

## 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*

## AN ODE TO FRIENDSHIP

by Dr Samuel Johnson

*Friendship! Peculiar boon of heaven,  
The noble mind's delight and pride,  
To Men and Angels only given,  
To all the lower world deny'd.*

*While love, a stranger to the blest,  
Parent of thousand wild desires,  
The human and the savage breast  
Inflames alike with raging fires.*

*With bright, but oft destructive gleam,  
Alike o'er all his lightnings fly;  
Thy lambent glories only beam  
Around the fav'rites of the sky.*

*Directress of the brave and just,  
O guide me through life's darksome way,  
And let the tortures of mistrust  
On selfish bosoms only prey.*

*Thy gentle flows of guiltless joys  
On fools and villains ne'er descend;  
In vain for thee the monarch sighs  
And hugs a flatterer for a friend.*

*When Virtues kindred Virtues meet,  
And sister souls together join,  
Thy pleasures, permanent as great,  
Are all transporting, all divine.*

*Oh, must their ardours cease to glow  
When souls to blissful climes remove?  
What rais'd our Virtues here below,  
Shall aid our Happiness above.*

# Seminar on Doctor Samuel Johnson's "An Ode to Friendship"

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