

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

DISCLAIMER

This transcript has not been checked by Sangharakshita, and may contain mistakes and mishearings. Checked and reprinted copies of all seminars will be available as part of the [Complete Works Project](#).

STUDY GROUP LEADERS SEMINAR HELD ON THE WHITE LOTUS SUTRA

CONTENTS

PAGE	TOPIC
1-2	Mutual penetration of all phenomena as a logical development of the doctrine of conditionality
3	Could the doctrine of mutual penetration replace the doctrine of Sunyata?
3-4	How valid is the concept of Sunyata?
4-6	The 'soul' of the universe is essentially ethical The counterbalancing of destructive and positive forces
6-7	Practices for insight into interpenetration
8-9	Examples of interpenetration in other cultures or religions
9-11	Science, philosophy and interpenetration
11-12	Does Blake's vision approach the Gandhavyuha?
12-13	Are there any translations from the Pali into the Theravada traditions?
13-14	The term 'Hinayana' is perjorative
14-16	Proselytising - other schools of Buddhism Going out from an basis of spiritual strength
17-18	The urge to Enlightenment and the ego's resistance
18-19	Using FWBO language in the group
19-20	Responding to people's actual needs
20	How the collective unconscious fits into the scheme of the Higher Evolution
21-23	Dealing with people's psychological problems within the FWBO
23-25	Arahants and Bodhisattvas
25-27	Fear and fearlessness
27-29	The life and writings of Mrs A A G Bennett
29-32	Debating as a spiritual practice Being able to justify one's position as a Buddhist
33-35	The Genesis of the Mahayana Sutras
35-37	The consequences of disparaging the Sutras Teaching the Dharma skilfully
37-39	Fruitful ways of approaching non conceptual material in Mitra study classes
39-40	The structure of the White Lotus Sutra
40	The date of Kumarajiva's translation
41-44	Nitcheren
42-44	Our attitude and approach to Western Nitcheren groups
44-45	Worship of a sutra as a path to Enlightenment
46-48	The symbolic significance of the title and its relation to the context
48-49	The Mahayana and the higher truths
49-50	Central Asian influence in the sutra
51	The development of the Trikaya doctrine
52-53	The three yantras as progressive stages
53	The Sravakayana is more negative than the Pratyeka Buddha
53-54	The Hinayana's nirvana
55	Different yantras for different temperaments

- 55-56 The walkout of the 5,000 Arahants
- 56-57 The inner Ananda
- 58-59 The predictions to Enlightenment
- 57-58 The Enlightened mind within
- 60 The Buddha of Abundant Treasures and Sakyamuni' S emanations
- 61-62 Mutual interpenetration in the White Lotus Sutra
- 63-65 The lack of motivation in the UK generally
- 65 Qualities in prospective Order Members
- 66-67 Encouraging people to get off the dole
- 67-69 Apathy in relation to change
- 69-70 Was the Mahayana Mara's work?
- 70 The period of the counterfeit dharma
- 70-71 Does the end justify the means
- 71-74 The everlasting existence of phenomena ?
- 74-75 Is sectarianism a necessary stage?
- 75-81 Buddhist and non sectarian
- 81-83 A coming 'new-age'
- 83-84 Is the 'new-age' a realistic possibility?
- 84-88 The 'New Society' outside the FWBO
The rate of technological change and increasing fundamentalism
Taking advantage of trends in society
- 88-90 The gopis and the bacchae
- 90-91 Ken Wilber's views
- 91 Flying saucers as psychic symbols
- 92-93 Books on the White Lotus Sutra
- 93-94 Oriental epic literature
- 94 The battle, the riddle and the journey
- 94-98 Is the myth of 'the fall' in accord with the dharma?
The return journey
- 98 The importance of our first relationship with mother
- 100 Sariputra, Subhuti and Ananda in the Mahayana sutras
- 101 The use of allegory
- 104 Psychological attitudes of servant and son relating to modern relationships
- 109 Relationships between Order Members and Mitras
- 110 - 112 " " " " " "
- 113 The symbolism of the Tibetan Book of the Dead
- 113 The clear light of the Bardo Thodol
- 115 Fear of change
- 115 The higher and lower selves - Angels and Bodhisattvas
- 118 Dualism to insight - a matter of time
- 119 The limitations of psychological technique within a spiritual practice
- 120 Meditation and change in behaviour patterns
- 122 The differences between religions reflected in their parables
- 123 The development of life and consciousness
- 124 The sameness and difference of people
Universality of the individual
- 128 Energy and the psychic centres; subtle bodies and auras
- 135 The linking consciousness
- 136 Fidelity to the mind

- 139 Prana and chi
- 139 Visualising seed symbols
- 142 Presenting the Higher Evolution in secular terms
Stretching the English language
- 146 The eight stupas built over the Buddha's remains
- 147 The intervention of the Brahmin in the disciples quarrel
- 147 Pagoda and dagoda
- 148 Relic worship and offerings made by the bhikkhus
The Jetavadins
- 150 Building a stupa
- 151 Relic worship as a human failing
Bhante's ashes
- 153 Reading the history of Ashoka
- 154 The vidic hearth and parasols
- 155 "Man's desire to preserve the leader" - tombs, stupas and pyramid~
- 157 Akasha and consciousness
- 160 The 'Buddha's eyes' in the stupa
- 161 The correlation between the path of the Higher Evolution and the
Five element symbolism of the stupa
- 162 Lunar and solar religions - yin and yang
- 163 Masculine and feminine qualities
- 164 The form of the stupa visualisation
- 165 Reflections on its transcendental qualities
Correlating the stupa and the dhyani Buddhas
- 168 Are the stupas mere reliquaries to modern Theravadins?
- 169 Incorporating the stupa into our practice
Literature mentioning the stupa
- 171 Correlating the stupa with the five Buddhas
- 172 Yin and Yang - transferring symbols from one tradition to another
- 174 Buddhism lacks a language of opposites
The 'path' rather than a 'balance'
"Verbal balancing acts"
- 177 Will Buddhism re-emerge in China?
- 178 Positive aspects of Chinese collective communes
- 179 The sudden and gradual paths
Personal experiences
- 182 Visual representations of the Pure Lands in Japanese and Chinese art
- 183 The prediction of Purna's Enlightenment
- 183 The significance of Purna's eloquence
- 184 Abstract and concrete universals as represented in the mantras
- 187 The alphabet of wisdom
- 188 Could Enlightenment be formulated in terms of communication?
- 188 Are the mantric syllables pre-Buddhist?
Do they incorporate magic sound symbols from other traditions?
- 189 Is their historic development traceable?
- 190 Introducing mantra recitation as a regular samatha practice
- 191 Mitras and visualisation practice
- 192 Mitras taking the ten precepts
- 193 Discussing one's sadhana practice with Mitras and Order members

- 194 The place of the Padmasambhava practice in the puja
- 195 Distinctions between self visualisation and external visualisation practice
- 197 Retaining identification with oneself as Buddha or Bodhisattva after the practice
- 198 The offering of the pearl necklace and its significance
- 199 Where can the images of Asclepius be found?
- 200 Pamacelsus
- 201 The healing arts as an expression of compassion
Dreams, drugs and diet
- 206 The burning of toes and fingers as sacrifice
Ordination burnings of wax and incense cones
Spiritual trials of self torment. Prostrations
- 209 Comfort
- 211 The spiritual justification of burning oneself
- 212 The Buddha as cosmic principle
Losing the historical Buddha in the archetypal Buddha
Appropriate reading matter
- 216 The thanka of the Medicine Buddha
- 217 The Vietnamese monk
- 218 A Buddha or Bodhisattva who embodies peace
- 218 Music, the Mahayana and the FWB0

END

- 222 Discussion of various translations of the White Lotus Sutra that took place at the end of the Study Group Leaders Seminar on the Bodhisattva Ideal.