

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/Triratna 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 Triratna 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 [Triratna 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

PRECEPTS OF THE GURUS (First Seminar)

Section One: *The Ten Causes of Regret*

[Text to be found in 'A Buddhist Bible' edited by Dwight Goddard,
published by Harrap, London, 1956 (Also published by Beacon Press, 1970).]

Contents

- 1 *'The Ten Causes of Regret'* are read out
- 3 The Freedoms and the Endowments
The Four Freedoms from fetters within human existence:
The 1st freedom: freedom from 'Firmly holding wrong views, such as Atheism, Nihilism, or disbelief in the law of cause and effect'.
4 'Atheism' as disbelieving the possibility of the attainment of Enlightenment
5 You cannot make people respond to you (or Enlightenment) - they have to do that themselves
What are wrong views?
6 The 2nd freedom: freedom from 'birth in a totally non religious or barbaric land'.
Culture and the nature of culture
8 The 3rd freedom: 'freedom from birth in a land where no Buddhist Dharma is taught. □
The 4th freedom: 'freedom from birth as a demented or mute person □
9 The Four Freedoms from non-human types of birth - in the hell realm, preta realm, animal realm and deva realm.
10 Deva realms. What distinguishes FWBO people from hippies?
11 What motivates one to lead a spiritual life?
A Deva-like existence, for a short while, has its place
12 Is it better to run away (from the difficulties of the mundane world) than to succumb to them?
Hippies again.
13 Attitudes towards pleasure - not to be puritanical and not to be hedonistic.
The realms seen subjectively and objectively
16 Bhante's vision of a new Buddhist Movement on his return to Britain
Mind over matter
18 The Ten Endowments:
The Five Personal Endowments
20 *Sanghabheda* - causing a schism in the Sangha
Sanghabheda as a positive division of the Sangha
21 Making oneself felt and being an Individual
22 Order Days and what to report-in
25 The heinousness of killing one's father or mother
Killing an Arahant
25 Does one have to be a human to gain Enlightenment?
26 Buddha-seeds in the different realms
27 Having respect for the three baskets of the Dharma (Tripitaka)
The Five Personal Endowments as a sign of the ideal Mitra
The Five Circumstantial Endowments:
The presence of a Buddha in the time in which one lives
The presence of the Dharma
The flourishing of the practise of the Dharma
28 The existence of the Spiritual Community
Having a Kalyana Mitra
Making good use of one's opportunities
The fine balance between not compromising one's spiritual ideals and not discouraging people - especially newcomers
34 Not to generalise about the whole Order based on experience of one or two Order members

- The Kali-yuga - the age of darkness
- 35 The Three Ages of the Dharma
- 36 The 'New Age' or the 'Aquarian Age'
- 37 Historicism
- People are not more interested in spiritual life today than they were in previous centuries!
- 40 The Axial 'Age'?
- Buddhist development in China, Japan and Tibet
- 41 Nichiren
- 42 The FWBO being misunderstood by calling itself 'Buddhist'
- 43 Are any other Buddhists actually Buddhists?!
- No Tibetans in the West before the Chinese invasion - why?
- 45 What is the 'Dharmakaya'
- Things that get in between us as we are now and Stream Entry
- The Four Right Efforts
- 50 What does one do when you feel dull and flat and need inspiration?
- 52 Are parties or alcoholic drinks helpful?
- Why, broadly speaking, the Metta Bhavana is more important than the Mindfulness of Breathing
- 54 Illusions. The *Viparyasas*
- 58 Very little room for adventure in the mundane world
- 59 The 'Friends' starting light industrial Right Livelihood projects
- 61 The fear of being converted to Buddhism or other 'philosophy'
- 62 Separation from the guru
- 63 No 'personality cult' of Bhante in the FWBO
- 64 Is it possible to gain Enlightenment in one lifetime nowadays?
- 65 Should Bhante appear in person at things more often?
- Not to underestimate the importance of personal contact
- 69 You can't organize the artists!
- Religious faith and vows
- 70 Commitment
- Uncontrollable passions
- 72 Making and breaking vows
- 73 Making positive vows
- 75 Celibacy and chastity
- 79 'Grace' or blessing - *Adhithana* and *Abhisekha* - ritual empowerment
- 82 What is a 'Tantric' initiation?
- 84 Hindu and Tibetan Tantra
- 85 The Classical and the Romantic
- 86 Italian Catholicism and its similarities with Paganism
- 88 Not the neglect the arts in the FWBO
- 89 Not all music has a skilful effect on the listener
- What is 'Pagan'?
- 90 The need for energy in one's spiritual life
- 92 Is the Sevenfold Puja too advanced for the FWBO?
- 94 Working out a positive version of the fifth precept
- 95 What does '*Namo Nama*' mean
- 'Male' and 'Female' energy?
- 99 Selling the doctrine like merchandise
- Not charging for meditation classes
- 103 Milton and Cromwell
- Do not exploit your Centre Chairman!
- 105 Ways of developing metta towards all beings
- All beings having been our mother or our father
- 106 Expressing gratitude
- 109 Hardy's novel '*The Woodlanders*'

- 111 Not wasting the 'prime of youth'
- 114 The *miccha-ditthi* of needing lots of worldly experience as a stage of on the spiritual path
- 115 Positive counterparts of 'worldly life' in the FWBO