

## 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

### MITRA RETREAT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS 1985

#### CONTENTS

- 1-2      Conditioned coproduction, God the creator and no perceptible first beginning  
Going beyond subject and object  
Conditioned coproduction's uniqueness to Buddhism
- 3        The arising of ignorance in the nidana chain  
Ignorance underlying all of the nidanas
- 3-4     Is a Buddha subject to the law of karma?
- 5        Dakinis and Dakas and Dharmapalas  
Literal-mindedness and making the mind more subtle
- 7        A hierarchy of buddhas?  
The Trikaya
- 8        The Buddha answering a question after three requests  
Are there too many options of 'spiritual' lifestyle in the west?  
The importance of continuing to do something for two or three years
- 10      Is number seven a magical number in the Udana?  
Not speaking a falsehood, even for a joke?
- 11      Were Mahayanists taking the Bodhisattva Vow too literally? (i.e. not entering  
nirvana until all beings are saved)  
Steering between being over literal and over metaphorical
- 12      Specific areas in which Bhante found mindfulness difficult to maintain  
'Sorting out' one's sexuality by the age of thirty
- 13      Marriage 'vows' and Going Forth
- 13      Traditionally a married man Going Forth with his wife's consent
- 15      Chanting mantras at the end of pujas?
- 16      Can one kill out of compassion to save others from harm?  
Dealing with ethical dilemmas
- 17      Second session - question based on 'The Udana'
- 18      The centrality of the Going for Refuge including the arising of the Bodhicitta  
The basic Buddhist act - Going for Refuge
- 19      Asking people to wait before Going for Refuge
- 20      Positive and negative seeking of approval  
Negating or affirming the self?
- 21      Some differences between Buddhist and other Indian cosmology and  
hierarchies of gods
- 22      Questions from the Life of the Buddha by Nanamoli
- 23      The Buddha performing miracles and using his supernormal powers
- 24      Mahaprajapati putting pressure on the Buddha and His response
- 25      Bhante's 'System of Meditation'
- 26      'Let thyself be known, know thyself' as applied to The Buddha  
Walking meditation in the FWBO
- 27      Giving more emphasis to applied meditation  
Can humour be creative?  
The Buddha's use of irony

- 27 English humour and Bhante's attempts to eradicate it from the FWBO  
Cynicism
- 28 The Hinayana's narrowing conception of the Arahant in terms of the  
diminution of their ability to communicate  
Communication of the dharma
- 29 Reading texts and sutras out loud
- 30 Tibetan Oracles
- 31 Learning Pali and Sanskrit
- 32 Being well mannered in one's dealings with others  
The need to be more sensitive  
Meeting regularly and in large numbers
- 34 The lack of black Africans in the FWBO  
FWBO activities being financially self-supporting
- 35 Criteria for Going for Refuge.