

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 [Mitrans](#). 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

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](#).

MILAREPA AND THE NOVICES SEMINAR

CONTENTS

PAGE SUBJECT

1	Milarepa himself. 'Commands' from gurus
2/4	Local deities
5	Deities as objectively perceived entities
6	'Angry trees' and 'Happy trees'
7	Living close to trees and lots of animals. Five novices come to visit Milarepa
8	The word of mouth as the best form of advertising
9	Milarepa's song of joy
10	Seeing loneliness and solitude as fearful or joyous
11	The 'Clear light' of the void
12	Its many ways of appearance
13	Total freedom from distraction
14	'The mandala of spiritual power' 'The Dakini' - the spontaneous arising of the mind
15	'The best present is the Dharma
16/17	The next song. Marpa in relation to Milarepa
18/19	The hallmark of the Vajrayana. Comparing the three yantras.
20/21	Buddhahood in one lifetime The different goals of each yana
22	Faults of the tantra. The four tantras
23/4	Making much of your likes and dislikes - Duality
25	Refining 'tastes' - Swinburne and alcoholism
26	Personal 'tastes' Accepting facts as facts - Accepting hierarchies.
27	Performing skilful actions to boost the ego
28	Doing things for approval Do not stay away from the spiritual community overnight
29	Being 'anti-social' Are parties social?
30	Sangharakshita's experience of a party. Intellectual conceits
31	Not doing too many activities when on solitary retreat. Using spiritual powers for worldly ends
32	Boasting of spiritual powers
33	Performing 'Spiritual' acts purely for money and esteem
34/5	Which scriptures are actually the Buddha's teaching? The unifying factor in the teachings
36/7	The next song The different ways in which the novices should exert themselves Enjoyment of learning
38	Preparation for taking classes
39	Squandering your spiritual inheritance
40	Keep exerting oneself
41	The uncertainty of death. Looking at positive aspects of the Unconditioned (as opposed to negative aspects of the conditioned)
42	Refining the conditioned through skilful use of pleasure
43	'Collecting' information. The thirst for knowledge
44	People wasting their lives Boasting
45	Arrogance dries up inspiration
46/7	'Judging' a person's actions in relation to that person and not in isolation
48/9	Competitiveness Biological survival

- 50 Women in hierarchies Matrilineality
- 51 Formation of dominance structures 'Cunning'
- 52 'Cunning'
- 53 Honesty
- 54 Being oneself should be easy but it isn't
- 55 Teaching children to lie
- 56 Losing one's honesty and straightforwardness in the transition from child to adult
- 57/8 The novices offer a golden mandala which Milarepa returned
Views, Contemplation and practice
- 59 The next song regarding views; contemplation and practice
- 60 Yogachara - nothing is separate from the mind. 'The clear nature of thought itself'
- 61 Redirecting one's mind
- 62 Transformation of energy. The ten virtues
- 63 Practising despite one's surroundings. Transcending duality
- 64 Realising that one was never unenlightened
- 65 'The one point to drive home' - voidness
- 66 Did Milarepa write the songs of Milarepa?
- 67 Blake, Locke and the Yogachara
- 68 Academic philosophy and extreme technology. Comparing Locke and Berkeley
- 69 Dissociation of emotion and reason in the 17th Century
A theoretical emphasis on practice
- 70 The next song 'of knowers of the way'
- 71 Having more than one teacher
- 72 Receiving instruction from other sources - even one's own mind.
The basic prerequisites for knowing the way
- 73 Clearing the darkness of wrong views
- 74 The Brahmajala sutra - wrong views
- 75 Faith - leading upwards
- 76 The five spiritual faculties. Self containment
- 77 Transformation of body speech and mind into the three kayas
- 78 The land of Great Bliss
- 79 The novices invite Milarepa to their country. Milarepa sings his next song
- 80 The song
- 81 Warning against over confidence in one's attainments.
One depends upon a positive environment
- 82 The mandala visualisation
- 83 Parts of the body and mind fighting against spiritual change - physical symptoms
- 84 Headaches in meditation
- 85 The importance of doing the metta bhavana. Experiencing negative emotions
- 86 Signs of alienation. The Buddha nature as beautiful
- 87 Seeing 'good' and 'evil' on 'Its own level'
- 88 When you are enlightened you do not go beyond the law of karma
- 89 Kirkegaard on the assumptions of Christianity. Empty rituals
- 90 Taking teachings and lectures seriously
- 91 The next song
- 92 Freedom from fear
- 93 Milarepa setting an example for the other yogins The 'cold'
of loneliness
- 94 The seven glorious jewels. Feeding on joy
- 95 Melancholy. Sometimes the more you are with people the more you are alone

- 96 Seeing the unity of wisdom and compassion on the highest level
- 97 Monkeys in chinese poetry Milarepa's transference of merit
- 98 Turning natural events into inspirational occurrences
- 99 The final paragraph Milarepa is instructed by guardian deities to return to Tibet
- 100 General impressions Creating positive environments - Spiritual communities
- 101/3 Being 'in touch' with the world
- 104/5 Keeping up with changes in language. The Basic puja
- 106 'It isn't reasonable to expect people to be reasonable'