

## 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/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

### THE PRECEPTS OF THE GURUS - SECOND SEMINAR

[Study based on the Chapter entitled:  
*'The Supreme Path, The Rosary of Precious Gems'*  
found in  
*"A BUDDHIST BIBLE"*, edited by Dwight Goddard,  
1970 edition, Beacon Press, Boston, USA.  
(ISBN 0-8070-5951-X)]

#### CONTENTS

##### 1The Ten Requirements

*(1). Having estimated one's capabilities, one requireth a sure line of action".*

2Balancing one's subjective requirements and the objective needs of the situation

3What one thinks of as virtues can be vices

4-5The difficulty of finding out quickly what our capabilities really are - it can take many years, even after ordination

Finding out what one really wants to do

6The deep and intense person and the broad person - Milarepa and Padmasambhava

7Wanting to do contradictory things

8Should one ever recommend that someone gives up the spiritual life?

9Not necessarily doing what one is used to doing when one gets involved with the FWBO/the spiritual life

10The Bodhisattva Vow to master all dharmas

*11(2) To carry out the commands of a religious preceptor, one requireth confidence and diligence.*

12Urging someone to do something

12-18How do you get people to do things? Sticks and carrots

13Creating an inverse hierarchy - the newest people being given the most money and the older ones the least etc.

14Trade Unions functioning against the individual

15Give what you can and take what you need

Not diluting the co-operative principle

Not doing things out of a spirit of conformity, which even happens within the 'spiritual' life

16Having a 'common purse'

18A co-op will only work if everyone in it believes in its ideals

20Money being almost an extension of a person's own being

22Taking responsibility in communities

*23(3) To avoid error in choosing a guru the disciple requires knowledge of his own faults and virtues.*

24Choosing a guru? Meeting disciples is far preferable

25In the West avoid gurus!

26Guru just means 'teacher' in India

A positive sobriety in the Theravada as regards gurus

27The emotional exultation of being received back into the group

*28(4) Keeness of intellect and unwavering faith are required to tune in with the mind of the spiritual preceptor.*

38-29Vertical and horizontal communication

30'You cannot be a guru officially'

*(5) Unceasing watchfulness and mental alertness graced with humility are required to keep the body, speech and mind unsullied by evil.*

31 Maintaining one's purity  
Purity as an ideal

33 The Shakers in the USA

33-34 The words 'unskilful' and 'evil'

34(6) *Spiritual armour and strength of intellect are required for the fulfilment of one's hearts' vows.*

35 Vows and the Bodhichitta  
The ten precepts/silas as principles

36 Taking vows publicly

37 The place of vows in the spiritual life

39 Spiritual armour - patience

40 The Perfection of Patience  
Before Stream Entry there is always the possibility of falling back

41 Avoiding generalisations based on very limited information

42 The necessity of vision and inspiration  
The need to stretch oneself (not in the physical sense!) and not settle down

43 Strength of intellect

44 Being scientifically or artistically inclined  
Science and the arts  
Not using the feelings as a refuge from thinking

46 One sided development of the intellect detrimental to the development of the human being

47(7) *Habitual freedom from desire and attachment is necessary if one would be free from bondage.*

47 "Love and Addiction" - the book

48 Craving and desire Desiring to eliminate craving

49 Pessimistic misunderstandings of Buddhism

50 The Bodhisattva being reborn not out of craving but out of compassion

51-52 Very dangerous vipassana retreats leading to alienation and worse

53 Communicating the dharma in a way that is appropriate to the person it is being communicated to

54 Certain 'vipassana' teachers discounting metta completely

55(8) *To acquire the twofold merit born of right motives, right actions and the altruistic dedication of their results, there is need of unceasing efforts.*

Punya (Merit)

56 "No Bodhisattva ever had a nervous breakdown"!  
The touch of the Transcendental

57 Bhante's use of the word 'Transcendental'

58-61 Misuse/debasement of the word 'growth'

61 The difficulty of writing without using cliches  
Saying/writing what you really mean

62 Making full use of language - the dictionary

63 Writing and journalism - writing under pressure  
'Unceasing effort'

(9) *The mind, imbued with love and compassion in thought and deed, ought ever to be directed to the service of all sentient beings.*

64 Emotional positivity  
Waking up feeling happy

66 The emotion experienced when giving  
The importance of giving  
Everything you do is a language and conveys a message  
Caring and catering for guests

69 Feeding and entertaining strangers/wanderers in India

69-71 Social graces

70Bhante's finding many people in the Friends uncouth after India

72*Through hearing, understanding, and Wisdom one should so comprehend the nature of all things as not to fall into the error of regarding matter and phenomena as real.*

The three levels of Wisdom

73Not deliberately forgetting impermanence

74Hedonists in pursuit of pleasure

75-76Being healthily hedonistic and healthily ascetic at the same time

77-78Sunnyata

**78III. The Ten Things to be Done**

*(1) Attach thyself to a religious preceptor endowed with spiritual power and complete knowledge.*

Positive attachment

79Going beyond omniscience

80Energy and life in spiritual activities

80-82Being at one's best when leading classes

82-83Getting enough sleep

The capacity to drop everything for short periods

83*(2) Seek a delightful solitude endowed with psychic influences as a hermitage.*

84Calm conducive 'vibrations' in certain natural settings

84-85Gandava - consciousnesses hovering around seeking rebirth

85*(3) Seek friends who have beliefs and habits like thine own and in whom thou canst place thy trust.*

86Immediate reactions of attraction or repulsion to certain people

87Setting up communities

88Different sorts of communities

Setting up mixed and family communities

89-90Weakening single sex communities by the presence of the opposite sex

91Projection onto people leading classes etc.

92-94Ultimate responsibility for FWBO activities

93Quick decisions cannot be taken by committees

94*(4) Keeping in mind the evils of gluttony, use just enough food to keep thee fit during the period of thy retreat.*

95-96Gluttony

96Eating alone and eating with others

97-98Being 'motherly' Men contacting their femininity

99Creative cooking

100Enjoying food

101Fasting

102-103Strange people becoming attracted to vegetarianism

103-104Becoming vegans

104-105Looking to kitchens/food on retreats etc., for (mother's) warmth and comfort

105-107Are women or men better cooks?!

108*(5) Study the teachings of all the great sages of all sects impartially.*

108Buddhist 'sects' Yana, Vada, Darshana, Nikaya

109The three nikayas in Buddhist Ceylon

Being in a particular nikaya but sympathetic to some of the views of another nikaya

109-110Nyingmapas, Kadampas, Kagypas, Gelugpas (and Sakyapas) in Tibet

110The Yanas in India - Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana

Tantric lineages

111The Tri-yana - seeking inspiration from all Buddhist sources

112Balancing all the schools and practising what one finds helpful and useful

113The FWBO is not 'eclectic'

The FWBO emphasis on the individual and the group

114Redefining old terminology

115 Respect for the FWBO from other Buddhist groups purely because of material, not spiritual, gains

116-120 Not generalising about the FWBO from a limited number of contacts

120 All traditional Buddhist Sanghas are exclusive!

(6) *Study the beneficent sciences of medicine, astrology and the profound art of omens*

121-124 The Buddha's warnings to bhikkhus against practising astrology

Lucky and unlucky omens

Causality and synchronicity

124-127 Animal omens, symbols and totems

127(7) *Adopt such regimen and manner of living as will keep thee in good health.*

Stress among chairmen in the FWBO

128 Being under stress and being stretched

128-131 Not underestimating the body's physical needs

Looking after oneself physically

131 Use of cosmetics, caring for one's teeth, dying hair

132 High heeled shoes

Incompatibility of karate and meditation?

133 Yoga and dance, eurhythmy

133 Prostrations

134(8) *Adopt such devotional practices as will conduce to thy spiritual development.*

Devotional practices within the FWBO

135 Not to feel obliged to make offerings in pujas

Making offerings before a sevenfold puja commences

136 Large Buddha images in shrine rooms

136-137 The Padmasambhava mantra and invocation

Keeping Padmasambhava out of the public eye

137-138 Avoiding yab-yum imagery in public places

139 Discontinuing the use of oriental images in the west

140 Festivals as devotional practices

141 Bhante's feelings of inspiration from the life of the Buddha

142-144 Reading out loud and people's difficulties doing it - reading in a monotone, reading out words which are not there

143 Dyslexia

144(9) *Retain such disciples as are firm in faith, meek in spirit and who appear to be favoured in karma in their quest for divine wisdom.*

146 Being 'favoured by karma'

147 Bhante's suspicions of recognising some incarnate young lamas

148 Bhante's contact with Tomo Geshe Rimpoche

148-152 Giving children love, affection and care

The education of children

Steiner schools

150 Serfdom, slavery and poverty in Tibet?

152-154 Not agreeing that Buddhists ought to do things (like helping the sick etc.)

154(10) *Constantly maintain alertness of consciousness in walking, in sitting, in eating, and in sleeping.*

155 Alienated awareness in the West

156 Bodhisattvas being reborn

156-157 Irreversible Bodhisattvas and novice Bodhisattvas

157 Theravadins practising the Mahayana path/having Mahayana attitudes and vice-versa

157-161 Sex as a way of contacting one's body?

159 Sexual experience having been polluted with guilt by Christianity

Getting things in their proper perspective

162 Society being based on power

162-165 The spiritual community as a positive group

165 Awareness in sleeping  
166 Maintaining consciousness through the dream state  
167 Catching up on lost sleep  
168 Awareness through the sleep state of other levels or even dimensions of consciousness  
169-170 Other terms rather than 'mindfulness'  
171 ***The Ten Things to be Avoided***  
(1) *Avoid a guru whose heart is set on acquiring worldly fame and possessions.*  
172 Groups require leaders  
Bob Dylan as a 'guru'  
173 The artistic temperament  
The Shaman, the medium, the Tibetan Oracle  
175 Van Gogh, Rimbaud, Rilke.  
Artistic transformation  
177 Writing poetry  
178 The great painter educates one in how to see  
179 Art - the way you interact with your environment  
180 A 'bad' work of art  
The family as the creative medium for the ordinary person  
181 (2) *Avoid friends and followers who are detrimental to thy peace of mind and spiritual growth.*  
181-183 Friends and relations who are detrimental to one's peace of mind  
183 Followers who are detrimental to one's peace of mind  
183-186 Projecting a negative father figure image onto certain Order members  
186 Pseudo equality  
187 18th Century rationalism Equality and egalitarianism  
187-188 Why redefine an existing term rather than using another one?  
The inappropriateness of using the term 'equal' when referring to human beings  
Egalitarianism amounts to a denial of individuality  
189 (3) *Avoid hermitages and places of abode where there happen to be many persons who annoy and distract you.*  
The optimum number of people for a community  
190-191 'Difficult' people ('hangers-on', 'passengers') in communities (and co-operative businesses)  
192 'Be very careful about being compassionate'.  
195 (4) *Avoid gaining thy livelihood by means of deceit and theft.*  
The advertising industry  
197 Myths and the need for a myth  
198-199 The women's liberation myth of Woman's oppression by Man,  
The anti semitic myth - The Protocols of the Elders of Zion  
200 The main myth of Christianity  
"Bad myths", "false myths"  
Wanting to accept myths as historic fact  
201 In Buddhism the myths developed from the facts whereas Christianity was myth from the beginning  
202 The myth of the female pope - Pope Joan  
203 The myth of the Aquarian Age  
203-204 The myth of the Anti-Christ  
204 Scientific discoveries being blasphemous  
Myth, legend, image and ideal  
205 Enlisting the co-operation of the irrational in our spiritual lives  
206-207 Understanding the lower and the higher evolution  
Evolution, progress and development  
208-209 The ethics of charging money for services/goods  
Guilt feelings about handling money

210-211 Wrong or deceitful livelihood  
212 Myths and legends  
213(5) *Avoid such actions as harm thy mind and impede thy spiritual development.*  
214 Changing one's ideals or changing one's perception of them?  
215(6) *Avoid such acts of levity and thoughtlessness as lower thee in another's esteem.*  
Levity and gravity  
Wantonness  
217 Esteem and being esteemed  
218 Being over familiar with people and not allowing time for friendship to develop  
219-220 Men not giving up their male friends after marriage and vice-versa  
221 Informality and pseudo informality Being cool  
223(7) *Avoid useless conduct and actions.*  
Room for leeway on some retreats, for example playing football  
223-224 Are retreats intensive enough?  
225 The uselessness of argument as opposed to discussion  
226 Moaning and gossiping  
Pseudo philosophy  
227 Talking at mealtime on retreats. Silent meals  
227-228 Being deliberately presented with insoluble personal problems by people as a way of defeating others  
228-229 The uselessness of arguments Avoiding and getting out of arguments  
231 Useless speech and unskilful action  
232-233 Turning arguments into discussions  
In addictive relationships really fighting and making love are two sides of the same coin  
233 Argumentativeness in the spiritual community is a neurotic luxury that one cannot afford!  
234 Organised debates in the Friends  
235(8) *Avoid concealing thine own faults, and speaking loudly of those of others.*  
235-236 Confession  
To the extent that we open up we are invulnerable (to manipulation)  
237 We conceal our positive aspects as well as our faults  
238 Problem orientation  
239-240 What is shyness?  
241 Blushing  
242 Blushing, shame, Hrih and Amitabha  
Bashfulness Modesty  
243-244 Archaic social conventions?  
245 Searching for moral values  
The phenomenon of French intellectuals  
246 The FWBO contacting other Buddhist groups and others generally through individuals  
247 Do people in the FWBO need the words *Buddhism* and *Buddhist*?  
248 "FWBO-ism" Project FWBO first, Buddhism next and religion last of all.  
249 Back to modesty and bashfulness  
249-250 The perfect confession is guilt free  
251 Helping each other to see one's 'blind spots'  
252(9) *Avoid such food and habits as disagree with thy health.*  
Giving oneself 'pleasure' can mean that one doesn't love oneself  
Habitual smoking  
253 Contentment as an aspect of self-love  
254 Smoking in public places  
255 Extinction of animal species, over farming the land, destruction of forests - Ecological issues  
256-257 Charities cannot be pressure groups  
258 Overindulgence in patent medicines  
Side effects of drugs - thalidomide, the pill

259 Dangerous driving, especially by men  
260 Physical exercise is not unspiritual!  
261-262 Getting enough sleep  
262-266 Early birds and late birds - natural rhythms  
267 A healthy regime and unhealthy rigidity  
268 What is pleasure?  
What is hedonism?  
269-270 The advantages of nudity/nakedness  
272 Unhealthy physicality  
273 Mindfulness and pleasure  
Happiness which can be independent of pleasure  
274 The innocence of the physical senses according to Blake and the Vajrayana  
275 The mind corrupts the senses, not the senses the mind  
Eradicate craving, not pleasure  
Happiness - the freedom to be yourself and realise yourself in thought, word and deed  
276 A Buddha as the most individual individual  
A sensuous person  
277 The six sense offerings  
279 Excluding sex from the pleasures  
The effects of climate  
280-281 Sexual instinct, the erotic and reproduction  
Does homosexuality deflect natural instincts?  
281 Searching for emotional and psychological completion through sex  
282 Infantilism in sexual relationships  
285 Promiscuity, monogamy and sexual relationships  
Being careful of cultivating exclusive relationships of any kind  
286 Three lifestyles:- monogamy, celibacy or promiscuity  
287 Esteem in relationships  
289 Polygamy in Buddhism  
Mixing up emotion and sex  
290 'Greek love' - Does it have a role in the FWBO?  
291 Angels and the angelic  
292 Men and women maturing at different ages  
293-297 Physical beauty and beauty of character  
297 Jealousy  
The possibility of family-type communities  
298 Plato - attractions between similars and attractions between opposites (in human relationship)  
298-299 Are homosexuals on a higher plane of spiritual development?  
299 Transvestitism  
300 'Seraphic instinct' - Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas  
301 Oppressive architecture in the ancient Roman world  
The origins of homosexuality - single sex situations - the army and the church  
302 The Greeks and slavery. Why Victorian writers were so productive - they had servants!  
Public condemnation of homosexuality - due to Christianity  
303 Attitudes towards homosexuality in India  
Family planning in India  
304 Things changing slowly - moving from full-time to part time work, single sex communities etc.  
305 Intensity of idealism  
306 The ego as the alienated self-consciousness  
'Passionate commitment'  
Greek Love and women  
307 Sappho, Lesbos and the lesbians



Can single sex communities be harmful for women?  
308 Lesbian or homosexual couples adopting children  
Certain heavy and 'torrid' lesbian relationships  
309(10) *Avoid such attachments that are inspired by avarice.*  
Misers  
310-313 Comparing avarice and generosity, the miser and the bodhisattva  
Giving your money instead of giving yourself  
315 Guarding one's 'private' time and private space  
The private life  
Children learning to lie - separating from mother  
316 'Spiritual adolescence'  
317 The individual and the group  
The besetting sin of the British - hypocrisy  
318 **The Ten Things Not to be Avoided**  
(1) *Ideas, being the radiance of the mind, are not to be avoided.*  
319 Bright ideas The arising of ideas in different contexts  
What is an idea?  
320 What is imagination?  
Coleridge, Imagination and fancy  
321 Blake and the imagination  
Romanticism  
322 Thought and emotion and their closeness/distance  
323-325 Putting forward feelings when reasons/thoughts are needed  
326 What is intuition?  
Vitakka vicara - discursive thinking  
327 Bright ideas and Insight  
(2) *Thought forms, being the revelry of Reality, are not to be avoided.*  
328 Symbols and symbolism - 'real symbol doesn't symbolise anything'  
329 Visualisation merely as a means of concentration  
330 Americans require a strong dose of genuine asceticism  
331(3) *Obscuring passions being the means of reminding one of divine wisdom (which giveth deliverance from them) are not to be avoided (if rightly used to enable one to taste life to the full and thereby reach disillusionment).*  
332 Tibetan Yab-yum images having no sexual connotations for Tibetans  
333 Thinking about the spiritual life when one is young and vigorous  
Madame Blavatsky and the Theosophists  
334 The idea of living life to the full  
'Ascesis' (asceticism) - the training undergone by athletes in Ancient Greece. A healthy concentration of all your energies on the task in hand.  
335(4) *Affluence, being the manure and water for spiritual growth, is not to be avoided.*  
335(5) *Illness and tribulations, being teachers of piety are not to be avoided.*  
336 The possibility of illness bringing you closer to the spiritual life  
337 Resolving quarrels before someone dies  
Trying to create what you think is a crucial situation  
338 Tribulations and opposition to one's spiritual life  
339-341 The intolerance of some Christians regarding the teaching of meditation and advertising meditation  
342(6) *Enemies and misfortune, being the means of inclining one to a religious career are not to be avoided.*  
Being capable of being somebody's enemy  
344 Combining thought and emotion in argument  
The enemies of Buddhism help Buddhists to understand their own position  
(7) *That which cometh of itself, being a divine gift, is not to be avoided.*  
345 You don't have to deserve everything that you get

People find spontaneous gifts difficult to receive

346(8) *Reason being in every action the best friend is not to be avoided.*

Reason

347 Making greater use of dictionaries

Bhante's recommended dictionaries

(9) *Such devotional exercises of body and mind as one is capable of performing are not to be avoided.*

348(10) *The thought of helping others, howsoever limited one's ability to help others may be, is not to be avoided.*

349 Giving

Not taking friendship/friendliness too much for granted

350 The Buddha's exhortation to the monks to look after one another