

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/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 Urgyen Sangharakshita.

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

DISCLAIMER

This transcript has not been checked by Sangharakshita, and may contain mistakes and mishearings. Checked and reprinted copies of all seminars will be available as part of the [Complete Works Project](#).

make that assumption ? Perhaps something dreadful will come up. Perhaps

you really want something incredibly wicked. (laughter) Maybe you are a sort of Satanist at heart - some people wouldn't think of that as necessarily negative - but that's another matter. But it's probably much more likely that what will come to the surface is some sort of harmless, innocent, rather pathetic little want (lawyer) which you've never been able to fulfil. If you see what I mean.

Anyway let's pass on. We seem to be in a rather psychological mood this evening or the questions seem to be.

Vesantara.- We'll try Abhaya's questions then.

Abhaya.- Yes, in the lecture you talk about transition from the Dhyanas to the 3 gates of liberation', called the Samadhis. And then in the course of that section on the Samadhis you refer to them at one point as the 'Transcendent Dhyanas' and I've always thought you've reserved the term 'Dhyana' for the field of the mundane, and I thought in this lecture you were using it to denote the 'Transcendental', and I find it a little bit confusing.

S. - That might have been a slip of the tongue. Because I usually speak of those particular virtues as 'Transcendental Samadhis' rather

than as 'Transcendental Dhyanas', because they are almost always referred to as

as 'Transcendental Dhyanas'. So if I did in that context speak of them as Transcendental Dhyanas, I'd probably in the course of editing that material would

change it to Samadhi - Transcendental Samadhi, because as I said one does speak of the Transcendental Samadhi, for instance, in the original not as far as I know of the Transcendental Dhyana or dhyana.

Abhaya. - In my other question, it relates to the same lecture a bit later on where you go into the four Sunyatas. I seem to remember, either someone telling me or reading, that when you were talking about your eight-fold path series, I think it's the first lecture - Perfect Vision, you go into the 4 kinds of sunyata; and I heard it said or you said that if you were to do the same again, the same lecture again -

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the same material, you 'wouldn't go into the 4 sunyatas, you feel it's a bit of a, maybe waste of time is too strong a word, but that's the impression I got. I wondered if you felt the same about this treatment in this lecture ?

S. - Well I suppose it would depend on the audience. It would depend who you were speaking to but I think in a general way, people are usually in too much of a hurry. I suppose this is a general feature, in a way, of Western life. In this particular context I think perhaps there are two sort of reasons. One is that one is a bit ambitious. One wants to scale and conquer the heights as quickly as possible. Perhaps it means that one over-estimates one's personal capacities. One over-estimates one's spiritual development.

And the other is that we have, so to speak, an excessive, again I

don't like to use this word 'intellectual' which is a good word that we're misusing nowadays, but we have an excessively theoretical approach to an

understanding of things. For instance I have mentioned before that in ancient India when spiritual teaching was not to be found in books (there were no books) when it was entirely a matter of oral transmission, you were given exactly what you needed at the time. For instance you weren't able to sit down and read a book describing all the stages of the path right up to Enlightenment. You would be completely ignorant of those things. - Maybe you'd be completely ignorant of the very idea of Enlightenment. But you'd go along to a teacher and he'd say, perhaps after talking to you or looking at you, 'Well, do this. Go nay and do this. And you might go away and do it for several years, and

when you'd mastered that thoroughly, you'd come back or he'd call you back and he'd give you some further teaching and then you'd practise that.

Do you see? You wouldn't have a sort of 'theoretical preview', but we constantly being given these theoretical previewa. So we know the path, we know all about the different stages, we know all about Prajna, -we know all about Sunyata, all about the different degrees and levels of Sunyata, and because we are so familiar with this material, theoretically,

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or mentally, in an abstract sort of way, we're quite unable to make the distinction between really knowing it* really experiencing it, and simply being acquainted with it in this theoretical way. We think that we know. So therefore we think that we're quite ready to talk about, to discuss, the four Sunyatas, ask questions about them~ even to practise them. And in most cases that is simply not so. But it seems that there's nothing that we can do about it~ because you can't stop people reading books. They've usually read all the books, or ~er~ often read all the books, the right ones and the wrong ones, and they've usually read the right ones in the wrong sort of way, before they come along to the FWBO.

So they come along with their Diamond Sutras in their hand and say,

◆L.t. 'study the Diamond Sutra. I really like the Diamond Sutra.' (Lau~ht er) ~'Like' the Diamond Sutra? ~The Diamond Sutra. ~r - one doesn't quite

know what to make of it, one isn't quite sure how to proceed. Because if you tell them that you don't think they're ready to study the Diamond Sutra, the chances are that they will be deeply offended. They'll think that you're unwilling to teach them, or you underestimate them* you underestimate their intelligence, their devotion, and their spiritual capabilities generally. And they just go away. I remember in this connection, there was a woman coming along to the FWBO years and years ago, and I don't know whether it was the Diamond Sutra, but a Sutra of that sort, it might have been the Heart Sutra, and she wanted to study it with me. And as tactfully as I could I sort of said that I wasn't willing to study it with her, or she should study it fl~th me. She was quite offended and she went away. I think she left the FWBO for a while, but after a few weeks she came back. And in the course of a class she said, or she announced, loudly and sort of triumphantly,

'Ah Bhante, Lama so-and~ao has agreed to study such-and-such Sutra with me. I think I'm very ready for it.'

So what could one say? So~this does create a sort of difficulty. So sometimes we have to unlearn what we know and unlearn what we learn, and recognise the distinction between really knowing something ~n our own -

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experience and deeper understanding and simply hearing about something, or reading about something. So I don't know whether I would talk about

the 4 Sunyatas now. I wouldn't like to make any sort of hard and fast decision, I don't want to sort of prohibit myself from talking about them in future absolutely, but I must say sometimes~my heart does sink when people ask for explanations of abstruse teachings that they, frankly, haven't even ~ to understand - they haven't got a glimmering of an idea about and have not made any connection with in their own experience. They manage to frame questions, but questions are actually purely verbal questions. Very often they don't realise this because since you've got words at your disposal and you can arrange those words into sentences in various ways you can actually frame~ question, but that's not a real question - a real question is something that springs out of your own experience, or even conflicts which you experience in your own experience. Then you can give birth to a question. But a purely verbal, purely conceptual question isn't very stimulating and one isn't sort of encouraged to pursue the matter further. One is sometimes inclined either not to say anything at all or at the most to vouchsafe a sort of non-committal grunt (laughter). If you know the person quite well, and you ~ne~ they're not

going to be offended, well then you can say, 'Well frankly, I think we'll just leave that for the time being if you don't mind'.

This also ties up with what I have been saying not only recently, but even before, about 'more and more of less and less' and getting back to basics. Of course, perhaps the situation being what it is, modern mind being what it is, Buddhism in the West being what it is, you can't altogether eschew a sort of rapid survey of the whole field. But I think having made that rapid survey you should get back, as soon as possible to where you actually are and practice and study accordingly.

It's really a sad thing sometimes to see people in the West, especially say in America, who become interested in, or involved in

Buddhism, just going straight for the most or what they think are the most esoteric Tantric teachings - they seem to feel that they're really

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ready, they're really qualified for just those teachings - no doubt in almost all cases they're just the last teachings that they should

consider. It's no less sad to see some Lamas, apparently at least to outward appearances, sort of handing out these teachings which one can see just have no relevance whatever for the people that they're handing them out to, and could even, or very likely do them quite a bit of harm.

Anyway we won't dwell on that painful subject. Vessantara. - Will had a question about Sampajana.

Will Spens. - For an Order Member working in a co-op and helping to run a centre but not spending long periods of several months a year on retreat, consequently having little Dhyana experience, could the deliberate cultivation of Sampajana assist in understanding it 'continually keeping the goal in mind' - be a valid approach to developing insight? And how is Sampajana cultivated?

S. Well one should certainly keep Sampajana in mind. It's sort of 'clear consciousness of one's real goal'. But one mustn't, at the same time, keep it in mind as something too distant. A goal, by very definition is something towards which you are actually working. So if you are in a situation where you're not able to work towards that goal, well yes it is very good to keep that goal in mind, but you also have to keep in mind the fact that your present situation, your present conditions do prevent you from making an effective approach to that goal, and that as soon as possible, you must bring about a change in that situation.

So in the case of meditation, if you recognise that in order to get anywhere near your goal you'll have to do a certain amount of meditation and if you find that working in a co-op doesn't permit you to do that amount of meditation, ie. not to approach the goal effectively, you've not only got to bear in mind the goal, but also the limitations of your present situation. And bear in mind moreover, that you need to terminate them as soon as you conveniently can - so that you

can start approaching the goal effectively, as distinct from really

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recognising the goal as your goal, as it were, theoretically. Will Spens. - I think I've probably misunderstood the meaning of sampajana 'because I was under the impression that it was more as if you didn't have enough time to develop Prajna through samatha meditation, through Dhyana experience, it was possible to work towards that by whatever you were doing in any particular situation - being able to think 'Vail I'm doing that for the sake of er...'

S.- Well in a way that it is. So, because for instance, supposing you are working in a co-op and because you are working in that co-op, it is going to be possible for that co-op say after 6 months, to send you on a long meditation retreat. Well then clearly your working in the co-op is helping you towards that particular end.

But Sampajana usually means - there's a compound expression-

Sati-sampajana - Sati is usually translated as recollection or mindfulnesq or awareness, and sampajana as clear comprehension and it is specifically a clear comprehension of the goal. That is to say, the goal of the spiritual life. It's not sufficient to be aware, say of your bodily movements and your feelings, your emotions, your thoughts and so on. You also need to maintain a constant clear comprehension of what is your goal - what is the goal of the spiritual life, what is your spiritual ideal- so that you may move constantly towards that. But I think there's a sort of question inside your question, I'm not quite sure what it is, I think the actual question matter hasn't emerged fully. Will Spens. - Well, it could be, where it came from was that I'd heard that you'd been speaking to Kamala-la, I hope that I'm not misquoting this, but...

S.- Well I have been speaking to him, so... (laughter) He's there so I expect he can check up on anything I say. (Laughter)

Will Spens. - What I understood, coming out of the conversation was that Kamala-la had been saying that he was at Vajraloka and because he had quite a lot of administrative work, he wasn't in a position where he

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could develop a great amount of dhyana experience. That you'd said

to him that although he perhaps couldn't do that, perhaps he could approach prajna by just bearing in mind exactly what he was doing, while...

S. - Approach Prajna ?

Will. - Well approach insight, without a large amount of dhyana experience.

S. - Well of course 'large' is a relative term. So if I say that to Kamala-la, I'm saying it to someone who has quite a few hours meditation every day and who as far as I know devotes a much less number of hours, even if it is hours, to administrative work. Do you see what I mean,?

He's not working in a co-op & also doing administrative work. It's a question of doing quite a bit of meditation and also administrative work. So if, say, with a mind saturated with 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 hours of meditation you then devote yourself or direct yourself to administrative work, well you are in position perhaps, not only to maintain your mindfulness, but to try to develop insight in connection with the administrative or other practical work that you are doing.

One couldn't very well give that sort of advice, or say that sort of thing, to someone who, when he was not doing administrative work, was doing some other kind of active work not doing meditation. Do you see what I mean ? res. So that was, those remarks were addressed to him, or to anyone in his sort of position particularly - not to people in

general. I think to be able to apply insight to, or to develop insight in relation to that sort of situation,

that sort of work, you will

need to have 'saturated' your mind in Dhyana, perhaps for several hours previously and bein~ doing that on a regular sort of basis. I think people know from their own experience that the usual half or a one hour in the morning and/or in the evening is not enough~to enable you to develop insight during the day in coneotion with your other work.

I won't say that it ii impossible, because the~recources of human nature are indeed unfathomable, but I think it's rather unlikely

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in most cases.

Will. - But if you are working in a co-op, I know this will vary from individual to individual, but what would you, could you give any guide- line to the amount of time that you would need to spend every year, in order to do so, to develop insight ?

S. - That is a very difficult matter becauser as you say, individuals do differ so much. Sometimes I wondtr why we don't put it the other way round. (Laughter) H"o# much time, how many mnonths~a year we ought

to be working in a co-op ? Or how matiy months we'd need to work in a each year co-op7 to support ourselves w~ile we are meditating. Perhaps we

should sometimes look at it in that sort of way.

But I wouldn't like anybody, any Order Member, to say fall below

one month of retreat a year. And even that is really a st9p-gap. Of course a lot depends also upon your actual, day-to-day life. Well if

you do have a regular morning and/or evening meditation, and if~ your ~tfe~~s y~i~ live it in the context of our co-op iq integrated, positive and happy, well thats rather a different situation from working in a way that is productive of tensions and stress (and in a way) you have perhaps from disagreements with the people that you're working with. So all these factors do make ~ quite quite difficult to generalise. But as a very rough and ready rule of thuinb, bit of guidance, I'd say well don't let annual quota of retreats, and I don't mean general retreats, just going along and, say, helping out on a beginners retreat, I mean a retreat for your cake - whether it's meditation or a combination

of meditation and study. Don't let it fall below one month a year. actually could I think it would be good if every Order Member/spend 3 or 4

months-a year on retreat. Preferably in one long stretch ♦. I think that would be - I was guing to say ideal , it wouldn't even be ideal - but it would be more normal as it were. I think I have in mind of course, the old pattern of Buddhist monastic life where you wandered, say for 8 or 9 months and you were in one place for 3 or for 4 months, enjoying your rainy season retreat or summer retreat as it came to be called.

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I think we should try to work towards that sort of pattern. I think if

you"4re working in a busy centre or working in a co-Op, I think you need that sort of refreshment and renewal of inspiration. Because if youlre working in a centre especially, you're giving out, you're teaching people, you're talking to people - but 7ou have to be very careful that you don't exhaust your 'stock' of Dharma too quickly, you have to constantly replenish. Not that literally what ;;ou give away , you lose, no - if anything it's the opposite; but you can feel, if you're not careful, 'drained' as with

-regards your- energies~ You can feel your inspiration drying up. If you're not careful , insensibly, you'll get out of touch with the people who come along.

You'll start feeling it as a bit of a chore that you have to deal with them, talk to them, answer their questions, listen to them and all the rest of it. You'll even start feeling, if you're not careful, it's a bit of an imposition, that they're imposing on you. You might even start feeling a vague irritation with them. That is really, really a danger signal for any Order Member working in or around a centre. You've got to really enjoy working with people and enjoy giving out, but even if you do enjoy it, nonetheless after a while if you" haven't had a retreat for some time you may well find your springs of inspiration drying up. Even if not exactly drying up, you'll certainly need some time and some space to yourself. You can't be giving out all the time - that's unbalanced, you have to be taking in as well as giving out.

So really I'd like to see all Order Members able to go on a 3 to 4 month retreat every year. This would require quite a bit of reorganisation on the part of centres and co-ops and communities. You could of course go on retreat in the community itself. But I think if there was the will a way would be found. You've got to really want to do that, as anything else.

Devamitra. - Since you've commented on the amount of retreat you think is generally necessary for Order Members, - could

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you just say what you consider to be the bare minimum

for Nitrac, because, for instance as far as I'm aware at the moment~in co-ops in the movement most Mitras get an average of about 6 weeks retreat about a year. Would you like to comment on that?

S. - Well there are Mitrac and Mitras. I mean some Nitras have got ordinary jobs~ they've got wives and families or husbands and families and they can't always get away, especially if they've got young children. So I - it's very difficult to prescribe for Mitras in general. But I think in the case of Mitras who are as it were 'unattached' and who are working in co-ops, probably 6 weeks is the minimum, if they could get more the better. I think probably you could say the more retreats a Nitra is able to go on - the more rapid the progress that they will make. Within certain limits of course. If you were to send them on a retreat, in some cases-say, for a whole year, well they might start experiencing a reaction~

But I think, to make a more general point, or a point of principle

- one has got to be very careful to ensure that the needs of the individual are not fitted into the objective requirements of a sort of working situation. One must never forget the working situation is for

the benefit of the individual or for the benefit of individuals. That is to say for the benefit of the whole community, in wider sense. The

whole spiritual community in a wider sense, to which that particular individual belongs.'

This is not to say that one has got to disregard things like profitability. No, that also has to be considered, but nonetheless one's got to be very careful. - you don't get into a situation where the needs of the individual, though their service is paid to them, are in effect ignored. Also you've got to be very careful that you don't rationalise - if you need someone to work in the co-op, you don't sort of convince yourself. If, 'Well that's the best thing that he or she could do as an individual. That's the best thing for their spiritual

development anyway.' I think you have to be very careful of that,

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because you may slip into these sort of rationalisations, in a way with the best of intentions.

Prasanasiddhi. - When you say every Order Member should have at least one month when they're on retreat which is actually for their benefit. Then you say ideally 3 to 4 months on retreat. Is that a retreat of the same nature as the one month retreat, for their own benefit ? Or could you say a more general ..

S. I'm not, as it were, legislating. But I would say that I'm thinking of those 3 to 4 months as being predominately for the individuals own benefit. I wouldn't like to exclude from that

entire period doing anything on retreat or in the retreat situation, or

for other people - like, leading a Puja, leading a study group/ giving a talk.

Of course it's well known that in recent months or even recent

years I've been feeling, and also saying that I felt, not so much that people didn't get enough time on retreat, that no doubt is also true, but that people weren't doing enough study. Especially that Mitras weren't doing enough study, there wasn't enough provision for study. That there weren't enough study groups and that the study groups even were not of a high enough calibre, and that therefore general Dharma knowledge was not really, in many cases, up to standard. So this also needs to be attended to.

So it's as though really a sort of general upgrading is needed. Unfortunately it all seems to involve money, cash. But again I'm sure that where there's a will, there's a way.

Ric Cooney. - How would you see this problem of retreats in relation to somewhere like New Zealand, where you can't go to radmaloka, or there's not so many obvious retreats, you know like, most of the retreats other than retreats where there's beginners or something ? It would have to be a solitary basically. So how would you get around that ?

S. - I think for the time being the problem is insoluble. Just as it was in England some years ago, one mustn't forget that. In England a

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few years ago the situation was very different. Five years ago there

was no Il Convento for instance, this is only the fourth. No doubt in in

the future/New Zealand too there will be Il Conventos. No doubt in New

Zealand you've got lots of beautiful places where you can have 11 Conventos. In fact there's probably more beautiful places in New Zealand even than in Italy, more unspoilt. But nonetheless for the time being what you say is true, and people just have to do the best that they can~ certainly have more, perhaps, in the way of solitary retreats. And also, I know one or two people in New Zealand do this~ listen to as many tapes of seminars as you ~an. I remember Aniketa, in particular, writing to me, because she's a great listener to seminars. She says that very often, almost always, when she listens to a seminar, that it's all so vivid that she actually feels that she's there present on it and she gets a great deal of inspiration from that.

So one mustn't neglect these sort of helps and these sort of facilities too. There's an awful lot of material on tape: in the form of lectures and seminars. There's an awful lot of literature available: all sorts of transcribed material available. Perhaps one could make up for the lack of retreat facilities by perhaps, at least for the time being, immersing oneself more in that sort of material. But no doubt as more Order Members gather in New Zealand, and as some of them become more experienced, it will be more and more possible to have very worthwhile, longer retreats there, as it is possible in England and as it is possible here. One of the advantages in New Zealand is that you ~an actually get away to places where it is completely silent. Yes. In England this is very difficult because almost always you~will hear the sound of traffic, a very faint hum in the far distance. Or a plane will come overhead.

But I've been in parts of New Zealand, especially South Island, where I've got out of the car, walked a short distance to the top of a little hill, and there hasn't been a sound. That is, no Man-made sound.

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And it's ... well quite a novel experience, if one normally lives in the city or even in a village~like Surlingham, it's ~uite different. I was going to say the 'quality of silence' is quite different, but it's more than that, it is simply silence. Which normally under the conditions of modern life one is not able to experience. It's relatively quiet, sometimes, under the conditions of modern life, but it isn't really silent.

Anyway, any more questions? What's the time anyway? Vessantara. - It's going on for a quarter to nine.

S. - And how many more questions?

Vessantara. - We have about 2 or 3 more rising out of that lecture, -and there are also some more follow-up questions about your discussion of the metaphorical nature of language, but maybe we could save those for next time. Padmavajra had 2 questions.

Padmavajra. - This is connected actually to the next lecture on um... but the 1st question is a general question on er.. to do with the Bodhisatva Ideal~ things you were saying quite early on in the Question & Answer session about introducing some more Bodhisatva-like precepts occasionally, to make us aware of that dimension. I was wondering, in order to bring the Bodhisatva Ideal more into focus, do you think there would be a place in the movement for a 'Bodhisatva Day'?

S. - Knim. That's quite interesting. Yes and no. I would say that Sangha Day is at least to some extent a Bodhisatva Day. Because what is the Sangha? Bodhisatvas are~ in a way, the most prominent representatives of the Arya-Sangha. So perhaps one could, as it were, include the Bodhisatvas in ones~celebration of Sangha Day. I~m not quite sure, I don't recollect exactly how Sangha Day is celebrated in FWBO centres and communities. The equivalent of Sangha Day is celebrated in Theravada countries usually, or mainly, by feeding the monks - (laughter) - rather more lavishly, even, than usual - but we won't go into that.

But yes, I think if One was inventive~and imaginative, it would be possible to incorporate into the ~angha Day celebrations some, as it

were, recognition of the great Bodhisattvas as being the exemplars of the spiritual community - the Sangha of Bodhisattvas. I've not suggested a separate day, because I think that might introduce difficulties, or create difficulties, because I think, as yet, the celebratory spirit hasn't been sufficiently developed around our WBO centres. I think we still have quite a bit of difficulty celebrating those particular days which, technically at least, we do celebrate. So I think it would be a good idea to really be able to celebrate them first, before we start creating extra sort of festival days. At present we've got Buddha Day, we've got Lharma Day, we've got Sangha Day, we've got WBO Day and we've got ~O Day, plus the birth and death anniversaries of the Buddha, that's actually quite a lot. We also celebrate Padmasambhava Day. Is that seven ?

Vessantara. - Eight.

S. - So I think that's enough to be getting on with - that's one every six weeks, and we don't as yet in my opinion even celebrate Buddha Day properly. Or in a sense of a grand enough scale, or with sufficient intensity, or with sufficient enjoyment - hn. But perhaps, having some kind of observance connected with the great Bodhisattvas would help us to 'flesh out' the Sangha Day celebrations. To make them richer than perhaps they are at present.

Pad~avajra. - My other question actually came up this morning when we talking about hierarchy. The lecture on "the Bodhisattva Hierarchy. In the Pali Canon it's reported that the Buddha, just after his Enlightenment, wanted to find somebody he could revere and respect - could you comment upon this ?

S. - I have even thought of giving a lecture, a talk, on this. You know that I have given talks on different episodes in the Buddha's life, we've had 'A Case of Dysentery' and had 'A Wreath of Blue Lotus' and we've had 'Between the Twin Sal Trees' and I've had other episodes in mind, and this~ in fact, was one of them. Because it does raise an extremely important principle. After all, here was the Buddha, and he was Enlightened,

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or perhaps at the very least let us say, he had started undergoing the

~nlightenment experience - he had started exploring all the aspects, the different facets, of that experience which we usually refer to~ as though it was one undifferentiated thing, as 'Enlightenment'. But even in the case of the Buddha, even at that moment, the thought came to him that he should dwell reverencing something or someone.

So this really requires pondering. It's as though it was only after the Buddha bethought him that he should dwell reverencing someone that he realised that there~ was nobody for him to reverence. It's as though his fundamental - his basic - impulse was to reverence, to look up, not to look down. And it was only when he tried to look up that he found that, well, there was no-one, there "was no- thing" to look up to. In a sense there was no up, because he was up. Up was he huh. I'm not sure whether that's grammar or not. (laughing) It isn't 'up was he' but 'up was him'. But do you see what I mean ? The Buddha wasn't concerned to find somebody, to find anybody, below him. His concern was to find somebody above him, or something~"" above him that he could reverence.

-At the end he couldn't find any being, he couldn't find any - person, he could only find the Dharma. That is to say that great Cosmic, that great Spiritual Law, in accordance with which he became Enlightened, or by virtue of the existence of which it was possible for him to attain Enlightenment.

And therefore, He decided to dwell, or to abide or to live, reverencing that Dharma. So this is very, very significant, that The Buddha, even as it were after His Enlightenment, looked for something or soii sons~ for so:aeone or something, that He could live reverencing an~"perhaps we could say worshipping.

Padmavajra. - Is this conected in any way to the episode in the '~~ahavastu where He reverences the ~odhi tree, is there a connection ?

S. - - I don't think so really. Not directly . I think his reverencing the Bocihi Tree is an expression of gratitude. You are grateful. to all the things that have helped you along the way. You're grateful to all the things that have helped you gain Enlightenment.

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And yes, the Bodhi Tree had helped in the sense that the Bodhi Tree had provided him with shade, with shelter, while He was en~aged in the last stages of His Quest. So I would personally interpret His reverencing the Bodhi Tree as an expression of gratitude, because you can't really take it as worship in the strict sense. If the Bodhi Tree had any significance or any sancitivity, it was only by virtue of it's association with the - Buddha himself. So He couldn't reverence it, as it were, for its own sake, but He could certainly feel gratitude to it for its own sake, because it had helped Him. The Kusa grass had helped Him. The khira the milk-rice had helped Him. The woman who offered Hirn the tnilk-rice had helped Him. All the people who ever fed Him while He was a wanderer had helped Him.

So I think it's quite a good thing to cultivate this sort of spiritual gratitude. It is mentioned in the Mangala Sutta as katan~nuta gratitude. And among all the different schools or forms or traditions of Buddhism, it seems that it's the Zen, the chan ~r Zen School, that has most cultivated or most developed this quality of gratitude. Or insisted most upon it, or emphasied it - that you should be grateful for every- thing that you recieve. Though I must say in the Theravada countries too it is emphasied that the monk should be grateful to the peopl~ who support him, who provide him with food and clothing and shelter and medicine and very often the monk does feel genuinely grateful . Sometimes unfortunately he takes it all for granted. But I think it is important that one should cultivate this feeling of gratitude. Perhaps gratitude is very close to reverence.

You can be grateful , perhaps, to all the people who brought you up. Perhaps they did bring you up in ~ery positive way, or at least as best they could. I remember, some of you may remember, that at the very begining of Marcus O'Refiu~~'s~ 'Meditations' (as it's called in English) there's a long section where he recounts the names of all the people that he has reason to be grateful to. His parents and his adopted father and various other relations and tutors and friends. He expresses his

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gratitude to each and every one of them for what they've done for him and the contribution that they've made to his life and to his career.

How they all, between them, helped to make it possible for him to be

the man that he was. Especially those who introducedhimto, and helped him to follow, the Stoic philosophy, in which of course he believed.

So one can perhaps, one can do this oneself as a sort of exercise. Think~ perhaps, of one's parents and what one has got to be -grateful for to them. ~aybe ignoring for the moment their little shortcomings, if they

do happen to have any. Just think of one's teachers, secular and spiritual, wflat cause one might have to be graterul to them, and all sorts of people

who might have helped you,);in one way or another, over the years. And people ♦fyoulook~edbac~ you might be surprised how many/there are. Not just the

more obvious ones , like parents and teachers, but all sorts of others

who've done something that has helped you, or which at least had been useful to you, in the course of your life. And that might give you a feeling of the extent to which your life, and even your achievements,

were dependent upon other people, on a large number of other ~eople, and how you couldn't have ~ot where you are now without them. Perhaps they're people you haven't thought of for years and years - you might have i -

forgotten them completely - but perhaps at a certain time, at a certain point they did play, perhaps, quite an important part in your life. A part that was important for you at that time. Perhaps some elderly

relation who nursed you through an illness when you were very young, perhaps you've almost forgotten about it. Or the person who taught you the alphabet, or the primer from which you learned the alphabet - and so on.

So there is this emotion of reverence which is very important.

There is also the emotion of gratitude and a third emotion, quite closely allied to these two, is the emotion that ~~~5~~~~y refer to as 'rejoicing A

in 'merits'. You could say that gratitude is almost in a way a form of rejoicing in merits. You rejoice in the merits of the people who have helped you. You recognise that help, you appreciate that help, or in a

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word, you're just grateful.

I'm not sure what the etymology of 'grateful' is. 'Pull' we understand, but what is this 'grate'? What is gratitude full of? Orate-full?

Abhaya & Vessantara. - Gratis.

S. - That which is free? Yes because it's (perhaps, I don't

know, I'm speculating now, but it could be that it's) your recognition that something has been given freely which you don't as it were, deserve.

It's not due to you, it's a sort of free gift and you respond by being grate - full. But as I say that's just a speculation, that's just a guess. Never mind you better go and look it up in your own dictionaries. Antonio Perez. - In Spanish 'grato' is something which is pleasant. S. - Pleasant ah.' Yes that's true. In older English a 'grateful' smell is a pleasant smell. Milton uses the word ~ateful - in that sense~ but that's different from the modern meaning. Something that is grateful to you, that is to say, pleasing to you. A grateful~. odour.

Sometimes we use the expression 'thankful~', but that's not quite the same. There's a sort of subtle difference which is easier to feel than to explain.

But to go back to this question of reverence, and the ~u~dha even, reverencing. I think that this is something that can't be insisted on too much or called to mind too often. It goes so counter to the modern spirit of not wanting to be indebted to anybody and not ~anti~ to look up to anybody. We're very willing, very happy, perhaps, to look down on others but not willing to look up to others. Even resenting that others appear to be, in any way, superior to you. Perhaps you'll have a sort of respect for superior brute strength, but very often you're very unwilling to respect, or to reverence~ qualities which are genuinely superior from the spiritual point of view.

Alright, what other questions ?

Vessantara. - Steve had one.

Steve Webster. - This goes back to the first lecture we studied. You

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said that if only we can create or induce the conditions which are represented by Santideva's Supreme Worship and Vasubandhu's four factors,

then the Bodhicitta inevitably~ in due course, will arise within us

and not in any other way. Did you mean this literally ?

S. - Well yes and no. I would say that if there is, as it were, any other way - those 2 sets of conditions are so comprehensive that they would be sure to include that, as it were, 'other way'. But again one doesn't want to exclude any possibility, as I mentioned earlier the

resources of human nature are unfathomable. (pause) Okay. left Vessantara. - All we have now are some follow-ups about metaphorical

language - the discussion we had at the end of the last question and answer session.

S. - Let's have them. Just read them all out, let me see if they hang together or whether the implications are such that really I ought to devote more time to it some other evening.

Vessantara. - I'm not sure of all of them. Mike has some, so perhaps he could read his, and see if they include the ones I've got here. Mike Shaw. - I haven't been able to formulate this~very easily. In

discussing the metaphorical nature of language you gave an example of two people having an 'argument', in inverted commas, where they apparently disagreed with each other, because they weren't really communicating at

all. S. - This wasn't in connection with metaphorical language, this simply

followed on quite fortuitously, in a way from that discussion. Okay. Mike. - I felt that might~ indicate the need for ... if communication is to take place, it would require both a sort of sympathy between the people and an understanding~ of the nature of language, so that they understand that it's metaphorical. But you seem to be saying that if they sort of take each other literally then that's part of

the breakdown in communication. Without ...

S. - I don't think I quite said that at least I didn't intend to imply that that sort of confused discussion was due to

280 people not being clear about the metaphorical nature of language. But

that may enter into it. I think what I was emphasising was that one of the most important reasons for that sort of confusion was that people were not clear about what they were actually saying. In a sense they didn't even know what they were saying. And that they used words and expressions, even argument 5, without any real consciousness of their significance. And of course this would include perhaps any consciousness of the fact that in some cases the expressions which they were using were metaphorical and not to be taken literally. (pause)

Mike Shaw. - when I was thinking about that, I thought of another example of miscommunication, when you have two people - sympathetic towards each other - apparently reach some sort of agreement, and then discover afterwards that they've actually agreed to different things. They go off with different ideas.

S. - Yes. Well of course one finds this even in the case of council some meetings sometimes. Or cabinet meetings. One finds that quite important

issues have been discussed and different people go away under the impression that quite different decisions have been arrived at. This has been known to happen in recent years even in the case of cabinet meetings. Or perhaps I should say even in the case of FWBO councils. And sometimes even the minutes don't help. It is not clear from the minutes what decision was actually taken. But some people go away thinking that the decision was to do such-and-such thing, and other people, members of the same council, go away under the impression that the decision was not to do that particular thing. So really this is extraordinary isn't it?

Mike. - So, I was wondering if the fact that confusion took place whether that was something to do ... the first thing I was wondering was something to do with actually the metaphorical nature of language - whether they sort of misunderstood each other's metaphors, so to speak, that they'd been using. Different people had been using language in a metaphorical sort of way and they'd not understood for those reasons. Whether that was...

S. - I think it's actually much more complex than that. I think that sometimes is perhaps one factor, but I think only one factor. Sometimes they don't