

# **The Seven Treasures of the Noble Ones**

*by*  
**Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche**  
*and*  
**Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche**

**Padma Gochen Ling, Tennessee**  
**June 10, 2005**

*These, monks, are the seven treasures.  
The treasure of conviction,  
the treasure of virtue,  
the treasure of conscience, and concern,  
the treasure of listening, generosity,  
and discernment as the seventh treasure.  
Whoever, man or woman, has these treasures  
is said not to be poor, has not lived in vain.  
So conviction and virtue, confidence and Dhamma-vision  
should be cultivated by the wise,  
remembering the Buddha's instruction.*

***Dhana Sutta: Treasure***

This is teaching on the Seven Wealths. In Tibetan it is called *phagpa nordun*. *Phagpa* is noble and *nor* is wealth. These are also known as the “Seven Treasures of Noble Ones.” This term *nor* is also a colloquial name which translates in the vernacular as “yaks.” There is a story about the renowned first Khyentse Rinpoche. When he was young, he used to go on many pilgrimages, travelling alone throughout Tibet, carrying his own luggage. In particular he visited the central part of the country where there are many sacred places and historical locations associated with Guru Padmasambhava, the great master Shantarakshita, Vimalamitra, and many others. The Dharma was originally introduced to the country from this area. So Khyentse Rinpoche arrived in the central region and stayed at a famous monastery of the Drikung Kagyu school. It was in a place called Drikung where this sub-sect of the Kagyu tradition originated. In the rocky mountains around the monastery there is a hoofprint which resembles that of a female yak. Khyentse inquired of the monk caretaker, “Whose footprint is that?” The man explained that this was a very precious sign, a footprint of one of the Seven Noble Yaks (*nor*). Not understanding the Tibetan phrase for the Seven Treasures, he assumed it had something to do with yaks. Khyentse later said that the monk was very courageous and had no hesitation in his answer, but that he had not studied very much. So that is a story to introduce tonight's topic, the Seven Treasures of the Noble Ones.

First we will list all seven names and then we will go over the meanings.

1. SRADDHA: (*dad pa*) devotion, faith, confidence, trust
2. SILA: (*tsul khrims*) morality or ethics
3. DANA: (*phyinpa*) generosity
4. DHARMA: (*cho*) study, contemplation
5. HRIH: (*ngo tsha shes pa*) self-respect, dignity, shame, decorum
6. APATRAPYA: (*khrel yod pa*) respect for others, propriety,
7. PRAJNA: (*shes rab*) discriminating wisdom

The first one is devotion. This is followed by morality. The third is generosity. The fourth is study and contemplation—to receive a teaching and practice it. The fifth is self-respect. The sixth is respect for others. Seventh is wisdom. Whoever has these seven qualities has discovered the Treasury of the Noble Ones and is a very rich person. If they have more than this, being considerably deep and strong in these practices, they are multi-millionaires. If they have immeasurable qualities such as these, they are incredibly wealthy, spiritual billionaires. That is basically what the Buddha actually said.

## SRADDHA

As you all know, devotion is very important. It is a combination of joy and interest, and includes the motivation to bring good things into your life, as well as the lives of others. Without devotion and good motivation, nothing will improve. The degree and strength to which we develop devotion can be divided into three levels. Initially, there is interest, which is followed by desirable, and then infallible devotion.

The first is interested devotion. When you have heard or see something special and are moved toward it, you feel something nice, clear, attractive, and uplifting. You may even think, “How beautiful!” When you have that clear thought and inspired attitude in relation to spiritual virtues, this is known as “interest.”

The second is desirable devotion. This happens when you are not just experiencing clarity around these ideas or awakening an initial interest, but when you are actually moved to involve

yourself further. Knowing that it is beautiful, you want to deepen your experience and explore your mind with the Dharma. This is known as desiring devotion.

The third kind is known as “infallible devotion.” Having developed interest to the point of engagement, you deepen and strengthen it through practice to the point where you will not fall away. Knowing it is good and perfect, no matter what happens you have unconditional faith in the Dharma. This is known as infallible, indestructible, irreversible devotion.

Devotion is so important. Without it, we cannot improve and grow. Buddha said, “Devotion is the opening that brings the light, the door to enlightenment.” If we don’t have devotion, we are closed up and shut off. There is no ventilation and no window to allow the light to shine. But with devotion, the window is open, you let in the light, and allow yourself to grow. Therefore, devotion is of primary importance. It is a combination of joy, confidence, and aspiration.

Whether you are a veteran practitioner or just starting doesn't matter. Devotion is powerful and will bring you closer toward enlightenment. Even if you have studied many scriptures, and have developed intellectually so that you know all of the Buddha's teachings, if you don't have devotion you will not make any progress on the path. According to the Buddha's teaching, the basis for study and learning has to be established in the heart with devotion. Then you can effectively bring on the enlightening power and spiritual qualities. Without devotion, practitioners never develop very far. On the other hand, even if you do not know very much about the Buddha's teaching, if you comprehend a few of the basic and vital points and practice them diligently with devotion, you will realize the same result as those who may have studied and practiced for a long time. For these reasons, devotion is number one among the Seven Treasures of the Noble Ones.

In the Vajrayana tradition, it is said that accomplishment will happen quickly for two different types of practitioners. One is very learned and has good devotion, while the other is unlearned but has a very stable mind, and steady devotion. According to the Mantrayana teachings, these two individuals will have speedy realizations. Tonight we have all come here because we have devotion. We feel joy in relating to the Dharma. This is why we all come together, to discuss and practice the teachings. However, we need to continually restrengthen our devotion to magnify its beautiful qualities and not let it fade away. It is really important to renew and restrengthen our devotion on a regular basis. Whenever we practice we should energize this number one quality of the Noble Ones.

### **SILA**

The second treasure is morality. Morality begins with unobscured observation, an alert mindfulness of the activities of the body, speech, and mind. Be mindful in a simple, and natural way. Morality doesn't have anything to do with being forceful or punishing or trapping yourself. Rather it is a gentle, joyful attitude that observes the activities of body, speech, and mind whether we are in a group or alone.

In this way, we are easily able to follow the rules or guidelines of the country or village, and to respect the traditions of people wherever we happen to be. This is practicing the morality of existing or local customs.

Spiritually, there are many different ways to practice the morality of the Dharma, but basically, there are two ways to simplify the activities of the body, speech, and mind, and not hurt

anyone. Harmlessness involves not causing injury to anyone and not endangering ourselves. That is basic morality. In the same context, try to be nice, calm, and peaceful. Be aware of your body language and your gestures in relation to others. In your own way, be a decent, simple, average citizen; all around nice guys and gals! You don't have to be extraordinary and you don't have to be completely shut down and say nothing like a piece of dirt. Be what you are and simply observe phenomena with joy, respect, and mindfulness. When you speak, do it nicely, be kind, polite, respectful, and honest. These are moral qualities in relation to speech.

As for the mind, be calm and peaceful, and emanate love, kindness, and compassion. Maintaining that attitude is known as the morality of the mind. Whoever has this morality, has real wealth. Even if we have devotion, without morality, things will never work out well. We begin with devotion, we add morality, and soon begin to shine and bring benefits to both our self and others. Therefore, morality is one of the treasures of practitioners.

### **DANA**

The third treasure is generosity. Generosity means openness of mind. It is the opposite of greed and grasping. It is about sharing, and caring for others with an open state of mind. We must learn to care for others according to our readiness and personal capabilities. Whatever we can do and are currently doing must be done with joy and appreciation. Generosity can be applied on many different levels.

There is the generosity of material wealth and belongings, offering others words of wisdom, as well as sharing your experience, knowledge, and skills. There is also the generosity of your power and abilities to protect others during difficult times; any refuge you can offer according to your capabilities. Whatever you do to benefit others, if you are not being greedy and holding back, activities done with that attitude of openness are known as “generosity practices.” Apply this on a material level according to your readiness. As Buddha said, even if you offer nothing more than a single mouthful of food to a human being or an animal, that is generosity. It does not have to be a big, gigantic thing. The most important part is opening our heart and not holding back, releasing our attachment to notions of loss and gain, and completely opening our self. With that attitude, do whatever you can. Even the smallest things offered in compassion with kind thoughts, such as a mouthful of food or perhaps just a single word that you know someone needs to hear. To help anyone in danger or comforting them during hard times, all of these are examples of the practice of generosity. Anything you do according to your resources and abilities, offered with an open heart and mind is known as generosity. This is a treasure of practitioners.

### **DHARMA**

The fourth treasure concerns maturing the mind through study, and practicing the teaching of the Buddha. As we said earlier, the purpose of the teaching is to practice. It doesn't matter how many teachings you have received, without the unfolding practice, it means we are not applying our resources or making right use of the treasure we already have. Having received teachings, we do not use them to examine and judge others, nor is the teaching just a lecture or format to express conceptual or abstract knowledge. The teachings we receive are to be applied individually, to oneself. It is not about looking outside or involvement with external relations. It is about going inward and observing your three gates of body, speech, and mind, and letting the view sink and settle and grow in one's own heart. All of these teachings we have received should be spontaneously employed at the moment they are needed. For example, the teachings on loving-kindness should be used, particularly at those moments when we find we are getting angry. Instead of indulging the anger, we should generate more love and patience. That is a simple

example of liberating the anger by applying the teaching.

Of course, there are many methods on how to handle anger including how to look into the source of anger itself. Instead of immediately grasping for outside answers and causes, we carefully look into where the anger is originating. This means not mechanically following anger or reacting emotionally, but to apply the appropriate antidote according to the teachings we have received. This practice will mature the mind and is known as “Dharma maturing the mind through the practice and teaching.” This is one of the Seven Wealths. If we don't use Dharma when we need it, what's the point? Of course, there may be some positive effects on your life, but overall there is no great benefit if you are not taking advantage of the teaching when you need it. You are not using the treasure when and where it would matter most.

Buddha offered many different examples to illustrate this. Once he said that if you receive all the teachings, but don't apply them when they are needed, it is very much like the beggar who happens to know about the great treasures of a king. Even if he knows the whole inventory—every item of gold, silver and diamond in the treasury—how does this knowledge benefit the beggar? Buddha also spoke of the man dying from thirst who dwells by a refreshing spring of pure water but does not drink any. What good is this cool spring of water if the dying man does not drink any? The Buddha, Guru Padmasambhava, and a host of other great masters have given us many examples of this failure to integrate the teachings into action. When it comes to Dharma, if we don't really apply and practice it with heart, when the time comes to apply it, to address arising conditions, we will have very little capacity to affect anything with mere conceptual knowledge. But if we try to apply the teachings consistently with mindfulness and devotion, with courage and commitment, the Dharma becomes one of the great treasures valued by all accomplished practitioners.

#### **APATRAPYA**

The fifth treasure is self-respect. This is as important in a group as it is when we are alone, in hermitage, or wherever we may be. Self-respect knows no boundaries insofar as it operates universally. It is not a quality that is invoked in one situation but not another. Its value is not limited to certain times and places. Self-respect will strengthen all our virtuous qualities. It is a combination of mindfulness, alertness, and contentment. Understanding the meaning of self-respect, we do not hold negative views of ourselves, nor do we look down on others. Whether we are alone and by ourselves, or active in the greater world, we must conduct ourselves as practitioners, good persons, human beings with self-respect. We should never let ourselves do things which are not virtuous, or good according to any standards. Although at times we may try to relatively ignore ourselves, we must still have enough self-respect that we are not going to hurt ourselves, or do anything wrong or harmful by means of our body, speech, or mind.

Knowing that we are beautiful human beings, educated people, and Buddhist practitioners of the Mahayana, we must learn to respect ourselves and not be carried away by negative, habitual patterns. When we consider becoming involved with non-virtuous ways, we must learn to see this as shameful and resolve not to speak, think, or act in such ways. Self-respect involves a vigilant upkeep of good qualities and is one of the treasures of practitioners. Taking care of our self, our health, and well-being, all of this is self-respect. In the Vajrayana teachings, it is said that the body is the mandala of the deities. So we should not ignore ourselves to the point of neglect. The extremes of asceticism and indulgence were both criticized by the Buddha. Since the body itself is the temple of the deities, self-respect has many different meanings. Do things which are good for yourself. Like all of the others, this is a treasure which

does not come from outside; we already possess this resource, but it must be progressively revealed to make the qualities of our wealth shine.

### **HRIH**

The sixth treasure is respect for others. Others are very special and beautiful. The Buddha taught that we are here because of others; without them, we wouldn't survive and nobody would be here. Therefore, there is every reason to respect them and to not harm them. This also involves the understanding that we will not do anything bad to ourselves in order to cause pain to others. In respecting others, we must be careful not to do anything dangerous or harmful to ourselves that might upset them. Therefore, this reinforces the admonition to refrain from non-virtue and practice respect for all other sentient beings.

Respect for both self and others is very important in the Buddha's teaching. This respect is expressed through your body, speech, and mind, and should not be limited to human beings but observed in relation to animals as well. The Buddha told many stories about animals who suffered as a result of a lack of respect by people. This is a genuine Dharma quality, and a real treasure for practitioners.

### **PRAJNA**

The last treasure is wisdom. Wisdom contains many subdivisions, such as the wisdom attained through reading or study, wisdom which is the result of contemplating or analyzing, and wisdom which comes from the practice of meditation, the wisdom of relative truth, and the wisdom of absolute truth. There are many aspects of wisdom. Wisdom as the fruit of study begins with absorbing all the different forms of knowledge, such as the lessons you studied under a teacher in school or university. This is known as "wisdom which comes from studies." There is also the study of the various yantras or levels of the Buddha's teachings. This too is called "wisdom that comes about by means of study."

The second type is the wisdom that comes from contemplation. After you gain wisdom from hearing or reading the teachings, in deep contemplation you are using your keen intellect to analyze things so that they make perfect sense to you. This is part of integrating and deepening what you have learned from a teacher or a book into your own intelligence and is known as the "wisdom of contemplation."

The third wisdom goes beyond just reading and analyzing what you learned in school; you have to apply the knowledge to your own heart and mind. You need to transform yourself into Dharma, and turn your mind into wisdom. Your mind and the Dharma should not be two different things. You yourself must become one with wisdom. All of the Dharma teachings you have received from the outside are meant to nourish you to the point where you become one with those studies, and merge yourself with that wisdom state. This is known as the "wisdom of meditation." Having studied and analyzed the teaching sufficiently, you've got it, and you become no different than that wisdom state. This is the realization gained from meditation practice. You can deepen this wisdom through the practice of Shamatha and Vipashyana meditation according to the general Buddhist teachings, and then specifically in the Vajrayana, this wisdom is matured through visualization and completion stage practices, or Dzogchen meditation. There are many techniques, but they are all about fully transforming yourself into that wisdom. This is the wisdom that "overpowers" the ego, and it comes from meditation. All of these forms of wisdom are excellent. If you only have the wisdom of study, that is good. If you also have the wisdom of contemplation, that is even better. If you have all three, that is the best

wisdom possible, and an extremely beautiful treasure of practitioners.

This has been a brief teaching on the Seven Treasures. We all have these treasures within ourselves but we need to acknowledge their presence while trying to increase and strengthen them. That is the practice, so we thought it would be a good reminder to talk about the Seven Treasures this evening.

---

Transcribed on May 2, 2006 in the house at the southern foot of Turtle Hill by Padma Shugchang.

---

You can find the audio recording of this teaching on the *Pemai Chiso* Dharma Store website:  
[http://www.padmasambhava.org/cart/catalog/product\\_info.php?cPath=39&products\\_id=206](http://www.padmasambhava.org/cart/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=39&products_id=206)