

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 [Mitrās](#). 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

SECOND ORDER CONVENTION (1975) DISCUSSIONS

CONTENTS

1-3	The relationship between the FWBO and the WBO
3-11	Practical details about ' <i>Shabda</i> ' and its content
8	Should ' <i>Shabda</i> ' be confidential i.e. for the eyes of Order members only?
12-17	Finances of the Order - <i>Shabda</i> , kesas, etc.
17-23	The legal position of the WBO
18	Recognition of Buddhist festivals by employers?
19-26	Prison visiting
27-38	The Order Registrar and register - Fundamental administration!
36	The editor of " <i>Shabda</i> "
38	The master of ceremonies
39-49	The Order Library and The Order Archive
47-50	Insuring the Order's property
51-54	Caring for thangkas
54-59	The Order Convenor
56	Responsibility for Order Conventions and Order Days (early Order 'weekends')
59	The Order Registrar
63	Is a Mitra Convenor needed?
65	Next Session - 'The Order and the Movement'
65-66	The relation of the FWBO to the WBO
66-67	Other ways of Order members functioning apart from through FWBO Centres
68-74	Is it possible to leave the Order? Removing people from the Order register
73	The first ordines not having an existing Order to be ordained into
74-75	The 'objective needs of the situation'
75	A 'coincidence of wills'
76-83	Using the term 'Order Member' rather than upasaka/upasika
80	The Tathagata not being misled by words or conventional speech
83	Trying to avoid the term 'religious movement'
84-85	Work as karma-yoga
85-87	Starting up new autonomous FWBO Centres with teams of Order members
88	The suggestion of forming FWBO Publications! FWBO recycled paper factories and farming communities Suggestions for types of Right Livelihood
89-90	What is 'semi-monastic'?
90-93	FWBO Educational centres/schools for children
91	Adopting children rather than making one's 'own'
94-97	Order members and 'their' mitras living together Communes and communities
97	'Formal recognition' of FWBO Centres by the Order
99-114	'Assessing' the three Centres in Britain - Archway (London), Aryatara (Croydon, Surrey) and Glasgow
100	Decision making by consensus
106-108	The atmosphere at a Centre - tranquil or energetic/'busy'
109	'You don't <u>have</u> to be all equal - if you're not'!
110-113	'Leaders' in the order and in communities
116-118	The FWBO in Cornwall (Manjuvajra's group)
119	Five members to form an FWBO Next Session - Devotional and artistic activities

119-122	Chanting of mantras in the puja
124	Suggestion of chanting the Avalokitesvara mantra during pujas
124-127	Devotional feelings - mantras and shrines
127-128	Creating, constructing and maintaining the shrine as a devotional act
129	“Forced holiness”
130-131	Pujas in the dark or with eyes closed?
	Pujas with all the lights on
132	Dedicating the shrine on retreat
	Being sensitive to the leader of a puja
133-134	Ways of making offerings in pujas
135	Selecting readings for pujas
136	Doing pujas (alone) naked
137	Ceremonies and festivals
138-144	‘Positive’ atmospheres
140-142	Coarseness
142-149	Buddhist Festivals and their dates
146	Celebrating Parinirvana Day?
150	FWBO and WBO Anniversary celebrations
151-152	Dates for Order Conventions
153-156	Wearing kesas and using Order names in public - and within the Order
156-157	The shortening of Order names (e.g. ‘Vajra’ for ‘Vajrakumara’)
157	Using Celtic names for Order members
158-159	Kesas
160-163	Creating a simpler puja for newcomers as opposed to the Sevenfold Puja
163-167	Buddhist ceremonies for the dead?
167-168	Bodhidharma Day
169-170	Celebrating the Chinese Patriarch Chih-i?
172	Plans for a Puja Book
173-175	The Five Precepts and the Ten Precepts
	The fifth precept as total abstention from intoxicants?
174	Not chanting the <u>Refuges</u> outside of the Order
177	The fine arts and spiritual life
178-180	Order robes? ‘Dressing up’ for pujas etc.
180-182	Music and dance in pujas
183-184	Professionalism and creativity
185	Handicrafts in the Order
187	‘Whatever we love, we want to embellish’
188	Next Session
190-212	Mitras and the kalyana mitra system
194	The beginnings of establishing the mitra system. 35 mitras worldwide at the time of this session!
194-197	Preparing for ordination
212-227	Resolution of difficulties with the mitra system
216	Resignation of mitras
214-218	Facilities for Friends and Mitras
220-226	Discussions about specific mitra/kalyana mitra relationships
228	Communication between kalyana mitras
230-240	Hierarchies in the FWBO? <u>F</u> riends
232	The <i>dayaka</i> - supporter
239-242	Cords/kesas for mitras?
243	Kalyana mitras of the same sex?
244-246	‘ <i>Mitrata</i> ’ and its content
246-257	Next session - the teaching and studying of the Dharma
246	Spending more and more time on less and less
249	Allowing study groups to go off at tangents

250-252	Difficulties with studying particular texts
252-255	Approaches to study The word 'study' and the word 'seminar'
258	The aim of a study group
259-264	Preparation for giving lectures
260	The three lectures that any Order member should be able to give
266	Two ways of attracting people to the FWBO - meditation and lectures
268	Using visual aids when teaching
269	The Higher Evolution
270-272	The micchaditthi of everybody being equal and challenging wrong thinking
273-277	Contacting 'Political Idealists'
278	Taking meditation classes
280	Being wary of innovation in meditation classes
	Visualisation of Sakyamuni and the Stupa
280-282	The Six Element Practice and Just Sitting Practice
282-286	Walking and Chanting
286	Not 'forcing the pace' when taking classes
286-295	Varying the programme on retreats
291-292	Mixing meditation and study?
295-299	Dissatisfied people at public classes
300	Speakers' classes
302	Next Session - The Functions of the Order and the WBO
303-325	Starting new Centres and activities
307-308	FWBO activities in Scotland in 1975
309-310	The FWBO in Bristol?
311-312	Expansion to the Midlands and the North - Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool Manchester, Sheffield?
316	The standard FWBO set up is only one of the possibilities
318	London, Amsterdam and Copenhagen as FWBO bases in Europe
320-321	FWBO contacts in the Netherlands and in Germany
323-326	The FWBO in Beirut, Yugoslavia, Poland, Israel, Australia?
328	Wholefoods as a possible area for FWBO work?
329	Sending the FWBO Newsletter to all Buddhist groups
331-334	Buddhist involvement with environmental issues?
335	Looking for new, young, Order members and not letting the Order become staid
336	Social and political involvement of the Order/FWBO
337	Employer and employee relationships
338-340	Political systems - Proudhon, Henry George, Schumacher
341-342	Involvement in local politics
343-346	Subhuti gives information about the new London Buddhist Centre and community - to be - in Bethnal Green
345	Arrangements for receiving guests at the new centre
349-352	Lokamitra on fundraising the £15,000 (£30,000 in total) needed to renovate the New London Centre
353	'The FWBO and other (non-Buddhist) spiritual traditions'
357-361	Transcendental Meditation and Divine Light
362	Spiritualism
365	Sufis
369	The absurdity of saying that all religions are one
370	Conflicts between individual needs and the needs of the Order/Movement
373	Rejoicing in one's own merits
373-374	Next Session - General Questions
374-375	The size of an Order Chapter
378	Order members becoming Kalyana Mitras
378-379	Suggestions of texts for future seminars

- 383 Order members not having any 'private lives' /secrets - at least to be able to be completely open with one or two other Order members.
- 385-386 Encouraging people to go on solitary retreats
- 387 Presenting Buddhism but not as 'Buddhism' - i.e. as the Higher Evolution of Man for example
- 390-392 Don't apologise for being a Buddhist!
- 395 Higher ordinations in the WBO - the maha-upasaka and the anagarika
- 397-398 Seniority in the WBO
- 399-402 Is celibacy necessary?
- 399-400 The problem of emotional dependence on another person
- 403 The role of the maha-upasika or anagarika
- 404-405 In the Buddhist tradition no ordination is irrevocable
- 406 The continuation of kalyana mitrata after ordination
- 407-408 Ceremonies and ritual
- 409 Final Session - Dharma Questions
- Stopping the wheel of life and/or developing the successive stages of the Spiral?
- 410 There is no word for 'Life' in Sanskrit or Pali
- 412-417 Devas as separately existing beings and as another level of consciousness
- 414 The Buddha is beyond time
- 418-421 Practices when one is close to death
- 422 The importance of the last thought before death
- 424 Cremation or burial
- 425-428 Procedures at a cremation
- 429 Visualisation meditation - the 'self-generation' and the 'generation in front'
- 430-432 The samayasattva and jnanasattva in Tantric tradition - Tantric aspects of samatha and vipassana
- 433 Being 'careful' when encountering wrathful Bodhisattva forms in meditation
- 434 A version of the Vajrasattva mantra which incorporates Tara or Avalokitesvara (Om Padmasattva Samaya.....)
- 436 Absorbing the visualised figure into one's heart as a ball of light
- 437 Colours of mantras
- 441 The Vajrasattva mantra as a way of purifying any errors in practice
- 444 Avalokitesvara and the Nyingmapa tradition
- 445 The difference between Mahayana and Tantra
- 'Self-existing' and 'Evolved' Bodhisattvas in the "Jewel Ornament of Liberation"
- 447-448 The Bodhicitta arising in a spiritual community, not just individually
- 450-456 The path of regular steps and the path of irregular steps
- 451-452 The use of vajra/dorje bells
- 458 The precepts - principles rather than rules
- Contentment and the third precept
- 459 The positive forms of the precepts
- 460 The Bodhiangas
- 462-465 Gramatically negative terms in Sanskrit and Pali have a positive ring about them
- 465 Back to anagarikas and maha-upasakas
- 466 The realisation of the Aryan truth of Dukkha and the experience of Dukkha/suffering/unsatisfactoriness itself
- 468 Buddhist parents and Buddhist offspring?