

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

From the mid-seventies through to the mid-eighties, Ugyen 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/Triratna 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 Triratna 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 [Triratna 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 Ugyen Sangharakshita.

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS

COMBINED ("MIXED") ORDER CONVENTION 1985

CONTENTS

- 1 The general inadequacies of the question and answer sessions
- 2 Chanting in the FWBO Not injecting emotion into mantra chanting
The magical-cum-scientific and the devotional approach to chanting
- 3 Bhante's general avoidance of the use of the language of chakras and currents
etc.
Using Buddhist calendar dates rather than Christian ones
- 4 Tension between the world and those trying to lead a spiritual life
- 5 Using Bhante's seminar tapes and using teachings that particularly appeal -
the Precious Garland seminar
- 6 Buddhist iconography and symbolism The figure of the Buddha only being
originally portrayed by symbols
- 7 The need to re-evaluate everything that has come down through the Buddhist
tradition to see what is essential
- 8 Not using images in Muslim countries
Traditional attachment to robes and objects of worship
Symbols. The precious metals of the Ten Pillars
Bhante's views on alternative medicine Dependence on the contact with the
practitioner
- 8-9 The need to question one's motives if practising medicine
- 9-10 Donation of organs after death - does it affect the consciousness? An act of
dana
A need to reassess our whole attitude towards life and death
- 11-13 Next Session Being in debt and reasons for this - Not taking responsibility
for oneself Being infantile
lack of imagination
Not just talking about individuality but having to practise it!
- 14 Becoming self-supporting through Right Livelihood businesses as opposed to
signing on the dole - creating a strong financial basis for all activities
- 15 Buddhism's role in the educational system?
- 16 Order members becoming involved with other non-Centre but Buddhist
related activities such as meditation for world peace
- 17 "Where have all the Bodhisattvas gone?"
The eleven headed, thousand armed Avalokiteshvara as a symbol of the Order
- 18 The disaster of triviality!
Training oneself to lead study
Using a dictionary Having access to dictionaries of one's own language and
Pali and Sanskrit
- 19 Bhante's attitude to computers The possible danger of alienation in computer
programmers
- 20 Talking about the FWBO in its entirety through the Newsletter
- 21 The difficulty of expressing things in the written word
Joy in new books being written by Order members and not just Bhante.