

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

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

FROM "THE HUNDRED THOUSAND SONGS OF MILAREPA"
(translated by Garma C.C. Chang. Published by Shambala, Boulder Ca., 1977)

Chapter 35: Rechungpa's Departure

CONTENTS

1-2	Rechungpa gives alms to Milarepa who is disguised as a beggar
3	Arousing skilful positive emotion
4-5	Milarepa acknowledging Rechungpa's skilful mental state
5	Rechungpa returns with his offering and Milarepa sings. What a Buddhist mandala is
7	Yab-yum mandalas - symbolizing bliss
7-9	Wanting to be given special attention
8-10	Attaching importance to position and place and recognition
10-11	The role of Prime Minister in the UK Knowing one's position in society
12	No man's land
12-13	We cannot get away from governments any more
13-14	Changing the existing society into the New Society
14-15	Cutting off ties of kinsfolk
16-18	Feeling inferior due to 'lack of a good education' University education
20-22	Unreasonable dependence on others for support - actors
23-25	Gab and babble - useless speech - reasons for it
25	Plans and schemes
26-29	Putting all one's energies into a project for a period of time
29	Not doing what one has committed oneself to
29-30	Keep one's promises
31-32	Being truly happy
32-33	Taking care of one's personal appearance
34-35	Tibetans and meat eating and Tibetan diet
35-37	Making an offering of everything you had to the guru Tantric initiation/empowerment
37	Total commitment in the Vajrayana Collecting initiations
38	Are visualization practices tantric initiations?
39	What is a Buddhist mental attitude? Mahayana/Vajrayana Buddhists generally not really exhibiting a Bodhisattva attitude unless circumstances force it - i.e. Tibetan lamas coming to the West after the Chinese invasion. Easier to teach to rich Westerners than poor untouchables
41	Renunciation
42	Devaluation of initiations and the Bodhisattva Vow by making them freely and easily available to Westerners
43	Everybody contributes to a (positive) situation, in however small a way
44-48	Amounts of punya (merit) depending on the degree of attainment of the person to whom one is giving

45	Metta and karuna in the Hinayana and the Mahayana
45-47	Experiencing beggars as Buddhas
47	Beware of false feelings as well as theoretical thoughts
48-51	Seeing all beings as one's own mother and father
51	A true sage and a true scholar
52	The dangers of trying to present Buddhism as more scientific than Christianity
53	Sages and scholars working together, for instance on translations
55-56	Thinking "What is the Dharma?", not in terms of particular Buddhist 'schools'
55	Learning from more than one teacher/'tradition' of Buddhism (and non-Buddhism)
57	Not condemning certain Buddhist practices but condemning the misuse of them or wrong attitude towards them
58	Pseudo-gurus
59	Narrow, over literalistic attitudes among some types of Buddhists
59-63	Public images of "Buddhism", the Hare Krishna movement, the Nichirens
60	"Five minutes meditation at a time and no more!" - Christmas Humphreys
61-64	More about the Nichirens
65-67	Ex untouchable Buddhists in India and the Hindu caste system
67-68	Rechungpa confesses his transgressions
68-70	Continuity of meditation practice when travelling
70	Casting out evil spirits
71	The Five Spiritual Faculties
71-72	The balance of work and meditation
72-76	Common property within the spiritual community?
77-87	Next song - knowing the right time and right conditions
78	Lamas practising the Tantra with dakinis (young females)
79	Understanding the mind-state of disciples
80	A wrong/inappropriate time to practise meditation
81	Knowing the right time to speak
82	Perseverance and determination
83	Living out companionship and brotherhood
84-87	A Guru's 'Rules' Rules
	Rules can detract from individuality
87	The precepts as principles, not rules
87	Next Session Becoming left behind and then out of contact
	Keeping in touch with those who seem to be slipping back
88	Recap of the story so far
	Rechungpa's dreams and Milarepa's interpretations of them
89-92	Interpretation of dreams?
92-93	Recurrent dreams
94	Rechungpa's second dream
95	The two accumulations - knowledge and merits - jnanasamvara and punyasamvara
96-97	The next two dreams
98	The crest jewel Seeing the guru above one's head
	The Kagyupa tradition
99-100	The Tumo or 'psychic heat' practice
100	Dhardo Rimpoche explaining the Tumo to Bhante
101	Pandaravasini, the consort of Amitabha
	The "Pointing Out Performance" - pointing out one's True Nature

- 102 Holding the vajra in the right hand and the skull of blood or wine in the left hand
- 103 Milarepa's interpretation of the dream continues rapidly
- 104 Developing Insight in a dream?
- 104-109 Not to be in a hurry to offer explanations about experiences
- 109 Reading the next song
- 110 Dependent origination - the twenty four links covering samsara and nirvana
- 111 Moving from the reactive to the creative
- 112 Having a basic understanding of the Dharma and then coming into contact with the Guru
- 113-116 Desires and clingings getting in the way of being joyful
- 116-117 The Saha World - the world of endurance
- 118 The root (cause) of Samsara is passivity!
- 119-121 Faith is the first movement of creativity
Hearing and not listening - passivity and activity
- 121-122 Passively drifting into domestic life
- 123 Passivity in Christianity - sheep and goats
- 124 Act, don't react.
- 125 Pleasure is passive, happiness and joy are active
Adulterating the Dharma
- 126 The main point of this final song to be studied on the seminar - an attitude of receptivity which is not passivity ??