

# The Treasury of Blessings

## Transcription Series

Teachings given by Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche



### Introduction

This text contains the transcriptions of a series of teachings given by Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche on Ju Mipham's liturgy called "The Treasury of Blessings".

In this practice we focus on Buddha Shakyamuni's form and qualities and receive his blessings. These talks were given during the annual November seminar in Kathmandu, Boudhanath, and were translated by Dr. Thomas Doctor.

The recordings can be streamed or downloaded from the DharmaSun website: [dharmaSun.org/sadhanas-rituals](http://dharmaSun.org/sadhanas-rituals).

These transcriptions are directly from the recordings of the teachings and were only lightly edited for readability. Timestamps in brackets (e.g. [00:03:03.10]) point out locations in the recording, for easy cross-referencing between the written and spoken words.

As of this document's publication (spring 2016), a global project is under way to accumulate one million recitations of the Buddha Shakyamuni by Rinpoche's sangha. Please join the project by adding your own mantra counts at this web address: <http://www.rygroupeast.org/mantra-counter>.

## Part 1: Refuge – The Gateway to Liberation

Rinpoche would like to offer a few words of introduction here. We will be doing chants and visualizations presented in a text called *The Treasury of Blessings*, a practice for recollecting the qualities of our teacher, the Buddha Shakyamuni, the qualities of his enlightened body, speech and mind. It's a practice that is made to ripen our minds and develop our capacity for shamatha and vipashyana: calm abiding and special insight, which is the core of Buddhist meditation. Buddhist meditation comes down to this; we hear about shamatha and vipashyana in all the different aspects of the teachings, from the general level of the teachings, the vehicle of the Listeners and up through the Great Vehicle. In terms of the tantric teachings, shamatha and vipashyana are also crucial, whether we talk about the Great Middle Way, Mahamudra; even in the Dzogchen context there is a deep importance to shamatha and vipashyana. So we do this practice to become masters of shamatha and vipashyana ultimately, and through recollecting the Buddha's qualities, bringing to mind the qualities of our teacher and his teachings.

When we talk about the objects in which we go for refuge as Buddhists, we have the threefold refuge: the Buddha, our teacher; the teaching given by the Buddha, the Dharma, which is scripture and realization; and those who are able to receive those teachings and gain the real results of the path: they are the genuine Sangha, those who are on the way to perfecting the qualities, and who are able to themselves receive disciples and give instructions. They are the Sangha in whom we take refuge because that's our connection, our link to the teachings and the Buddha. It's through these individuals who hold the Dharma that we ourselves can access the teachings and arrive at enlightenment.

So our meditation practice here is also a way of connecting with the qualities of the threefold refuge: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

[00:03:03.10] The practice begins with going for refuge and developing the enlightened mind. After that, we have the development stage, then recitation and the completion stage. So, the very beginning is going for refuge, and refuge is said to be the root of liberation, just as developing the enlightened mind is said to be the root of omniscience. But why should it be the case that taking refuge forms the very root or basis for liberation?

First of all, we need to understand what liberation means. What sort of liberation, from what? If we are hungry and we want to be free from the pain of hunger, we need to take

refuge in food. If we are cold then our refuge becomes clothing, if we want to be free of the discomfort of feeling cold. And if we are thirsty, our refuge is drink, right?

If we are sick, we need to see a doctor and take refuge in the course of action that the doctor recommends. Perhaps have an operation, who knows?

[00:04:58.07] CNR English: Enlightenment, enlightenment. Yesterday I saw in a movie: a woman was giving a teaching, maybe in Mexico? There were so many followers, and she said, "Enlightenment is light. You need to see the inner light, then you see God. That is the ultimate enlightenment." I don't know what it means; it must be a very deep meaning, I can't say. But for me, this was very strange. Unfortunately, for me, it felt very strange.

[00:05:57.03] The liberation that we're talking about is liberation from negative emotions, negative states of mind, and the things we do under the influence of that kind of negative state of mind. It is liberation from the results of that negative mind and the things we do; it is liberation from delusion, the experience of "that which is not the case." That's the kind of liberation we seek when we follow the teaching of the Buddha. But where would we find such guidance? Where would it be explained how to become completely free of negative emotions and negative thoughts? How might it be possible to be free from the negative conditioning that follows from that? How might it be possible to be free from delusion? Where can we find that kind of guidance?

[00:06:59.00] There's so much to learn and study in this world; where might we find the information that we need? When we learn something, and there is much we can learn, and so many fields of learning that we can try to acquaint ourselves with. When we do so, we say that we receive a form of education, that we become educated, knowledgeable. And when one is knowledgeable, one can be knowledgeable in many different ways. But basically, some are just very insightful by nature. In other words, they did something in the past that makes them just naturally brilliant. And others can acquire those qualities and do acquire them in the present life; they learn, reflect and so on and so they become very bright. And then there's a third category of being knowledgeable or educated in terms of meditation practice, as a result of meditation. So we can say becoming educated has three dimensions in this way; there are three ways.

[00:08:41.29] If we look at the Buddha-dharma, the Buddha-dharma does indeed speak about exactly these issues. Not only does it talk about them to some extent, it's so detailed, so clear, so elaborate, so precise, an account of just what it is that obscures the mind; precisely what it is, how does it express itself, and what can be done about it. What is negative emotion; in what way does it have a negative effect on the mind, and

how can the tendencies that we have for giving rise to those emotions and acting on them be remedied? What are the consequences of that kind of applied remedy? What happens when we apply the remedy? All of this is explained in tremendous detail and perfect clarity. This is what we find in the general teachings of Buddhism, in the paramita teachings, and in the tantras. So indeed, if we wish for that kind of liberation, then Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are our refuge. Since that's how it is, since the teachings become our refuge, since they are in this way the root of our liberation, then we should become able to understand and to know the teachings. Getting to know the teachings is a different process for every person.

It is a fact that for some it's not so hard. It's not so hard even to achieve what are otherwise amazing results. There is such a thing as the genius, right? So in the Dharma context, there are people who hardly need any effort at all and yet they far surpass their classmates in terms of school, when they get an education, when they go to college. Also in the Buddhist context, without having to do much, they achieve a whole lot. That's very nice, right? It's being very fortunate, and a lot of profit for very little investment, so to speak, in that life. How come it's like that? It's because learning is like putting money in the bank, but it's just a bank account that you keep for more than one life. That's how the great master Sakya Pandita himself has explained it; learn and reflect even if today is your last, because whatever you gain through this is waiting for you. You should know that it's like wealth that is just waiting for you to take possession of in your next life.

[00:15:59.14] In short, when we learn the teachings and become clear about the meaning of the teachings, as we reflect on them, then something very fortunate and auspicious takes place in the mind. We are connecting with the qualities of enlightenment; we are moving toward the awakening ourselves. This process is happening in this life, but it will continue in the future too, as the result of that kind of condition. So learning and reflection is important, and when we learn, reflect, and begin to gain experience with the meaning of the teachings through meditation practice, the results of the path do manifest. In other words we ourselves gain accomplishment. We ourselves ultimately will become buddhas through this.

That's the quality of the teaching, that we are able to overcome what needs to be overcome and we are able to realize all that needs to be realized. In other words, that we ourselves can achieve that flawless perfection which is Buddhahood. That's the quality of the teaching, that it has that power. And where we do get that power; how are we empowered to follow this path? By connecting with those who hold the teachings, in other words by going to refuge in the Sangha.

The perfect Sangha consists of the truly noble beings like great bodhisattvas, male and female, or those who have overcome the enemy of the negative emotions: arhats, male and female. But it also consists of just individuals who are genuinely committed to the practice of doing what is good, refraining from what is negative and taming our own minds. Those who genuinely follow the teachings as monks and nuns, they also can be counted as members of the Sangha in whom we go for refuge. It's even possible to include, in terms of the different levels of the monastic vows, those who have taken one of the seven classes of vows for individual liberation. And also those who are lay, who have not assumed the celibate lifestyle and who have received just the vows of the lay practitioner, they as well can be seen as genuine members of the Sangha, if they are genuine followers of the teachings. Also, in Tibet there is a tradition for specifically enumerating the practitioners of mantra. Just as in India, in Tibet also, were greatly accomplished spiritual practitioners, who lived at times not at all in the way of a monk or a nun; instead, their lifestyle was in accordance with the explicit word of the tantric teachings. So these mantra practitioners, male and female, are counted as well in the Sangha. It's called the "inner Sangha of the vidyadhara", the "awareness holders."

By connecting with the members of the Sangha, whoever they are: those who hold the teachings and who can transmit them to us, we ourselves are able to set out on that path, the path of awakening, the path that leads to Buddhahood. Buddha in that way is the central refuge. Buddha is what we are to discover. It's our own awakening, our own discovery of perfect qualities within a complete absence of any flaw, anything that is negative or even slightly problematic. That has completely disappeared, so that there is complete purification. But within that absence of anything negative is also a perfect presence of all that is excellent. It's there, completely. That's why in Tibetan it's translated as "Sangye," purified perfection. There's also the word "Buddha" itself, which in Sanskrit has these connotations of purification and then an unfolding, a completion of perfection. Purification is just like an absence of that which obscures, just like we can think of the sky which at times is completely overcast: there are dense, thick dark clouds that cover the sun, so it's almost as if there were no sun in the sky. But then those clouds can indeed disperse and in the end there is this bright open sky, and the sun shines radiantly in the middle of it all. The atmosphere is so bright and so clear. That sense of disappearance of that which otherwise covered, veiled and concealed is one of the connotations of Buddha or Sangye, and then within that, the perfect qualities, evident and obvious, are present. Just like in the absence of those clouds, the sun is there, for all to see. So it's that sense of purified perfection.

We can also use the image of the lotus flower that is no longer a bud but has now completely opened so that all of the beauty of the flower is there for all to see. That is the sense of completion and perfection which we have with the word Buddha. It's toward

that awakening that we practice. Not only is this how it is from our perspective; this is really what the Buddha is. That purified perfection is what the Buddha comes down to. When we talk about buddhas, speaking about an individual who is a Buddha, we should not think therefore, that the Buddha is a person; it's not that the Buddha was someone who appeared a number of years ago in the past and who was just a very extraordinary, wonderful person. So gifted, so bright and so beautiful, such a wonderful human being who was able to teach the most perfect teachings, who had the most wonderful qualities, is that what and who the Buddha is? No, it's not.

At times we may speak like this, and it has a certain relevance to talk about things in this way but we should understand that certainly in the context of the extraordinary teachings of the Great Vehicle, the Buddha is not someone who becomes enlightened; the Buddha is not a person who goes from the level of imperfection towards perfection and then achieves it. The Buddha is since the beginning primordially enlightened, pure and perfect. The appearance of a person is a compassionate display to guide individuals like ourselves, to show us how to accomplish that, to gain that ourselves, that state of purified perfection. That's why the form of a Buddha, which appears like a person, is called nirmanakaya. The Buddha Shakyamuni is called the nirmanakaya emanation body, because it is a compassionate display.

[00:24:41.03] In this way, we go for refuge in the Buddha who appears to us as a teacher, and we connect with his teachings through the community of the Sangha. But then we are to awaken ourselves, we are to discover Buddha within. That's the encounter with real Buddha, when the qualities of wisdom are manifest in our own minds. It's discovering the Buddha within or finding the Buddha within one's own bed, so to speak, arising from our natural seat, from our natural bed, our own bed, as buddhas.

In short, Buddhahood is awakening from the sleep of ignorance to the full presence of the enlightened qualities. Since we are the followers of the Buddha this is what we ourselves should see happen. We are asleep right now, sleeping in ignorance, and we need to wake up. Wake up to enlightenment. That is our objective and that is the reason we go for refuge in the Buddha. Who is this? The Buddha who is the unfolding of the two wisdoms, who is the purifications of the two obscurations and therefore the unfolding of the two wisdoms, and so the mastery of the two bodies of enlightenment, that's what we should achieve for ourselves. And we can do this by receiving the teachings of the Dharma, and accomplishing the teachings of the Dharma, the Dharma being, in short, scripture and realization. And then how do we receive those teachings, how do we progress on the path? By keeping a proper relationship with the Sangha. And who are they, in short? You can say anyone who is compassionate and insightful certainly qualifies as a member of the Buddhist Sangha. In this way we go for refuge and

this is how we begin the practice session of the *Treasury of Blessings*, the meditation practice we're going to do, by taking refuge in this way.

We say, “In the Buddha, the Dharma and the Supreme Assembly, I take refuge until enlightenment. By the merit of generosity and so forth, may I attain Buddhahood for the welfare of all beings.” So in this way we have refuge. After that follows a training in what is called the Four Immeasurables, a profound practice which it would be good for us to study some more.