

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

The Tibetan Book of the Dead seminar

Contents

- 1-22 The message of the book
- 2-5 Evading the issue of rebirth
- 5-7 Insanity and Enlightenment. Opening up fresh possibilities of experience
- 8 The bardo experience - removed from the familiar
- 10-12 The importance of strenuous thinking - Buddhist philosophy
Irresponsible translations of the Dharma
- 12-14 Subjective and objective views
Thinking and feeling
- 15-17 The bardo space in life as well as death
- 18-19 The effort of the individual
- 19-20 The bardo experience in everyday life
Forgetting powerful experiences
- 21-22 Making the message too accessible
- 22-42 The Bardo of the moment before death
- 23-24 Self-consciousness - the problem of keeping and losing control
- 25-27 Alienation and self-consciousness
Communication - levels and awareness
- 27-30 Duality - as confusion, loss and gain, pleasure and pain
- 31-33 Getting out of contact before being in contact
Communicating WBO meanings of words
- 33-36 Death in terms of the elements and senses
- 36-38 Attaining Enlightenment or losing one's sanity?
- 38-40 Experiencing pain and pleasure simultaneously
- 40-42 (The luminosity) a tiny glimpse of reality
- 43-44 Seeing and believing
- 44-70 The Hell Realm
- 44-51 The building of aggressive energies and emotions
Fighting with oneself
Creating one's own hell realm
- 52-60 Projecting one's emotions
- 57-58 God images and projection
- 58-59 Projection and creativity
- 59 Fear as a projection
- 60-61 Fear of punishment and coercion
- 61-63 Hell - subjective and objective
- 63 Anger as motivation to Enlightenment
- 63-64 Love and projection
- 64-66 Hell as a sanction for the spiritual life
- 66 The wheel of life
- 67-70 The cold hell realm
Uncommunicated anger
- 69 Aggressiveness rather than hatred
- 70-82a The Hungry Ghost realm
Possession and dissatisfaction
- 72-74 Emotional impoverishment
- 74-76 Alienation from one's feelings
Purity
- 77-80 Neurotic greed
- 80-81 Desiring one's optimum well-being
- 81-82 The spiritual person and enjoyment
- 82-82a Feeding pretas
- 83-116 The Animal Realm
- 83-84 Animals, natural functions and socially acceptable meanings
- 84-87 A sense of human and modern society
Deflecting anger with humour

88-89	Instinct and predictable behaviour
89-92	Elements of animality in humanity
92-94	Culture and being aware of other possibilities Art and religion
94-96	Creating the positive group and the spiritual community Living too comfortable a life
96-98	Are differences threatening?
98-99	Charities, the law and change
99-100	The symbolism of the animal realm
101-107	Attitudes to culture
103-104	Culture as an alternative to the devotional
107-115	The rebirth of an animal The Jataka Tales
112-114	Human potential Mind and body, devolution and evolution
115-116	Philosophical implications
116-132	The Human Realm
117-123	An accumulation of collective experience
119	Culture Appropriation and alienation
122-123	Asuras and devas and humans
124-128	The cultural experience of the average human
128-138	Objective criteria after the effects of meditation
129-131	Changes in vision and attitude
131-132	Self consciousness and being fully human
132-156	The Realm of the Jealous Gods
132-136	The Asuras - anger and intrigue
136-139	Alienation of qualities
137	Appropriation
139-153	Competitiveness - its negative and positive elements Ancient Greek attitudes
153-154	Women's instincts to serve'
154	The offering of the sword of wisdom
155	The etymology of Asura
155-156	Unhealthy competitiveness in the spiritual life
157-177	The Realm of the Gods
151-158	Doing what you really want to do
158	The kamaloka and rupaloka - distinctions by gender
159-160	Angels and androgyny
161	The Brahmacharya
163-165	The infamous hierarchy! The individual despite social and cultural conditioning
165	Developing one's opposite qualities
167	Maintaining the state of samadhi
172	Single-sex communities
172-174	Comments on angel, hippies and communities
174-177	The confrontation of two realms The palliative approach
178	The Bardo of the Dharmata
178-180	The phase of transition
182-184	The Akasa
185-188	Finding one's level
188-191	The colours and the Five Buddhas The relaxing of the subject-object distinction
191-196	The Bardo retreat Mystics, experiences, schizophrenia
194-195	Vipassana practices and their pitfalls
196-198	The journey between dharmakaya and luminosity Contacting one's emotional nature

198-199	Angels - origins and hierarchies
200	The nature of the visions
201-202	Receptivity - Cooking our egos' A limited self means limited visions Limiting one's visions The liberation through hearing on the after-death plane
206-208	Saving rather than transforming one's soul
208-210	The visions of the Tathagatas
210-215	Communication - transcending subject-object duality Sex as a basis for communication.
213-215	East and West - warmth and friendliness
215-225	Vision of the peaceful deities
215-218	The power in peace
216	Four Brahma Viharas Metta, karuna, mudita and upeksha
217	The cessation of everything mundane
218-225	Fear of peace Fear of silence
225-228	The experience of the wrathful deities
226-227	The peaceful as unyielding The wrathful as reactive
228-258	The six realms and the Tathagatas
229-240	Style, lifestyle and commitment
231-232	Role playing
233-234	Sloppy usage of language
235-238	Western reluctance to evaluate, to order hierarchically Expressing a genuine conviction
239-240	Experiencing the realms Spirituality of mind and body
241	The unfamiliarity of the Bardo
241-256	The Subtle Body
243	Bhante's first experience of acupuncture
249	Aura and attraction
252-254	Other kinds of bodies
254	Multiplication of bodies
256-258	Concern about life after death
259-280	The First Day
259-260	Functioning in the luminosity
260-261	The timing of the Bardo experience
261-262	The experience of unconsciousness The waters of Lethe
262	The development of the Buddha families
262-265	The priority of the teaching rather than the myth
263	Sakyamuni
265	Vairocana
265-267	Solar symbolism
267-269	The panoramic vision Decentralising oneself
269	Blue
270	White
271-273	The eight-spoked wheel The wheel turning king
273-274	The soft white light of the Gods
275-280	The wisdom of the Dharmadhatu Clinging to a source of happiness
279-280	A reaction to the unsupportable
280-295	The Second Day Aksobhya, Vajrasattva
281	Transcending the water element

281-283	The vajra
283	The elephant throne
	The Buddha Eye, the five types of eye
283-288	Buddha-lochana, the female consort
	Women and communication
286-287	Blake's definition of the "emanation"
288-292	Ksitigarbha and Maitreya
	Potential of growth
	The Earth Goddess bearing witness
289-291	Being supportive in the context of spiritual growth
292	Female bodhisattvas, Lasya, Pushpa
293-295	The vajra-like intellect
	Criticism
295-304	The Third Day
296-297	Ratnasambhava, Mamaki
	Dana mudra, wisdom of sameness
	The negative aspects of generosity
298	The horse throne
299	Correlations between jnanas and vijnanas
300-301	Akasagarbha and Samantabhadra
302	Mala and Dhupa - female bodhisattvas
302-304	Pride and riches
	Greed and the West
305-314	The Fourth Day
305	Amitabha
	Red
306-308	Accumulating wisdom
	Fire and Peacock
	Transformation of energy
308	Panadaravasini, Padmanatesvara, Sakyamuni
314-330	The Fifth Day
314-316	Amoghasiddhi, the karma family
	'Green'
315-318	The union of opposites, green and the crossed vajra
316	The shang-shang and cymbals
	Symbols and their meaning
318	Samaya-Tara, Sama-Tara
319-320	The Tara mantra
	The Tara practise for male Order members
320-322	Vajrapani and Sarvaniveranaviskambhin
	The clearing away of all hindrances
322	Gandha and Nairedya
323-324	Skandhas and realms
324-326	Female and male Bodhisattvas
326-327	Jealousy
328-329	Karma and vipaka
329-330	The iconography of the two aspects of Enlightenment
330-354	The Sixth Day
330-332	The Forty Two peaceful deities
332-338	The principle of no escape. Going for Refuge
	A situation of basic bewilderment
334-336	Francis Thomson - 'The Hound of Heaven'
338-340	The eastern gatekeeper, the Victorious one - Vijjaya
339	Making the vow
341-342	The southern gatekeeper, the lord of the lord of death
	Not fearing death
342-343	The western gatekeeper - the Horse-headed Hayagriva
342-344	The northern gatekeeper - the anti death potion. Amrtakundali
	Suicide

345-346	The female principles of the gatekeepers The hook, the lasso, the chain and the bell
347-349	Facing the Buddhas of the six realms The futility of human life
349-350	Changing the Buddha at the centre of the mandala
351-354	Wealth and riches in the mandala of the five Buddhas Amoghasiddhi and Ratnasambhava The Five Wisdoms
354-363	The Seventh Day
355-361	The vidyadharas, the communication principle "The green light of the animal realm" Opportunity for choice
361-362	Focusing on the abdomen in meditation The chakras
362	The hara
363	Visualizing the counting in meditation
363-388	The wrathful deities
364-369	The subjugation of Rudra
364-369	Transforming the energy of the ego
365	The Heruka
366-368	Misunderstanding the Tantric Teaching Looking for approval and recognition from one's teacher;
370-371	Compassionate anger The Herukas
371-374	The gauris
371-372	Nipping rationalizations in the bud
374-378	Shifting the energy of the ego
376	Crabb the poet - a story
378-380	The relevance of the wrathful deities in the western culture
381	The FWBO Heruka-ites'
383	The dakini - abandoning oneself to the dharma
385-388	Work is the great Tantric Guru
389-401	The dying person
389-393	Honesty in communication with the dying
394-399	Reading the Bardo Thodol to the dying
395-399	The Bardo experience in this life and after death Transitional stages/crisis communication after death Stages of death
400-401	Comments on the translation