

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

Edward Conze's Introduction to: Buddhism: Its Essence and Development
Held at Sukhavati Community , London in 1975

Cassette One:

- 1 Buddhism a form of 'Eastern spirituality'?
- 4 Mysticism & the 'perennial philosophy'
- 7 Wisdom the heritage of the group?
- 9 Transmission of wisdom
- 11 Immortality & the deathless
- 12 Problems of introducing Buddhism
- 15 Letting the Dharma speak for itself
- 16 Do people really want to change?
- 18 'Character' Buddhism & 'adjustment' Buddhism
- 19 Sensory experience relatively unimportant
- 21 Distinctions between rupa & arupa-dhyanas
- 22 Nature of arupa-dhyanas
- 23 Levels of experience

Cassette Two:

- 24 Renunciation & attachment
- 26 Dealing with craving
- 27 How to treat all people alike
- 28 Metta more satisfying than emotional turbulence
- 31 Difference between East and West?
- 33 Should one reject the senses?
- 35 The will to live
- 36 Thirst for existence & non-existence
- 39 Dealing with feelings of emptiness
- 41 More on 'rejecting' & 'overcoming' the senses
- 42 More on the will to live: three aspects of trsna
- 44 "Suicide doesn't work"
- 45 Yet more on rejecting the senses

Cassette Three:

- 47 Where is your joy? Don't let your spiritual life depend on your sensual life
- 49 Exotic curiosities
- 51 Value of being thoroughly disillusioned
- 54 Disillusionment & disgruntlement
- 59 Living apart from ordinary society
- 60 Spiritual life needs no justification

Cassette Four:

- 64 Value of spiritual communities for spiritual progress
- 65 Kasina meditation
- 68 Loathsomeness of food
- Individuality, true & false
- 69 Pudgalavadins
- 73 Individuality of an enlightened person
- 73 Changing & becoming more truly oneself
- 77 Sakkaya-drsti - the First Fetter
- 78 Enlightenment only gained through wisdom
- 80 The transcendental as the object of wisdom
- 82 Philosophy a waste of time for Buddhists?
- 84 Value of speculation

Cassette Five:

- 86 Faith followers & doctrine followers
- 87 Does the Unconditioned exist?
- 89 Subject & object
- 91 Is Buddhism pragmatic?
- 93 All statements are false?
- 99 The Aryan silence
- 102 Aryan Truths
- Nature of dukkha: three aspects
- 106 Buddhism 'radically pessimistic'

Cassette Six:

- 107 Negative states distort our vision
- 110 Contradiction & paradox in Buddhism
- 115 The Absolute
- 116 Three stages of visualization
- 117 Zen koans
- 121 Appendix: Complete text excerpt used in seminar

Transcription completed by Prajnananda
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