

The same applies to attachment to material things. It won't make it easier for us to die, but it will disturb the mind and make the death process more difficult. So then what? Instead of being attached, we can part with our friends and loved ones in a meaningful way, and that would be for example by sharing our understanding of the spiritual path, giving some meaningful and helpful advice for those who are going to be left behind. In terms of things and possessions, we should make the conscious decision to offer those, to make these things be used in a wholesome and meaningful way. We should give away those things while still alive, for the things to be used in a positive way. This will not only help us but also others.

During this life we have worked hard to gather material things, often we may not have been that conscientious, as we gathered those material things. Often people do things that are not very positive and good things to do, in the pursuit of material wealth. They might not have been always completely honest, they might not always have spoken the truth when trying to gain profit. Or maybe they became wealthy in a way that indirectly caused suffering to many. They might have done some kind of business that indirectly caused many insects to die. We might have become wealthy while at the same time indirectly many sentient beings' lives have been taken. In this way of course we are not doing things that will create positive karma, that will make us experience beautiful and delightful karmic ripening. So at the time of death it is better then, if we can make sure that all of these things that we have put so much effort into getting together, and all of these things that we may have gotten together in a way that has created pain and suffering for others,

now at least is something that will be a circumstance for happiness and wellbeing for others.

Those are some pieces of advice as to do in terms of what to do at the time of death with one's family and loved ones, and on the other hand material things when the time of death comes. With one's friends and family one shares one's understanding and gives good advice, and one's material things, one ensures that they are now used a positive and meaningful way.

At the moment of dieing, the most important thing is: Let go! Don't be attached to anyone or to anything, not to friends, family, or possessions, because we won't be able to take them with us. They can't follow us. Therefore, since we anyway have to leave them behind us, let go! Otherwise, if you just hold on, you will have even more fear, attachment, and uneasiness, and many other negative mental poisons will arise.

"Dharma" is a technique. A Technique needs to be used. So on one hand, these are very simple and logical techniques. If you are attached and not detached, the attachment will bring so much suffering. So let go! So what do you do with your friends and family at the time of death? We talk to them very nicely, which means, give them good advice, very pure advice, on how to live nicely and how to die nicely, the art of living and dieing. Because everyone will have to follow this way. So we need to be a good example for our family and friends. So you need to show your departure in a very beautiful way, because that will have a good effect on others, who also will have to depart sooner or later. We are all in the departure lounge. We pretend that we are not, we pretend that we are going to live forever, but we are all in line for departure.

The Buddhist way of thinking is going very deep, not only superficially, we need to go very deep, in both topics good and bad. We like to know both. Concerning the good, we need to know what is bad. Concerning the bad, we need to know what is bad. Like, these days in civilized places, people don't like to see the moment of death. They don't like to see a corpse. They even don't like to see garbage. For example, in Europe, the garbage gets picked up very early. It is not the milkman who makes the first rounds, but the garbage man comes very early. They put the garbage in a box, cover it very strongly, even if there is no bear around. In this case the "bear" is the human eye. People don't like to see garbage, so it is hidden as soon as possible and then taken away as soon as possible. Once it was changed to another form, then it is ok again. I believe in London, people use water six, seven times. They take the used water, run it through some machines, and then use it again. People think that compared to this Nepali water is very dirty. Yes, but if we could send it through some machines, everyone would feel that it's ok. Sometimes, they even use that recycled water to drink. That seven times recycled water...hmm...I feel it's a little too much. Anyway, what to do. *[Laughs]*

We were talking about good advice. We should also make good wishes, good aspirations. Aspirations are very powerful. At the moment of dieing, our mind becomes very clear because of fear. Fear makes the mind clear, very clear. So positive things become very clear, but also negative things, because one's mind is one-pointed. Right now, what do we think? If we think of one thing that interests us, then if another interest comes, it just takes over. The second thought takes over, the first thought is gone. At the moment of dieing, our thinking is very solid, real, and there are not many thoughts, not countless thinking. But any kind of thinking will be related with fear, hoping not to die, hoping, hoping so much, "Doctor, can't you do something? Are you sure?" or "Why do I have to die? I am healthy and young, why me? I want to live long!" "Is god not helping me? Is the doctor not helping me? Is my friend not helping me? Who didn't help me?" or "Why is everyone giving up on me? This is not my wish!" Mind becomes very, very strange. We see things in a funny way, we say weird things. Even for our very close friends it won't be easy, because our mind is so confused. Our mind will not be a little bit picky, but very, very picky, "No, this is not good, that is not good." We will be terribly picky. We might ask for some water and first feel that it is way too hot, but soon afterwards feel that it is way too cold. Nothing feels right. We ask to be covered by a thin blanket, but then it feels too heavy, then it feels too cold. We ask for a warmer one, but then we feel it's too thick, then too thin, too warm, too cold. Our mind really experiences those feelings, physically feels that, it becomes hypersensitive and very strange.

Therefore, the most important thing is that whomever we love, whomever we feel attached to, we need to deal with them very nicely. Very nicely, that is very, very important. Give them good advice and make good aspirations for them. Whatever virtue I have done in my life, I want to dedicate it so that all of them live nicely, happily, healthy, in a spiritual way. I want them to have

a good heart. I want them to do good things. I don't want them to be confused. I want them to never hurt or harm anyone. I want them to live very beautifully. So this kind of wish, this kind of thinking has a lot of power. It is very, very powerful.

Also we talked about our material belongings, whether we created them ourselves, or whether it was given to you by family or friends. But whatever the case, it didn't just come by itself, but came about through effort. Whatever we gained, it becomes now my responsibility for it to be used in a good way, not a bad way. That means, these days, sometimes what you have, if you don't know where to put it, it might cause so many harmful things. This is not your wish. But even if it is not your wish, sometimes things go a strange way. Therefore, those two things are important.

And then, at the moment of dying, one might wonder what kind of practice would be good to do. In the Mahayana way, one does the Seven Branches. The Seven Branches are a good summary of what is called the "Power of Virtuous Seeds". Those virtuous practices come down to the Seven Branches. There are some verses that explain the nature of the Seven Branches, and it is quite nice to memorize those verses. For example,

*Towards the enlightened ones and their offspring throughout the ten directions,  
I pay homage with a bright and joyous mind.  
In Tibetan at least that is quite beautiful.*

Mind should be occupied in a positive direction, not in a negative direction, not attached or angry or worrying, "What to do? What to do? Now I'm losing this, now I'm losing that!" That kind of attachment brings so many negative emotions. That's why, our mind should be occupied in a very beautiful, positive way, that has positive energy. For example, we could think of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and visualize them. We could do some prostrations, which doesn't necessarily mean paying respect physically but paying respect mentally. Why do we pay respect? Because they are full of love and wisdom. If we respect that, we will also become like that, full of love and wisdom. If we, too, become full of love and full of wisdom, we can truly serve and help countless sentient beings. Therefore that type of prostration or paying respect is a very positively occupied mind, that has a lot of power, a lot of energy. It can heal so many negative emotions, so much suffering, and so much fear. Therefore, paying homage is so important.

The second of the Seven Branches is making offerings. Whatever we offer, there is no need that it has to be pricey, but it is important that it is something that we can give away genuinely, without any regrets after having given it away. In verse it could sound like this,

*These flowers, incense, and lamps,  
Music, dance, food, and so forth,  
I offer, making material offerings.  
I also bring forth such offerings mentally,  
I invite the host of noble ones  
To enjoy these offerings.*

The third of the Seven Branches is confession. Confession is very important when in the context of the dying. It is very important to acknowledge one's wrongs and also regrets and confesses them in a very open and direct way. Whatever it is one has done wrong, and of a negative character, one is open about that, and confess it, that is important when dying.

Confession is very important. In this life, we might not have gotten along with some people, we might have been angry or disappointed with them, we should really feel regret for this. It could have been that we were upset with our Dharma brothers or sisters, or even sometimes with our teacher or with the teachings, but not only those, but with any sentient being! If one acknowledges that one had gone wrong and feels genuine regret about it, even if we have committed a great sin, it will be purified thereby. On the other hand, small wrongs can become a real problem if one doesn't acknowledge them and regret them.

Evil is not good. But there is one thing good about evil and that is that it can be purified when confessed and regretted!

The process of confessing is as follows: First recognize that you have done something wrong, evil. Secondly, you feel bad that you did it, "It wasn't good that I did wrong. I really regret it." Thirdly, one needs to think, "Now that evil is purified. It is no more, my sins have been washed

away.” That is also important. It is not sufficient if one remains thinking, “I am a sinner.” .

Another very important thing we need to keep in our heart, and that is about virtue. One needs to think, “At this time, what was before a heavy burden of evil and sin, has now evaporated and is gone. Whatever virtue there was, has now been tremendously increased and enriched.” We need to think that, we need to believe that, we even need to say that. Think it and be convinced. To say it is very helpful, “Let sin and evil be purified, and let the virtue increase and multiplied.” This has power. Please believe me. It sounds funny, but it does have power.

The verses for confession could be:

*Since beginningless time and up until now  
Whatever I have committed, may it be the ten negative actions or the five misdeeds with  
immediate consequences,  
Whatever I have done while under the influence of disturbing emotions.  
I confess and regret it.*

Next comes rejoicing:

*I rejoice in the virtue of the Listeners, self-realized Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas  
And also in the virtue of ordinary sentient beings.  
Whatever merit they have accumulated  
I rejoice in that.*

This is also very important. Rejoicing in what is genuinely good is important. If you rejoice in what is not good then you’ll share in the demerit and in the evil for those who are responsible for those negative, unfortunate things. If you can rejoice in what is genuinely good, then even without doing anything yourself apart from just rejoicing, yet you can join with those carrying out genuine goodness and experience the same positive effects as those who bring about such good things. On the other hand, if something is causing great pain and suffering to others and we feel it is good, then through that, although we didn’t do anything ourselves apart from just thinking that, we create a lot of misfortune for ourselves, misfortune that is quite similar to the misfortune the actual perpetrator of these horrible things has to experience.

Through rejoicing we can bring about a lot of change, depending on what it is we are rejoicing in. It is all a mental process, a matter of what which thought comes up in your mind, and yet the effects are so powerful.

Rejoicing has a lot of power. If somebody has a good heart, does good things, and if we rejoice in that, it has a very strongly positive power. If somebody has bad intentions, harms and hurts so many sentient beings, and if we rejoice in that, there will be a very bad effect. So, rejoicing has a lot of power.

When we see a practitioner or a Dharma student who studies, if we rejoice we get a lot of good karma. For example, Shedra students here, from all over the world people come and study. Those who don’t study, or those who only study a bit, if they rejoice thinking, “How nice! They are studying so seriously. They really want to serve and help all beings. What a wonderful motivation they have.” If we rejoice from the bottom of our hearts, it will have so much positive power. Rather than thinking, “Why are they studying? Maybe it’s all nonsense.” Or “I feel really jealous because I don’t have the time to study.” Or they feel disappointed, or angry, or jealous, or competitive. These are not good.

Also, when you are around the stupa, seeing many people who practice walking around the stupa, or who do other virtuous things, it is very, very important that we rejoice. Also, when a monastery has a puja going on, if you have time, go inside, do three prostrations, or just fold your palms in front of your heart and think, “I rejoice. They are doing hours of praying. They must be full of wisdom, compassion and good energy. I am rejoicing. I want to join them mentally.” So if we do that, we do join them a lot, that’s why rejoicing has great power.

But we need to rejoice in good deeds not bad ones. It is really bad if a Dharma practitioner rejoices in something bad, where people are caused to be unhappy or hurt. If we rejoice in genuine goodness, a source for happiness for others, then that will create a tremendous amount of merit and goodness for oneself. To understand the importance of rejoicing, the power of rejoicing, we

need to ensure that we rejoice in that which is really worthy and avoid rejoicing in negativity.

Also mundanely, for non-religious people, people who are not spiritual, if they want to be happy, if they want to live happily, they need to know one technique: rejoicing in other's happiness. If you don't know how to rejoice in other's happiness, you will never be a happy person. Because, however much successful, may it be in our education, name, power, or something else, there will always be somebody who is better than you, and you will be disappointed countless times, you will never be 100 %, not even 90 % happy.

Therefore, even if you are a non-believer, if you want to be happy, and live happily, there's one thing you should not deny: it's good to rejoice in other's goodness. Another aspect is appreciation in what we have, otherwise we won't be happy. If we have little, and we appreciate what we have, we are happy. Happiness is important, not the name, power, possessions, etc. Don't rely on the outside to bring you happiness. Yes, supposedly outer things such as gain, power, position, etc. bring joy. Then it should follow that the more one has, the happier one should be, the more material gain, the more power, the bigger name, etc. the more joy. But often that is not the case at all. On the contrary, it often seems that people who have more, have more fear, more competitiveness, and are less happy. That makes us uneasy. It is often a source for unhappiness. We often think that unhappiness comes from over there, "I didn't get this, that's why I'm unhappy. I didn't get that, that's why I'm unhappy." No! Does unhappiness come from outer things? No! Unhappiness comes from their inability to appreciate. Please know that clearly. There are people who have little, but appreciate what they have, and are very happy. I see this more and more.

About 30 years ago, in Boudha, people were quite poor, in poor conditions, their houses were thatched with straw, they ate simple food, and lived very simply. But they laughed a lot, joked a lot, and were happy. They had time to laugh, they had time to joke. They liked to joke with others and share what they have. They shared easily. But nowadays people seem to have more limits. People have more and more luxury in Boudha, but they are more and more unhappy. Isn't that strange? Actually one would assume that with more and more luxury one would have more and more happiness.

Also in Southeast Asia, in countries like Malaysia and Singapore, there is this same problem. It is very clear. People own a lot. They have a TV in the bathroom, in the shower, in the kitchen, in the bedroom, sitting room, in each room, even the toilet. They have many, many other things. They have a bulletproof car, because they have so much fear and worries of kidnapping, because they are rich and famous. When going out, they have to pretend to be someone else. They have so much fear, therefore they are unhappy.

You might own a lot, but fear causes your whole life to be unhappy. Mentally you're unhappy your whole life, but what you own is a lot. But if you own a lot, you can't even use it all, even if you tried. People would think you are crazy, you even yourself you would feel crazy. You could go shopping in Paris, have dinner in France, and sleep in New York. You could take your own jet and go around and around and around. But what would you yourself feel? What would you yourself think? You would have jet lag problem all the time. What for? Also, even if you're so rich, you can't eat more than five, six times. It's very rare that people eat that many times. And if you'd change your dress three, four times every day, what would people think, and what would you think?

The bottom line is, it is important to appreciate. It is very, very important. If you don't appreciate, you will never be happy!

Even in Tibetan society, although we were refugees, we had to drop everything, our home, our possessions, our family, our friends, and run, run, run, gun, gun, gun, chasers chasing, runners running, but even things were so horrible, the Tibetans were still joking, punching, sharing simple food, calling all friends for a little bit of traditional food. Some would pay, some would cook, whatever little they had they shared, and they laughed a lot. But how is the situation now? This original trait of the 'good mood society' is shrinking, especially with those Tibetans living in Europe or America. They live quite well, a civilized life, but their minds are quite uptight, sad, and fearful. We need to find the middle way, that is very, very important.

The bottom line is, rejoicing is very important, because then you will be very happy. If someone is in the same situation as you, rejoice in all their goodness. If someone is better than you, and you can rejoice, then you won't be jealous, you won't be disappointed. Isn't it true?

[Rinpoche asks a student sitting in front of him: Where are you from?

Student: France

Rinpoche: How do you say "rejoicing" in French?

Student: réjouir

Languages and cultures are not easy. In English, if somebody is close to you, you might call him or her, "My honey." That's beautiful. But if you would translate that into Tibetan, "trang-tsi", and a man would call his girlfriend trang-tsi, it really sounds weird. ☺. Definitely the girlfriend would think he's coo-coo. They never use the word trang-tsi for humans. For them honey is honey.

I heard that in the West some call each other "buttercup". That's a little flower, right? If you translate that into Nepali, it really sounds funny.

We really need to know what we can use in which language. We can't use honey or buttercup in Tibetan or Nepali, because it just sounds weird in those languages. If your girlfriend would become actual honey, you would be very disappointed. Ha ha. Then what would you do? That would be a big problem. Ha ha ha. In songs they talk about their loved ones as "my baby", in Nepali that would be "mero badza". To us it sounds really funny, buttercup, baby, honey. [People are laughing a lot] That's nice: the Saturday Talks are not only serious teachings, but also entertainment. Ha ha. Maybe all of you are actually not coming for teachings but for entertainment? Ha ha. Ok, the man calls his woman 'buttercup', then the woman needs to call him "tree" or "rock" or "mountain", "Oh, my mountain." Or even better "My Everest!" Ha ha. Or what about "My red wood" Since the most solid wood is red wood. Who creates these funny things?]

Rejoicing is very important, and the remaining three branches are also very important, (5) to request the teacher to turn the Wheel of Dharma, so that the teachings manifest in the world, (6) to ask the teachers not to pass beyond but be present, and (7) to dedicate all virtue and merit to all sentient beings. All of them are very powerful factors that we should make use of in the situation of our death. When the time of our death has come, and we found out because of certain indications - we might find out because the doctor might say that now the time of death has really come. Of course it should be a knowledgeable, reliable doctor and if he or she says that now the time has come, there is no hope left and that we will definitely die, then we should make sure our possessions are used in a positive way, we should also give advice to our loved ones, and train in the Seven Branches.

The main part of the practice is of course the crucial Bodhisattva practice of indivisible insight into emptiness and loving kindness and compassion. So training in the indivisibility of insight and compassion is the main part of practice. But as a circumstance for arriving at the genuine enlightened compassion which this indivisibility of knowledge and loving kindness is, it is again very helpful to make use of the Seven Branches. If you can't immediately enter the state of genuine insight and all-embracing compassion, then one can go through with the training of the Seven Branches and that can be the cause to lead to the actual direct experience of this view that sees the nature of things as it is and has true compassion for all sentient beings. So, again, in that context, the Seven Branches are very important.

The way one arranges the sequence of the Five Powers at the time of death is as follows:

(1) At the time of death, start out with the Power of Virtuous Seeds.

[2] Then apply the Power of Aspiration, of Prayer, because as we mentioned before, at the moment of death the mind is extraordinarily clear. The acuteness of, the imminence of death has the effect on the mind that it is extremely clear, alert, because of fear. Whether you are a believer or a non-believer, we will have fear at the moment of death. Because of fear, our mind will be clear, and because of clarity, whatever thought comes, it will be very focused and powerful, vividly in mind. If you can turn to something positive, then the focus will be strong and clear, the state of mind will be powerful, and the effect of any aspirations will be increased. What aspirations should we make? "I and all like me, who are in my situation, who are going to die, I want all of them to have a good heart and wisdom." We should make aspiration prayers on behalf of all sentient beings, "May I and everyone like me, who find themselves at the point of death, be able to die within the state of the insight that realizes emptiness and loving kindness. May all sentient beings be able to pass beyond within a state of affection and love for all beings. Once having died, may we be able to resume spiritual practice of indivisible insight and compassion for all sentient beings at the time of

death, in the intermediate state after that, and in the next lives.”

It is important that my prayers are not just for ME, or MY family and friends, but truly altruistic, for all infinite sentient beings! That’s the Power of Aspirations.

(3) The Power of Revulsion is when we acknowledge that it is the self-cherishing, self-centered attitude is what prevents sentient beings from experiencing what they actually want to experience, meaning happiness, wellbeing and so forth. Because of our selfish outlook we continue to experience suffering. And you feel, “May I never give in to this self-centered impulse that puts myself before others, and based on that, understanding the negative nature of mind, and we should feel revulsion against self-centeredness and egoism.

(4) The Power of Resolve is that one thinks, “The time of death has come. I want to through death as a Dharma practitioner. As my breathing stops I want to be able to go through the experience of death within the state of compassion and loving kindness and the knowledge that realizes egolessness. I want to breathe my last breath within a state of mind of genuine affection, love, and compassion!” If we can do our last breath in the state of the wisdom that realizes egolessness, then that’s the best.

If we can make this kind of resolve, it becomes a very powerful circumstance to actually being able to die in that way, in an open and accommodating, genuinely kind-hearted state. Based on that resolve it is possible to die in a very positive, wonderful way.

(5) As for the Power of Familiarization, what should we familiarize us with? One is boundless compassion and loving kindness. And connected to that, also with the outlook that all phenomena appear and yet they are without self-nature. Mind itself is emptiness, simplicity, free from complexity. Once we are truly familiar with these, then we will be able to die in a state that truly cares for others, wishes for the happiness and welfare of all sentient beings. We will also be deeply relaxed, completely open, acknowledging that appearances appear brightly and vividly, yet they are not in any way real as they seem to be, but illusory and like appearances in a dream. We will be in a state of mind appreciating the emptiness nature of things, that our experiences, all what we see and relate to, and ourselves included, are ultimately beyond what can be created by mind, it remains the simplicity nature of things. Out of that state of mind, perfect love and compassion will arise. If we can die in such a state, then truly we are able to die in a wonderful way, a way that is in perfect in accord with the teachings.

So now you understand the Five Powers, isn’t it? The first power was the Power of Virtuous Seeds, which are basically, or we could say, which are complete within the Seven Branches. The second is the Power of vast and pure Aspirations for all sentient beings, wishing that all sentient beings without any exception may gain perfect and lasting happiness. The third is the Power of Revulsion, where we focus on what creates pain and suffering, we see that that is ignorance and the self-centered attitude that comes with being an ordinary sentient being. That is something that creates so much pain and misery for myself, just as it creates pain and misery for all others. Understanding that, one feels wholeheartedly, “May everyone be able to over come selfishness and delusion.”

Please try to remember these three points: first the Power of Virtuous Seeds, then the Power of Aspirations, and thirdly the Power of Revulsion.

The fourth power is really important. The more solid and fully present that fourth power can be, the more we will be able to genuinely merge with the practice and die in a perfect way. As an indication of one’s ability to pass away in a perfect way as a spiritual practitioner, one may be able to also die while in meditation posture, and that again is very much because of the presence of the fourth power, the Power of Resolve to actually pass away within the practice. One is then able to assume at least a squatting, seated position, and that’s the position one remains when the breathing stops. Otherwise one can assume the position of the “sleeping lion” like Buddha Shakyamuni was, meaning you lie on your right side. Based on the presence of the fourth power, we will be able to die in the authentic way.

One important thing to remember is that at this point it is very conducive to keep one’s attention focused on the crown of one’s head. This is one very powerful practice. We need to often keep our attention focused on the crown of our head. Then there will be a good rebirth, a good

journey. Therefore it is very important. Especially for those who learned the practice of Phowa, Transference of Consciousness, for them often, on any occasion, when going, walking, talking, one subtle attention should be kept on the “door of Brahma”, the crown of the head. Because that “door” is the best door, other doors are not so good. But leaving through that door is very good.

[dedication]

Thank you. I sort of forgot that I have to go to Jawalakele to do puja. Now I’m late, but I was so happy to talk about “honey” and “buttercup”. Ha ha.

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