

# The Treasury of Blessings

## Transcription Series

Teachings given by Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche



### **Part 6: Seven Branches – Supplication, Dedication, Conclusion**

[00:00:11] After that follows the Seven Branches of Spiritual Practice which is a very efficient way of gathering the accumulations, purifying the obscurations and making sure a whole lot of auspicious circumstances come together and that we stay clear of situations that affect us and otherwise prevent us from gaining progress. So it is an excellent way of making sure that everything unfolds auspiciously. Training in this way in the Seven Branches, begins by paying homage and prostration, which is the first of the seven aspects. When we pay homage to the teacher, the white lotus of compassion, and bow down recalling the qualities of the Buddha – the Buddha's body, speech and mind – as we've been talking about them here, we bring to mind these qualities. We pay homage in our mind by acknowledging them, with our voice by speaking words of praise, and physically by bowing down and touching the ground in veneration. This is a very effective way of remedying the disturbing emotion of anger and it is also a profound way of purifying the obscurations and evil influences. So that's the first thing we do.

[00:01:48] After that follows the offerings we make: all that we have, all our possessions, all that is good, and in fact all that is good and perfect in the world, even our own body and whatever provisions we have gathered through spiritual practice and all of our accumulation of merit—we make an offering of that.

[00:02:20] And when we can offer in this way, giving a gift of absolutely everything that is valuable, then this is a perfect way of remedying miserliness as a negative emotion. If we can give away absolutely everything then there is no longer any basis for being stingy and miserly and so on. That is the effect of making offerings and along with that comes a tremendous accumulation of merit. That is the second aspect. Confession is the third aspect. We confess our wrongdoing and offenses that we may have done since the beginning, meaning however long we have been around in this cycle of birth and death. For that long we may have done all sorts of things that may have been terribly wrong. It's important in Buddhism that one brings this to mind, that "I may be a great sinner, I may very well be a great sinner." It's important to acknowledge one's own evil actions, wrongdoing in this life of course, but also in the others. So to begin with it's necessary to acknowledge that. And then on the other hand, once it is acknowledged, and once we feel regret about it, then there is nothing that cannot be purified. That is the amazing quality, the amazing effect of doing this. Once we acknowledge this, then proportional to our regret we will also be able to purify the negative influences. When we do something that is wrong, negative or evil, there's always a negative effect. There is always a painful negative effect that follows, but those effects can be purified by confessing them and once we have done so with genuine true regret, acknowledging that this was indeed nothing but wrong, then there is nothing that will remain. Then at that point one thinks, "I am no longer a sinner." So this is the point of the effect of confession. By confession, we can purify the evil. That's the primary result of doing this, but it is also a very skillful way of remedying the negative emotion of anger if we can confess.

[00:05:11] After that comes requesting the teachings. We request that the teacher turns the wheel of the Dharma and that is a way of remedying the extreme views that we otherwise have. Extreme views are dispelled by the turning of the Dharma wheel; when the teachings are present in the world, then that enables beings to follow the path and also gain enlightenment.

[00:06:19] Actually, before that we have rejoicing, so rejoicing is number four and that's followed by five, which is requesting the teachings. I got the order wrong, sorry. After confession comes of course, rejoicing and rejoicing means to appreciate wholeheartedly all that is done that is good by others, whether they are ordinary people, whether they are very advanced practitioners, whether they are Bodhisattvas or enlightened ones. Whatever is done and done well that benefits others, we rejoice in it, because if we do that, we share in the goodness. We become part of it. We come to belong to that party, so to speak. That's the amazing effect of rejoicing. And so of course it matters very much what we rejoice in. If we rejoice in something that is actually harmful for sentient

beings, if we rejoice in something that is negative and destructive then we share in the evil as well and we become part of that party. So it's very important to rejoice but it's also very important that we're aware of what we rejoice in. Because whenever rejoicing happens, even if it's not something that we try obviously to do, it does have these effects. When we rejoice, if we can rejoice in the happiness, the well-being and the success of others, then that remedies jealousy and envy. Envy otherwise is a very negative emotion that creates a whole lot of misfortune. In particular it's very destructive to be envious, not just towards people who are happy and successful, although of course, that's a very negative way of feeling and being, not to be able to appreciate or even tolerate the fact that others are happy. But in particular if we cannot tolerate that others are successful practitioners and if others do what is virtuous, and we then feel jealous because of that, that is extremely negative.

[00:08:38] So in order to remedy that kind of emotional state of envy and jealousy, rejoicing is very effective. After that comes requesting the turning of the dharma wheel and the prayer for the teacher, the Buddha, to remain in the world without passing beyond, which is the remedy of ignorance and delusion of the mind. Finally, there is dedication, where based on the merit that I have gathered throughout the three times to benefit countless beings pervading space, may I always delight the Dharma King and attain the state of a triumphant Lord of Dharma. That's the dedication. Dedication is always something that should follow whenever we do spiritual practice, because whenever we do spiritual practice or anything that is good and wholesome, there will always be something positive, and if we dedicate, something truly good is engendered through that. And it's important that we give that goodness proper direction and if we specifically direct the virtue, goodness and wholesome qualities that have been engendered towards universal enlightenment, to the awakening of absolutely everyone, then that will mean that our goodness, that which we have created there, has become inexhaustible. It is definitive, not undecided, and there is a certainty in the mind that comes with dedication. So that is the purpose for the seventh among the seven branches, dedicating the merit. There are three ways of doing this, the perfect dedication through wakefulness, the dedication through insight, and dedication through the good heart. For the dedication of good heart, we can think of the example of the kind old lady. A kind old lady who is very keen on everyone being happy and successful, and everyone also proceeding towards liberation, awakening and so on. That type of very kind old lady may not have gone to any sort of Dharma school, may not be very educated, and not able to make dedication in a very sophisticated way. That lady may not either be able to dedicate in the perfect way of great beings through wakefulness and through insight. But nevertheless she sure is kind and expresses it when she makes her dedication. She just dedicates whatever she can think of that

sounds really nice and that she really likes and wants everyone to have, she dedicates whatever she has done good, and so she wishes everyone to be completely happy and wants everyone to be free of suffering of any sort what so ever. “I want all that is good to be experienced and become the enjoyment of everyone, not leaving anyone behind, anyone at all. I want everyone to be completely free and flourish, in the most excellent way.” Just expressing what's in her good heart. That's also a way of dedicating that's through a good heart. And when somebody dedicates in this way, they may have certain verses that they say every time, there may be a certain phrase, that they say every day, but sometimes it's a little different depending on the circumstances. And then perhaps she will say, “May everyone, also the little insects, may they experience happiness and freedom from suffering and so on.” Whatever comes to mind in the situation. So sometimes it's very interesting and delightful to listen to an old lady dedicating in this way.

[00:15:18] In the invocation and supplication to the teacher, where we acknowledge that it is by the Buddha's kindness that all of this is possible, that all the light of the Three Jewels that there is in this world is due to the fact that the Buddha chose to set his feet in this world, and not only was he born here, he grew up and displayed the way of enlightenment. He proceeded to evolve and proceed and attain true and complete enlightenment. Having gone to the core of enlightenment, he next proceeded to reveal the vast and profound teachings and so he turned the wheel of Dharma in inconceivably many, vast and profound ways. This means that when great individuals receive these teachings, become able to master and uphold them, we are able to meet now and also today these very teachings, these expressions of complete enlightenment that the Buddha gave to this world and which have been maintained by this unbroken noble lineage of masters. So when we ourselves are able to meet the Dharma, we are able to experience the qualities of the Dharma by learning, reflecting and meditating, when we ourselves experience the sense of success and progress, it's all because of the Buddha's kindness, so we acknowledge that and call on this source of great love and compassion to not now forget the vow. Because the Buddha made many compassionate vows for the benefit of beings like us, meaning beings who are born at the end of time, so to speak, in the dark age, when the disturbing emotions and all sorts of misfortunes are rampant and when otherwise spiritual practice is difficult. He made particular prayers to be able to benefit beings at this time and date. So we call on the teacher to remember that compassionate vow and embrace us all with the compassion with which he gave rise to these vows.

[00:17:48] Having supplicated the teacher for blessings, we then chant the Buddha's names, blessing with various references to the Buddha, “Supreme spiritual teacher,

blessed conqueror, thus gone one, foe destroyer, completely perfect Buddha, glorious victor, Shakyamuni, I make offerings, take refuge in you.” We chant that and then comes the name dharani of the Buddha Shakyamuni and the other Buddhas of the excellent eon. We chant “muni muni mahamuni soha.” As we chant the mantra we experience and perceive radiant light of wisdom that blazes forth from the body of the Buddha. And at the end of our practice session, we perceive that all of this multi-colored light purifies our own behavior and that of all sentient beings, so wherever it reaches, all that is touched by this light of wisdom are purified of evil, negativities, flaws and downfalls that otherwise they have accumulated since beginningless time. As that is purified, all of the virtues of the path of the great vehicle arise in their being and so they achieve this irreversible state of perception in things as they are – that is the perception that we have at the end of the recitation – we let be in that for a while before finally dedicating. We dedicate the virtue, the goodness that has arisen through our practice and also make aspirations for everyone's success and liberation and enlightenment.