

## 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*

**A seminar on the Parabhava Sutta  
conducted by Sangharakshita  
April 1982 in London**

**Preface**

As I finished transcribing this short seminar on the Parabhava Sutta it is about five years since it was held. I can't recall the exact dates but it was some time in April 1982 that the six of us working in Windhorse Trading at the time Kulananda, Dharmananda, Sumitra and Prajnananda, and Mitras Mike Howes and Chris Harper (now Satyapala and Amoghacitta respectively) - met for four evenings in Bhante's flat above the London Buddhist Centre in Bethnal Green. Whether Bhante judged this particular sutta somehow suitable for us I don't know; it is a popular text in the East and known as a complement or antithesis to the Mangala Sutta.

The text occurs as the sixth sutta of the first chapter 'The Chapter of the Snake' - of the Sutta-Nipata and comprises verses 91 to 116 of that chapter. I have appended the complete Pali text and not only the three translations used in the seminar but three others, from the oldest Fausboll 1881 - to the most recent - K R Norman 1985.

This transcript on word-processor is based on original longhand transcriptions by several persons unknown. My thanks go to them, and of course to Bhante for the seminar itself.

A few interpolations in square brackets clarify meaning where necessary. Simple affirmative remarks are sometimes bracketed within the main body of dialogue where appropriate. I have tried to follow the seminar in transcribing 'Dhamma' or 'Dharma'; sometimes one, sometimes the other is used. They are in any case interchangeable. Gross infelicities of style and gross repetitions have generally been eliminated but otherwise the seminar is unedited.

Prajnananda  
April 1987

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APPENDIX

This series of appendices contains six translations of the Parabhava Sutta. Sangharakshita's

version is incomplete, only the first four verses being presented as final in the course of the seminar; readers could devise their own version from the various remarks made. A good bibliography can be found at the back of Saddhatissa's Sutta Nipata. The devata's repetitive questioning stanzas (alternate from 93 to 113 inclusive) are usually omitted or abbreviated by translators.

One: Parabhavasutta in Pali (Omitted)

(150)

Two: Translation by E M Hare - "Of Suffering"

Thus have I heard: Once, when the Master was dwelling near Savatthi in Anathapindika's Park at Jeta Grove, a deva of surpassing beauty, lighting up the whole of Jeta Grove, approached him as night waned; and drawing near, she saluted him and stood at one side, Thus standing, she spoke this verse to the Master:

Devi About man's suffering  
We question Gotama:  
We ask the Master now  
The source of suffering [1/91]

The Master Plain is the weal in life,  
Plain is the suffering:  
Prosper who Dharma loves,  
Suffers who Dharma hates [2/92]

Devi 'Tis truly so we know  
Firstly of suffering:  
Sir, tell us secondly  
The source of suffering [3/93] (151)

The Master Who hath bad men as friends,  
Nor maketh friends with good,  
Who chooses bad men's ways:  
A source of suffering that.

Devi 'Tis truly so we know .. .  
Tell us the third .. .

The Master When man loves company  
And sleep, when he is lax  
And slack, and known for wrath:  
A source of suffering that.

Devi 'Tis truly so we know .  
Tell us the fourth .

The Master Who being rich, supports

Not parents in their age,  
When gone is all their youth:  
A source of suffering that.

Devi 'Tis truly so we know .  
Tell us the fifth .

The Master Who with false words deceives  
A brahman or recluse  
Or other mendicant:  
A source of suffering that.

Devi 'Tis truly so we know  
Tell us the sixth .

The Master When man of wealth and means,  
Of gold and property,  
Enjoys its sweets alone:  
A source of suffering that.

Devi 'Tis truly so we know .  
Tell us the seventh .

The Master When man is proud of birth  
And purse and family,  
And yet ashamed of kin:  
A source of suffering that.

Devi 'Tis truly so we know  
Tell us the eighth ..

The Master When man on woman dotes,  
On drink and dice alike,  
And all his savings wastes:  
A source of suffering that.

Devi 'Tis truly so we know .  
Tell us the ninth .

The Master Who not content with his,  
Is seen with others' wives,  
Is seen with harlots too:  
A source of suffering that.

Devi 'Tis truly so we know .  
Tell us the tenth .

The Master When man, passed youth, doth wed  
A maid with rounded breasts,

Nor sleeps for Jealousy:  
A source of suffering that. [20/110]

Devi 'Tis truly so we know .  
Tell us the eleventh .

The Master When woman or when man  
A spendthrift or a sot,  
Is placed in sovran power:  
A source of suffering that. [22/112]

Devi 'Tis truly so we know  
Th'eleventh suffering:  
Now tell us, sir, the twelfth,  
The source of suffering. [23/113]

The Master When born of noble clan,  
A man is poor and craves  
For much and longs to rule:  
A source of suffering that. [24/114]

These sufferings in the world  
The wise discern, and blest  
With vision Ariyan,  
They seek the world of bliss. [25/115]

from Woven Cadences of Early Buddhists (Sutta-Nipata), Oxford University Press, London,  
1944

Three: Translation by Robert, Lord Chalmers - "Failures"

Thus have I heard. Once while the Lord was staying at Savatthi in Jeta's Grove in  
Anathapindika's pleasure, as night was passing away, a deity of surpassing beauty came to  
the Lord, flooding the whole grove with radiance, and, after salutation meet, stood to one  
side, addressing the Lord in these stanzas:

Concerning him who fails, I come to ask of Gotama from what that failure springs. [91]

The Lord: Both worth and failure can be quickly seen: - worth still aspires, but failure hates  
the light. [92]

The deity: Thus much I see: - first failure stands out plain. Now tell me whence the second  
failure comes. [93]

The Lord: The second failure's he who loves the bad, courts not the good, and favours bad  
men's creeds [94]

The deity: Thus much I see: - the second failure's plain. Now tell me whence the further  
failures come. [95]



The Lord: Third comes the critic, lazy, indolent, and sleek; his constant carping marks him out. [96]

Fourth failure's he who, well-to-do himself, support not aged parents, past their prime. [98]

Fifth failure's he who brahmins guides astray, or anchorites, or other wayfarers. [100]

Sixth comes the wealthy man, with pelf and gear, who keeps his dainties strictly to himself. [102]

He seventh comes whom birth or wealth or clan inflates, till he looks down on kith and kin. [104]

The eighth's the rake who squanders all he gets, fast as it comes, on women, drink, and dice. [106]

Ninth comes the lecher who, not satisfied with his own wives, is seen about with whores, or caught in dalliance with others' wives. [108]

Tenth comes the dotard who, in failing age, a maiden takes to wife, with ripe round breasts, so fair he cannot sleep for Jealousy. [110]

Eleventh failure's he who puts in charge a drunken, spendthrift rake, - of either sex. [112]

Twelfth comes th'ambitious noble, lacking means, who fondly schemes to get himself made king. [114]

The noble sage, whose penetrating eye these failures scans, has won the realms of bliss. [115]

from Buddha's Teachings - being the Sutta-Nipata or Discourse-Collection, Harvard Oriental Series Vol 37, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, 1932

Four: Translation by H Saddhatissa - "Downfall"

Thus have I heard: Once the Buddha was living near Savatthi in the Jeta grove at Anathapindika's monastery. Then, one beautiful night, a certain devata, having illuminated the whole Jeta grove with surpassing splendour, came to the Buddha and, making salutations, stood on one side and uttered these words:

1 I wish to ask you, Gotama, about a person who suffers downfall. I have approached you in order to inquire as to the causes of downfall. [91]

2 The Buddha: Easily known is the progressive one, easily known the one who declines: He who loves Dhamma progresses, he who hates it declines. [92]

4 One who loves the company of the vicious finds no delight with the virtuous; he prefers the doctrine of the [vicious] - this is a cause of one's downfall. [94]

6 Being fond of sleep, talkative, [lethargic,] lazy and irritable - this is a cause of one's

downfall. [96]

8 He who being sufficiently affluent does not support his father and mother who are old and infirm - this is a cause of one's downfall. [98]

10 He who deceives by falsehood a priest, monk or any other spiritual preceptor - this is a cause of one's downfall.[100]

12 Having ample wealth, assets and property, enjoying them alone - this is a cause of one's downfall. [102]

14 If a man is conceited through [his birth, wealth or community], and looks down on his own kith and kin - this is a cause of one's downfall. [104]

16 To be a [womaniser], a drunkard, a gambler and to squander all one earns - this is a cause of one's downfall. [106]

18 Not to be contented with one's wife but to be seen with a prostitute or the wives of others - this is a cause of one's downfall. [108]

20 Being past one's youth, to take a young wife and to be unable to sleep for jealousy of her - this is a cause of one's downfall [110]

22 To place in authority a woman given to drink and squandering, or a man of like behaviour - this is a cause of one's downfall. [112]

24 If a member of an influential family (or social or other grouping), with vast ambition and of slender means, seeks power or control over others - this is a cause of one's downfall. [114]

25 Reflecting thoroughly on those causes of downfall in the world, the wise one, endowed with insight, enjoys bliss in a happy state. [115]

This version - published in *The Sutta-Nipata*, Curzon Press, London, 1985 - contains four slight variations from that used in the seminar (pp5/6), presumably an earlier version:

4 [] originally = 'ignorant and misguided'

6 [] originally absent

14 [] originally = 'being born in a high social class or by his position in society'

16 [] originally = 'playboy'

Five: Translated by Narada Thera - "Downfall"

Thus have I heard. Once the Exalted One was dwelling at Anathapindika's monastery, in the Jeta Grove, near Savatthi. Now when the night was far spent a certain deity whose surpassing splendour illuminated the entire Jeta Grove, came to the presence of the Exalted One and, drawing near, respectfully saluted Him and stood at one side. Standing thus, he addressed the Exalted One in verse ...

1 The Deity: Having come here with our questions to the Exalted One, we ask thee, O

Gotama, about man's decline. Pray, tell us the cause of downfall! [91]

2 The Buddha: Easily known is the progressive one, easily known he who declines. He who loves Dhamma progresses; he who is averse to it declines. [92]

3 The Deity: Thus much do we see: this is the first cause of one's downfall. Pray, tell us the second cause. [These lines are repeated after each stanza with due enumeration.] [93]

4 The Buddha: The wicked are dear to him, with the virtuous he finds no delight, he prefers the creed of the wicked - this is a cause of one's downfall. [94]

6 Being fond of sleep, fond of company, indolent, lazy and irritable - this is a cause of one's downfall. [96]

8 Though being well-to-do, not to support father and mother who are old and past their youth - this is a cause of one's downfall. [98]

10 To deceive by falsehood a brahmana or ascetic or any other mendicant - this is a cause of one's downfall. [100]

12 To have much wealth and ample gold and food, but to enjoy one's luxuries alone - this is a cause of one's downfall. [102]

14 To be proud of birth, of wealth or clan, and to despise one's own kinsmen - this is a cause of one's downfall. [104]

16 To be a rake, a drunkard, a gambler, and to squander all one earns - this is a cause of one's downfall. [106]

18 Not to be contented with one's own wife, and to be seen with harlots and the wives of others - this is a cause of one's downfall. [108]

20 Being past one's youth, to take a young wife and to be unable to sleep for jealousy of her - this is a cause of one's downfall. [110]

22 To place in authority a woman given to drink and squandering, or a man of like behaviour - this is a cause of one's downfall. [112]

24 To be of warrior birth, with vast ambition and of slender means, and to crave for rulership - this is a cause of one's downfall. [114]

25 Knowing well these causes of downfall in the world, the noble sage endowed with insight shares a happy realm. [115]

from Everyman's Ethics, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka. 1979

Six: Translation by V Fausboll

So it was heard by me: At one time Bhagavat dwelt at Savatthi, in Jetavana, in the park of

Anathapindika. Then when the night had gone, a certain deity of a beautiful appearance, having illuminated the whole Jetavana, went up to Bhagavat, and having approached and saluted him, he stood apart, and standing apart that deity addressed Bhagavat in stanzas:

1 'We ask (thee), Gotama, about a man that suffers loss; having come to ask, Bhagavat, (tell us) what is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man).' [91]

2 Bhagavat: 'The winner is easily known, easily known (is also) the loser: he who loves Dhamma is the winner, he who hates Dhamma is the loser.' [92]

3 Deity: 'We know this to be so, this is the first loser; tell (us) the second, O Bhagavat, what is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man).' [These lines are repeated after each stanza with due enumeration.] [93]

4 Bhagavat: 'Wicked men are dear to him, he does not do anything that is dear to the good, he approves of the Dhamma of the wicked. - that is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man) [94]

6 'The man who is drowsy, fond of society and without energy, lazy, given to anger, - that is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man).' [96]

8 'He who being rich does not support mother or father who are old or past their youth, - that is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man).' [98]

10 'He who by falsehood deceives either a Brahmana or a Samana or any other mendicant, - that is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man).' [100]

12 'The man who is possessed of much property, who has gold and food, (and still) enjoys alone his sweet things, - that is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man).' [102]

14 'The man who proud of his birth, of his wealth, and of his family, despises his relatives, - that is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man).' [104]

16 'The man who, given to women, to strong drink, and to dice, wastes whatever he has gained, - that is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man).' [106]

18 'He who, not satisfied with his own wife, is seen with harlots and the wives of others, - that is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man).' [108]

20 'The man who, past his youth, brings home a woman with breasts like the timbaru fruit, and for jealousy of her cannot sleep, - that is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man).' [110]

22 'He who places in supremacy a woman given to drink and squandering, or a man of the same kind, - that is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man).' [112]

24 'He who has a little property, (but) great desire, is born in a Khattiya family and wishes for the kingdom in this world, - that is the cause (of loss) to the losing (man).' [114]

25 'Having taken into consideration these losses in the world, the wise, venerable man, who is endowed with insight, cultivates the happy world (of the gods).' [115]

from *The Sacred Books of the East*, Volume X, Part II, Oxford University Press 1881; reprinted Delhi 1973

Seven: Translation by K R Norman with alternative translations by I B Horner and Walpola Rahula - "Failure"

Thus have I heard. Once the Blessed One was staying at Savatthi, in the Jetavana in Anathapindika's park. Then, as night was passing away, a deity of surpassing radiance, illuminating the whole Jetavana, came up to the Blessed One and stood on one side after saluting him. Standing there that deity addressed the Blessed One with a verse.

91 'Having come to ask the Blessed One, we ask Gotama about the [unsuccessful man]. What is the cause of the [unsuccessful man]?'

92 'The [successful one] is easy to know; the unsuccessful one is easy to know. The successful one loves [the doctrine]; the unsuccessful one hates [the doctrine].'

93 'We know that to be so indeed; that is the first failure. Tell us the second one, Blessed One. What is the cause of the unsuccessful (man)?' [These lines are repeated after each stanza with due enumeration.]

94 'Bad men are dear to him; he does not hold good men dear. He approves of the bad men's [ (evil) doctrine]. That is the cause of the unsuccessful man.'

96 'If any man is fond of sleep, fond of society, and does not exert himself, (but) is lazy, and [has anger as a characteristic], that is the cause of the unsuccessful man.'

98 'If anyone, (although) being able, does not support his mother or father when they are old and past their youth, that is the cause of the unsuccessful man.'

100 'If anyone by speaking falsely deceives a brahman or ascetic or [even another mendicant], that is the cause of the unsuccessful man.'

102 'A man with abundant wealth, having gold (and) food, enjoys his dainties alone, that is the cause of the unsuccessful man.'

104 'If any man, being haughty because of his birth, wealth, and clan, despises his own relative, that is the cause of the unsuccessful man. '

106 'If any man, being a rogue with women, drink, and dice, squanders whatever he has received, that is the cause of the unsuccessful man.'

108 'Being dissatisfied with his own wife, he is seen among prostitutes, (and) he is seen among other men's wives. That is the cause of the unsuccessful man.'

110 'A man past his youth brings home (a girl) with breasts like timbaru fruit. He cannot sleep for jealousy of her. That is the cause of the unsuccessful man.'

112 'He places in (a position of) authority a woman who is [addicted to drink] or a

spendthrift, or even a man of similar character. That is the cause of the unsuccessful man.'

114 'One with little wealth (but) great craving is born in a khattiya family. He desires kingship in this world. That is the cause of the unsuccessful man.'

115 'Seeing these failures in the world, [a wise man, a noble one endowed with insight, resorts to the blissful world.]'

( ) Words supplied in the English though not found in the Pali original.

[ ] Words for which alternative translations are provided.

91 (et seq) unsuccessful man = declining man

92 successful one = rising man

92 the doctrine = virtue

94 (evil) doctrine = (wrong) views and ways

96 has anger as a characteristic = is of choleric disposition

100 even another mendicant = even any other poor man

112 addicted to drink = addicted to food and drink

115 a wise man, a noble one endowed with insight, resorts to the blissful world = a wise noble man of vision attains a blissful world

from The Group of Discourses, Pali Text Society, London 1985