

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

From the mid-seventies through to the mid-eighties, Urgyen Sangharakshita led many seminars on a wide range of texts for invited groups of [Order members](#) and [Mitrans](#). These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Tiratna as Sangharakshita opened up for the still very young community what it might mean to live a life in the Dharma.

The seminars were all recorded and later transcribed. Some of these transcriptions have been carefully checked and edited and are [now available in book form](#). However, a great deal of material has so far remained unchecked and unedited and we want to make it available to people who wish to deepen their understanding of Sangharakshita's presentation of the Dharma.

How should one approach reading a seminar transcription from so long ago? Maybe the first thing to do is to vividly imagine the context. What year is it? Who is present? We then step into a world in which Sangharakshita is directly communicating the Dharma. Sometimes he is explaining a text, at other times he is responding to questions and we can see how the emergence of Dharma teachings in this context was a collaborative process, the teaching being drawn out by the questions people asked. Sometimes those questions were less to do with the text and arose more from the contemporary situation of the emerging new Buddhist movement.

Reading through the transcripts can be a bit like working as a miner, sifting through silt and rubble to find the real jewels. Sometimes the discussion is just a bit dull. Sometimes we see Sangharakshita trying to engage with the confusion of ideas many of us brought to Buddhism, confusion which can be reflected in the texts themselves. With brilliant flashes of clarity and understanding, we see him giving teachings in response that have since become an integral part of the Tiratna Dharma landscape.

Not all Sangharakshita's ways of seeing things are palatable to modern tastes and outlook. At times some of the views captured in these transcripts express attitudes and ideas [Tiratna has acknowledged as unhelpful](#) and which form no part of our teaching today. In encountering all of the ideas contained in over seventeen million words of Dharma investigation and exchange, we are each challenged to test what is said in the fire of our own practice and experience; and to talk over 'knotty points' with friends and teachers to better clarify our own understanding and, where we wish to, to decide to disagree.

We hope that over the next years more seminars will be checked and edited for a wider readership. In the meantime we hope that what you find here will inspire, stimulate, encourage - and challenge you in your practice of the Dharma and in understanding more deeply the approach of Urgyen Sangharakshita.

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

THE FIRST CONVENTION OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER - 1974

CONTENTS

- 2 First session: 'The spiritual development of the Individual Order member'
3 Can one develop without meditating?
4 Confused 'Definitions' of "Meditation"
Signs for measuring growth - constant awareness
4 Success and growth in meditation
5-16 Work, labour and employment
6 Are there less alienating forms of work than others?
The scattered energy of young children
6-7 Earning more money than one needs
8-11 'Alternatives' to earning money
9-11 Vocations and jobs
13-14 Pooling of financial resources and communal living
14-15 Parasitism and symbiosis in relation to the society
16-17 Dealing with scattered energy
17-20 Too much self doubt of the wrong kind
19 Most organizations and groups are kept going by neurotic energy
19-23 Speaking out and not remaining silent or complaining afterwards
- 21 People often more afraid of their own feelings than others' reactions
Disagreement means you belong to a different group
23 'Creative listening'
Extra facilities that those present wanted to see to assist the spiritual development of Order members
23-24 Definition of terms - 'Retreat', 'Sesshin', 'Seminar'
25 The possibility of retreats for Order members only
Solitary retreats
26 Places for solitary retreats at the time of the session (1974)
27 Solitary retreats in the city?
28 The danger of stagnating in the country and the city being much better for spiritual life
29 The ideal length for a solitary retreat
29-34 The arts as a way of promoting spiritual development?
35 Distinguishing between momentary enthusiasm and solid interest and determination
36-38 Sharing one's personal interests with the Order - is it necessary?
- 38-40 Bhante's feeling even more connected with Order members when being physically separated from them
38 Next Session - 'Communication within the Order'
40-41 Being in communication with everybody in the Order?
41 'Friendliness', 'closeness', 'fellowship' and 'chumminess'
42 Being brought closer through being part of the Sangha
43 Ten minutes is often enough for meaningful communication - more time doesn't necessarily mean more communication
43-45 Knowing people as opposed to knowing about them
45 Bhante's spiritual contact with Order members
46-49 Bhante's first suggestion of practising the Order Metta Bhavana and trying to organize when it could be done regularly - full and new moon significance - once a month ...
49-51 Ways of doing the Order Metta Bhavana
52 Factual telepathy
53-54 The Order news-sheet and its function
55-56 Giving the Order News-sheet a name - vacana, ghosha, antaravani, vak - Shabda!
57 Should Order members write to Bhante?
58-59 Correspondence and visiting Order members outside London
59-61 The newly introduced Kalyana Mitra system - Preparing people for ordination who do not know Bhante

62 Having at least one of the two Kalyana Mitras of the same sex
63-65 Not judging just by personality when 'assessing' potential Order members. Having people of different types in the Order.
66-67 Getting to know people who are similar rather than dissimilar
68 Every talent is to be appreciated in the Order

69 Contacting 'lapsed' Order members
When to remove Order members from the Order List
69-70 What constitutes resignation from the Order?
When people resign from the Order the spiritual connection persists
71-74 Keeping in touch with specific out of contact Order members
75 'Active' and 'inactive' order members - nonsense expressions
76-77 Payment towards the potential retreat centre mortgage - £7.00 per week!
78 Next Session - 'The Order and the World'
78-82 Prison visiting by Buddhists
80 Visiting psychiatric hospitals
82-84 Carrying Buddhist/Order identity cards Informing officialdom of the existence of Buddhists
85 The 'Seal' of the Order - The Nalanda Seal
85-87 The need to go out more to spread the Dharma - not preaching to the converted
88-91 Trade Unions, the working class and the Dharma
Getting more involved in working class activities
89-96 Getting the Dharma into schools
92-93 Warnings against inter-faith meetings
97-102 Teaching at adult education institutes and universities
101 Courses being prepared by Order members for use by other Order members
102-104 Feeling overwhelmed (and inspired) by all the possible things to do as a result of these convention sessions
104 Next Session - 'The Functioning of the Order'.
105 Creating new 'Office-bearers' - Order registrar - Order convenor - librarian/archivist - Master/Mistress of ceremonies - editor/compiler of Shabda
105-107 The compiler/'editor' of Shabda and the Order Registrar
108 The Order Convenor (responsible for meetings, retreats and conventions)
109 The Librarian and Archivist
110 The Master of Ceremonies
111 The status of the Order
112 Legally changing one's name and use of order or secular names
111 Concessions for 'ministers' Conscription, Jury Service
Acknowledging Buddhist festivals as holidays by the wider society
114 Using Order names
115-116 Traditional Buddhist Festivals and their dates
117 Links with Padmasambhava and with Chinese Buddhism for the WBO
118 The fat 'laughing Buddha' - Maitreya
119 [break in recording] - what do bhikkhus wear under their robes?!
120-128 Wearing robes - An Order robe - them and us?
121 Over importance given to external things such as dress
122 Why Bhante didn't always wear his robes when first in the UK
123 Different approaches within the FWBO - ritual, meditation, talks with different emphases at different times - the religious and the non-religious approaches
125 The history of the kesa in the WBO
126 People being wary of ritual, pujas, robes etc.
129 The history of the Buddha image and the vajra
131 Peoples reactions to robes, clergymen, religiosity etc.
132 Ritual that has to be explained is not ritual
Defining ritual
133 Uniform and public respect for the Salvation Army
134-135 Why the robe discussion was the most emotive!
136 Planning of specific study groups at that time
137-138 Systematic study and the use of these seminars rather than just miscellaneous reading
Recommended texts by Bhante
Bhante's plans for his seminars - filling a gap in the total life of the Order??