



ADDRESSING
ETHICAL ISSUES
IN TRIRATNA

A REPORT ON THE WORK OF
THE ADHISTHANA KULA
AUGUST 2020

ADDRESSING ETHICAL ISSUES IN TRIRATNA

For many years, ethical issues from Triratna's past have affected the individuals who were involved and the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community as a whole, and a number of people have come forward with accounts of the suffering they experienced within Triratna. Some of these issues involved the sexual behaviour of Sangharakshita, Triratna's founder.

The task of the Adhithana Kula was to address these issues honestly. We investigated what had happened, inviting people to share their experiences, especially those who were directly affected; and we worked with others to create fresh structures that could address past difficulties and help prevent future problems.

As the Adhithana Kula concludes its work in 2020, this document shares its findings and reports on progress. For all our efforts, we wish to acknowledge the wounds that have not yet healed, the stories that have not yet been told and the pain that has not yet been recognised.

This is a report on unfinished business, and we suggest how this work can be taken forward in the future.

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ABOUT THE ADHISTHANA KULA

The Adhithana Kula was a group ('kula') of people with senior roles in the Triratna Buddhist Order who were based at Adhithana¹ –Triratna's main retreat centre in rural Herefordshire, UK – when it formed in 2017. Its seven members held responsibilities in the major Triratna institutions and were in communication with Sangharakshita, who also lived at Adhithana up to his death in 2018. In early 2017 the group began meeting daily to address issues connected to past difficulties and controversies, and most of their work was undertaken by early 2018.

While the Adhithana Kula was an influential group, no one can speak on behalf of the Triratna Community, the Order or the College of Public Preceptors. In that sense, it speaks only for itself.

It is not our job to protect Triratna from difficult truths, and we recognise and deeply regret the pain of those who suffered in any way as a result of their involvement in Triratna. We thank those who have come forward to share their experiences for their courage in doing so.

We recognise that the members of the Adhithana Kula are all deeply committed to Triratna and want it to thrive, and that this could compromise their ability to address these issues objectively and without bias. To counteract this the Kula approached its work on the basis of the Buddhist ethical precepts, which include honesty and a commitment to preventing suffering wherever it occurs. In examining Sangharakshita's behaviour and its impact on others, the Kula consulted with other Buddhists and experts in the fields of Safeguarding and Restorative process (see section 5/**Addressing Ethical Concerns Today**). In some cases it delegated work to them, for example bringing in an external Restorative facilitator. It also worked collaboratively with others in Triratna, both in the UK and internationally, and especially with the Safeguarding Team.

We have regularly shared our work with others through the Adhithana Kula Blog.²

¹ <https://adhithana.org/>

² The Adhithana Kula Blog
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula?display=latest>

Introducing the Adhithana Kula
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/introducing-adhithana-kula>

A Conversation with the Adhithana Kula
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/conversation-adhithana-kula>

Responding to Triratna Controversy
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/responding-triratna-controversy>



Saddhaloka has been the Chair of the Norwich Buddhist Centre, a member of the team helping men prepare for ordination in Europe, and the Chair of the Triratna College of Public Preceptors¹, a position he held for five years during which time The Adhithana Kula was initiated.



Ratnadhharini has been involved in many projects within Triratna, including being a member of the women's ordination team at Tiratanaloka, and was part of the team setting up the Adhithana Retreat Centre in Herefordshire. After being a Public Preceptor for 16 years, she became Chair of the Preceptors' College in 2019.



Parami was one of the International Order Convenors from 2008 to 2017. She has been a member of the Triratna International Council since its inception in 2010, initially as part of the Steering Group. Having worked extensively in the Spanish speaking world, she now represents the Latin America area.



Aryajaya joined the Adhithana Kula in late 2019, after the bulk of its work had been done and having become one of the Order's two International Order Convenors², in early 2018. She and Lokeshvara facilitate the flow of communication within the Order and are responsible for overseeing Order gatherings and conventions. Aryajaya was a director of Windhorse Evolution for five years.



Lokeshvara is the other International Convenor of the Triratna Buddhist Order, sharing his responsibilities with Aryajaya. Before working in Triratna he worked in the field of international conflict prevention and human rights and is interested in learning from critiques of the Order and supporting a culture that meets contentious or difficult issues without polarisation.



Mahamati was Director of the Karuna Trust³, which supports social work projects in India's poorest communities. He worked with Order members in India and later became an International Order Convenor. He lives near Adhithana and from 2014 until Sangharakshita's death in 2018 was one of his secretaries and carers.



Dhammarati was Chair of the College of Public Preceptors from 2005 to 2015. From the mid-1980s to the early 90s he was Chair of the London Buddhist Centre, and his other experience includes being the President of several Triratna centres and involvement in ordination training for men in North America and Scotland. He is currently the Convenor of Triratna's International Council⁴, which he helped establish in 2010.

¹ <https://preceptorscollege.online/what-the-college-does-overview/>

² <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/stories/order/office/>

³ <https://www.karuna.org/>

⁴ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/internationalcouncil?display=about>

INTRODUCING THE REPORT

A COVERING LETTER FROM THE KULA

As members of the Adhithana Kula, we have worked together over the course of nearly four years to review historical difficulties in our community and find ways to address their lasting consequences. This report shares what we've found and what we've done in response.

All of us have devoted many years to developing Triratna as a Buddhist community based on open communication and ethical behaviour. It has been sobering and sometimes upsetting to look squarely at the negative impact of involvement with Triratna on some people. Despite our principles, some people have suffered.

We profoundly regret that it took us so long as a community to fully recognise that some of Sangharakshita's sexual behaviour caused confusion and pain and to make a concerted attempt to deal effectively with its negative effects. For anyone who suffered these painful consequences: we are truly sorry.

We recognise that when someone is a founder or leader of a spiritual community, the consequences of their actions – both positive and negative – are magnified, and they have a greater responsibility to act carefully in relation to those they teach.

The relationship between a spiritual teacher (or mentor), and a disciple (or student) is emotionally and psychologically powerful and, as is nowadays widely understood, it contains a status or power imbalance. Introducing sex, and all the feelings that go with it, into this relationship brings a heightened risk of confusion and suffering for the disciple. Sangharakshita and our community more widely failed to recognise these dangers. We also acknowledge the difficulty for some of those affected of having any satisfactory dialogue with Sangharakshita about their experiences with him.

A further danger is that others copy the teacher's behaviour. This happened in our community in the arena of sex, bringing other painful experiences, especially for some younger men.

The report explores some of the ideas and attitudes that have existed in our community that proved to be unhelpful, unkind or just untrue, especially attitudes that were dismissive of women or people who practiced Buddhism as parents. These attitudes have changed, but it took a long time for the problem to be fully recognised, and the effects live on.

It also details some of the work that has been done to address the continuing impact of these events: listening to those who suffered because of their involvement in our community; facilitating long overdue conversations; creating safeguarding practices; and training people to employ them.

As we have worked on these issues, we have reflected at length on Sangharakshita himself: he cooperated with our work, and halfway through the process he died. One aspect is the profound impact on us of Sangharakshita's Dharma teaching and his personal kindness and encouragement; another is the behaviour we have been considering and its painful consequences. We wish to recognise and honour both of these perspectives.

Finally, we hope this report will be an important step in our community's engagement with these issues, but recognise that the work is not finished. As the Adhithana Kula disbands, we make recommendations for how it can be taken forward.

Ratnadhari, Saddhaloka, Dhammarati, Parami, Mahamati, Lokeshvara + Aryajaya

1 / APOLOGY AND REGRET

RECOGNISING THE NEED FOR AN UNEQUIVOCAL STATEMENT OF OUR POSITION ON THE ISSUES WE WERE INVESTIGATING, WE ISSUED OUR OWN MESSAGE OF APOLOGY AND REGRET.

The fundamental ethical principle that we follow as Buddhists is the importance of taking responsibility for the consequences of our actions. We recognise that collective apologies are problematic because one person cannot be responsible for another person's actions, and that no one, including the Adhithana Kula, can speak on behalf of all Order members.

Nonetheless, we wanted to express our deeply-felt sadness and regret at what had happened and we recognised the need for a clear statement representing Triratna's current position about these issues. The seniority of the members of the Adhithana Kula meant that we understood that our own statement would carry weight and was perhaps as close as we could get to the kind of statement that some people would have liked to see.

IN DECEMBER 2016 SANGHARAKSHITA PUBLISHED A STATEMENT REFLECTING ON ASPECTS OF HIS LIFE AND HIS RELATIONSHIP TO TRIRATNA THAT INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING CONFESSIONAL REMARKS:

I being its founder, Triratna sometimes bears the mark not of the Dharma but of my own particular personality. That personality is a complex one and in certain respects I did not act in accordance with what my position in the movement demanded or even as a true Buddhist. I am thinking in particular of the times when I have hurt, harmed or upset fellow Buddhists, whether within Triratna or out of it.

These thoughts have borne all the more upon me in the course of the last week, when I was in hospital with pneumonia. As I was well aware pneumonia can be fatal to a man of my age and I knew that I could die, even though I did not feel that I was dying, despite being very ill.

I would therefore like to express my deep regret for all the occasions on which I have hurt, harmed or upset fellow Buddhists, and ask for their forgiveness.¹

He later confirmed that this statement should be understood to include his sexual behaviour.

1. A Statement by Ugyen Sangharakshita, 2016
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/statement-ugyen-sangharakshita>

THE ADHISTHANA KULA ENDORSED SANGHARAKSHITA'S STATEMENT SHORTLY AFTER IT WAS ISSUED, AND IN AUGUST 2019 MADE A FURTHER STATEMENT OF ITS OWN.

At the end of 2016 Sangharakshita published a statement of his regret and apology for occasions when, as he put it, 'I have hurt, harmed or upset fellow Buddhists, whether within Triratna or out of it.' He confirmed that he intended his apology to include anyone who was hurt, harmed or upset by his sexual activity in the period between the late '60s and the '80s when he was not celibate.

It has been a slow and difficult process for our community, individually and collectively, to come to terms with our founding teacher's imperfections. Soon after Sangharakshita made his statement the Adhithana Kula was set up to look into the issues it raised, and we have now begun a review of our work over the past two-and-a-half years.

We want to begin by endorsing Sangharakshita's apology more clearly than has been done before with our own expression of profound sadness and regret for any suffering or harm that anyone has experienced as a result of the behaviour he refers to. We are deeply sorry for any hurt that has been caused as a result.

Over the years we have learned as a community that sexual relations between people in the positions of 'teacher' and 'student' or 'disciple' contain a power imbalance that can lead to suffering. Consequently, we have developed ethical guidelines for preceptors (those conducting ordinations in our community) and for those in teaching positions.

We want to ensure that anyone with negative experiences of Triratna or concerns about our community is heard sympathetically, and that their concerns are addressed effectively and promptly. We will be putting in place further arrangements to give people the option of reporting any negative experience to an external organisation.¹

We remain committed to ensuring that we have the necessary procedures and training in place to guard against unethical behaviour in the future, particularly through Safeguarding. Anyone wishing to report harmful behaviour is requested to contact Triratna's Safeguarding Team: safeguarding@triratna.community.²

We have been more specific about the regrettable elements of behaviour in the following section.

¹ Read about why our reporting service is internal here:
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/triratna-safeguarding/why-triratnas-safeguarding-internal>

² Message of Apology and Regret on the Adhithana Kula Blog:
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/highlights/message-apology-and-regret>

2 / SANGHARAKSHITA'S SEXUAL ACTIVITY

A CENTRAL ELEMENT IN CONTROVERSIES AROUND TRIRATNA HAS BEEN CRITICISM OF SANGHARAKSHITA'S SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR. WE SET OUT TO ADDRESS THIS FULLY AND HONESTLY BY:

- Ascertaining what happened by investigating the past and encouraging people to come forward with their testimonies;
- Making an unambiguous statement of apology and regret where it was needed;
- Doing whatever is possible to address any suffering that has resulted from these events;
- Establishing systems for safeguarding people engaging with Triratna in the present and future.

THROUGH OUR INVESTIGATION WE IDENTIFIED TWO PRINCIPAL AREAS OF CONCERN REGARDING SANGHARAKSHITA'S SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR:

- Not recognising the power imbalance between a spiritual teacher (or kalyana mitra) and a disciple or student, and not understanding the emotional impact that sexual relations between a teacher and a student can have on the student.
- At times being unwilling or unable to have meaningful dialogue after the sexual involvement ended.

2.1 / INVESTIGATING WHAT HAPPENED

There are many rumours and claims in this area, especially on the internet, and we recognised that it was important to start by establishing the facts.

Encouraging a Culture of Openness

To support this investigation and start a process of addressing the effect of what had happened, in 2017 we set out to encourage a change in our internal culture, which we described as 'not being afraid of the difficult conversations'.¹

We established an Order blog called *Stories of the Past and Present (Looking to the Future)* where Order members could share accounts of their experiences. To ensure that people felt able to write frankly, this blog was confidential to Order members, but some of their accounts have also been made publicly available by their authors.

¹ This blog post by Lokeshvara explains our thinking more fully. *How do we have the difficult conversations?* <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/how-do-we-have-difficult-conversations>.

Sangharakshita had sexual relations with a number of men in the FWBO/Triratna over a period of 17 years, from 1968 to 1985. A further allegation was made about an incident said to have taken place in 2003, which we also investigated.

Consulting with a number of those early Order members who remain in the Order today we were able to identify 24 men who it was believed might have had sexual relations with Sangharakshita. Of these men 16 are still Order members, 6 have left and 2 have died. (We should note that there was no connection between these deaths and any of the issues we were investigating.)

We tried to contact all of these men, using an intermediary to approach those who have left our community, asking them if there was anything they wished to say, something they wanted to have understood, or something they wished to hear from anyone in our community, including Sangharakshita. We offered the services of an external Restorative facilitator if they wished. There's a full account of our use of the Restorative approach in section 6/**Restorative Processes**.

Not everyone responded, but we heard back from three of the men who had left the Order and twelve who are still in it. Although most of these men said they had no issues that needed resolving, and several were keen to say it had been unambiguously positive, others recognised the same issue highlighted by those who left the order: that it hadn't been at all easy to talk about it with Sangharakshita afterwards. The men who had left all mentioned the difficulty of having meaningful dialogue after their sexual connection had ended and some of the current Order members mentioned this as well.

Three restorative conversations emerged from this process, and we can't pass on any details of these because they remain confidential to the participants.

We also reviewed other testimonies by some of these people – some of these appeared in Shabda (the Order's newsletter), and some have been posted online. Some of these accounts describe the sexual encounters, and the emotions the men involved describe (both at the time and subsequently) include confusion, distress and in one case a sense of being mentally and emotionally frozen.

Another account referring to alleged events in 2003 was investigated in 2012 and a full report was published. We reviewed this episode and were satisfied that it had been addressed already.¹

We investigated other rumours, allegations and controversies concerning Sangharakshita and reported our findings in the Triratna Controversy FAQs:

¹ Mahamati commented on this in 2016

<https://alaya.thebuddhistcentre.com/index.php/s/ri3lXnZG9uIdUEW#pdfviewer>
and 2017, <https://alaya.thebuddhistcentre.com/index.php/s/o32WKdzrWEotnnM#pdfviewer>.

Did Sangharakshita have sex with men under the then legal age of consent? ¹

Some of the allegations relate to sex with Sangharakshita or others in the 1980s, well after the 1960s and 1970s. Why did nobody report to the police? Was there a cover-up? ²

What is the idea of ‘Greek Love’ I sometimes read about in connection with the FWBO in the past? ³

Why did Sangharakshita leave India in 1964? Was there a scandal? ⁴

There have also been concerns that when Sangharakshita lived at Padmaloka Retreat Centre in the early 1980s men were allocated to share his bed. Read about the Safeguarding team’s work on this and other concerns about Sangharakshita and sex.⁵

A further accusation against Sangharakshita is that he presented a version of Buddhism that was distorted in ways that enabled his unethical behaviour. We address these concerns in section 3/**Unhelpful Attitudes and Ideas**.

CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING SANGHARAKSHITA

There was nothing secret about Sangharakshita’s sexual activity and it appears that many in Triratna saw no reason to be critical at the time. The Order as a whole is not celibate (though some Order members choose to be) and Sangharakshita went from being a celibate monk to a non-celibate Head of the Order. Having said this, there was a transition period during which his status was unclear – when he sometimes still wore robes in ceremonial settings and his sexual behaviour was the subject of discussion and some criticism within the FWBO/Triratna as well as widespread controversy in Buddhist quarters outside it, particularly given that those with whom he had sex were men.

The first public criticism in the Order by someone who had been involved sexually with Sangharakshita was made in 1988 and several more testimonies emerged in 2003 and subsequent years. The first media criticism appeared in 1992; a major article appeared in The Guardian in 1997; other material appeared online, starting in 1998 with a long document entitled The FWBO Files; and more material, including articles in The Observer and The Daily Mail, has appeared since 2016. Links to this material are in section 8/**Documents and Resources**. This also includes comments and statements by Sangharakshita and bodies within Triratna; reflections by senior Order members; testimonies and comments by critics; and recent media coverage.

¹ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/controversy/#FAQ5>

² <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/controversy/#FAQ6>

³ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/controversy/#FAQ7>

⁴ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/controversy/#FAQ12>

⁵ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/triratna-safeguarding/safeguarding-enquiries-concerns-about-sangharakshita-and-sex>.

Drawing conclusions about a person's behaviour is a challenging process, especially when the person involved is one's Buddhist teacher. Nonetheless, our primary responsibility is the welfare and safety of those who engage with Triratna, not the reputation of the organisation itself.

We discuss the wider issues about Sangharakshita's continuing place in Triratna in section 4/ **Sangharakshita's place in Triratna**. However, we now present the Adhithana Kula's shared conclusions about aspects of his sexual behaviour that would fall short of the standards we would expect of a Triratna teacher:

i. NOT RECOGNISING THE POWER IMBALANCE BETWEEN A SPIRITUAL TEACHER (OR A KALYANA MITRA) AND A STUDENT, AND NOT UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT THAT SEXUAL RELATIONS BETWEEN A TEACHER AND STUDENT CAN HAVE ON THE STUDENT.

For some of the individuals who looked up to Sangharakshita as a spiritual teacher, and who were also sexually involved with him, the emotional impact was painful and long-lasting.

It is important to be aware that this was not the case for everyone with whom Sangharakshita had a sexual encounter and that attitudes towards sexual relations have changed greatly since the 1970s and '80s. Important generational differences have also emerged; and some older Order members who were involved in these events told us that they feared that past events were being misrepresented because they were unfairly judged according to today's very different expectations.

Nonetheless, the role of spiritual teacher involves a responsibility to the people he or she teaches, and this includes awareness of the potential for the teacher's conduct to have an emotional impact on his or her students. Making sense of sex and sexual relationships is often complex and difficult for people, especially when they are young, and sexual involvement with an influential person can easily complicate the process, whether that person is senior in years or spiritually senior.

An imbalance of status can also compromise the junior party's ability to refuse a sexual advance and, even if they accept this at the time, their feelings and their assessment of what happened may change over time. This can confuse their relationship with the Dharma (i.e. the teachings and practices through which they are trying to find meaning and value in life) and complicate relationships with other members of the Sangha. For this reason a spiritual teacher has a responsibility to maintain clear boundaries with the people they teach and guide. The Triratna Model Ethical Guidelines¹ express how we understand this in Triratna today.

¹ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/triratna-model-safeguarding-policies-and-ethical-guidelines-2020>.

Having heard accounts of what happened, it is clear to us that Sangharakshita did not adequately recognise the power imbalance between teacher and student, did not see how this might compromise the junior party's ability to refuse a sexual advance, and did not sufficiently understand the emotional impact that sexual relations were liable to have on the student.

II. SANGHARAKSHITA WAS SOMETIMES UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO HAVE MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE AFTER THE SEXUAL INVOLVEMENT ENDED.

In some circumstances the lack of dialogue with Sangharakshita has had a negative emotional impact on the individuals concerned. We found this to be significant, even though it isn't always mentioned in discussions of such issues. Separately from their feelings about the sexual encounters themselves, several of the respondents mentioned the impact of feeling ignored by Sangharakshita after a period of receiving his attention. Some said that, at a later period, when they were no longer sexually involved with Sangharakshita, they had found it unsatisfactory that he was either unwilling or unable to discuss with them their feelings about what had happened.

This goes against the widely shared recognition in Triratna that where difficulties occur open communication, which may lead to confession, apology and perhaps resolution, is a key to addressing them adequately. We think that Sangharakshita's unwillingness or inability to engage in this way with these men, even many years after the event, contributed significantly to the difficulties they experienced, and was therefore a failing in its own right.

A connected issue is that Sangharakshita did not communicate an apology or acknowledge the impact of his behaviour to the wider Triratna community until very nearly the end of his life. This was also a source of confusion and disappointment to many within Triratna and we discuss this topic more fully in section 4/ **Sangharakshita's place in Triratna.**

MORE INFORMATION

Further issues are discussed in the Triratna Controversy FAQ¹ including:

*Do you take seriously accounts of sexual misconduct in the past?*²

*Is this sexual misconduct still going on?*³

*Why did Sangharakshita continue to wear robes when he had ceased to be a bhikkhu (monk)?*⁴

¹ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/controversy>,

² <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/controversy/#FAQ1>

³ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/controversy/#FAQ2>

⁴ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/controversy/#FAQ13>

2.3 / RESPONDING TO THE DIFFICULTIES

EXPRESSING APOLOGY AND REGRET

In December 2016 Sangharakshita himself issued a confessional statement about these matters.¹

We recognised the need for a clear statement of our own representing Triratna's current position about these issues, and in August 2019 we issued our own Message of Apology and Regret, see section 1/ **Apology and Regret**.

Addressing the harm done to individuals

Section 6/ **Restorative Processes** describes the work we have done to support individuals who experienced their sexual involvement with Sangharakshita to have had a negative emotional impact, and also to resolve other concerns from Triratna's past.

Section 5/ **Addressing Ethical Concerns Today** describes what we have done to develop Safeguarding Policies and Ethical Guidelines to protect adults and children involved in Triratna activities from harm – now and in the future.

OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES IN TRIRATNA

Allegations of ethical breaches by Order members, whether in the past or the present, are addressed through several bodies and a considerable part of the Adhithana Kula's work involved establishing or supporting them as they developed.

Section 5/ **Addressing Ethical Concerns Today** describes what happens in the case of allegations of more serious ethical breaches by Order members. Other matters can be addressed at a local level by the trustees of the responsible charity, perhaps with the involvement of a President (a senior member of the Order who is not directly involved in the situation) or others who are able to help. Section 6/ **Restorative Processes**, describes how we oversaw a new network of trainers, and found this an effective way to address painful or unresolved issues from the past and supplement other approaches.

TRIRATNA'S PAST RESPONSES TO THESE ISSUES

You may ask why Triratna has not considered these challenging issues before now? We explored this question with some of those within the Triratna community who held positions of responsibility in previous years, and the following is a description of what we learned.

Sangharakshita did not conceal his sexual relationships at the time they were happening. They were known to many people, both within and without Triratna. Most of those who were aware of these sexual relationships did not consider them to be morally questionable. Here

¹ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/statement-urgyen-sangharakshita>.

we think it is important to take into account the difference between the perspectives of young people in the 1970s and 1980s and a contemporary perspective, which is informed by, among other things, a greater awareness of the potential power dynamics present within certain relationships.

As awareness grew in Triratna of the difficulties some people had experienced the principal response within the community was a change in behaviour both individually and collectively. Sex in the context of spiritual friendship was generally discouraged; discussion resulted in guidelines being drawn up, but in a culture that avoided rules and disciplinary sanctions these were not always followed. Sangharakshita himself had returned to celibacy after 1985, and the 1990s saw more experimentation with celibacy among Order members, with some becoming celibate anagarakas /anagarikas. Safeguarding policies, and the idea of revisiting the past with a Safeguarding perspective, were still in the future.

We also note that testimonies by former sexual partners expressing emotional hurt and distress emerged only slowly. One person made such criticisms in 1988, and at the time of the first public criticisms and Triratna's responses to them he was the only one to have done so. Other testimonies emerged gradually from 2003 onwards, although we note that these were not actively solicited.

In a 1987 interview¹ and a Letter To A Friend (1992)² Sangharakshita commented on his period of sexual activity and said that he intended to write about this in greater depth in his memoirs – something he only did many years later and not in the detail he had indicated. He did not make an apology at this stage.

In 1997 The Guardian published an article about the FWBO entitled '*The Dark Side of Enlightenment*', and in 1998 an external critic published a long document called '*The FWBO Files*'. The official Triratna responses did not attempt to justify the problematic aspects of Sangharakshita's sexual encounters, but neither did they criticise it; they focussed mainly on the many other criticisms of Sangharakshita and Triratna in these documents which fundamentally challenged its legitimacy as a Buddhist movement.

After 1997 there was widespread debate of these issues within the Order and significant criticism of the behaviour of Sangharakshita and other Order members, as well as the culture that had supported it. On the whole, leaders in Triratna did not engage in this debate at this time, however, when a second round of criticisms came in 2003 Subhuti and others in leadership positions strongly encouraged open debate and sharing of experience. In 2004 Subhuti, then the Chair of the College of Public Preceptors, publicly criticised elements of Sangharakshita's behaviour, but there was no systematic investigation of what had happened and the College of Public Preceptors has never taken a shared position on this matter.

1 <https://alaya.thebuddhistcentre.com/index.php/s/sEpzAgOwVwrzGq6#pdfviewer>

2 https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/sangharakshitas_letter_to_a_friend_1992.pdf

Following this period of emerging information, Order members individually have had to consider what they think of Sangharakshita's behaviour, and whether – or how – this affects their relationship to him. This has been a long process, and has affected different people in different ways.

Between 2005, when the controversy largely died down, and 2016, when it re-emerged, these issues were largely treated by official Triratna bodies and publications such as *The Triratna Story* (2009)¹ as serious matters but aspects of Triratna's past. They were just one element in a larger picture of Sangharakshita and his legacy, and material for reflection and shared learning rather than active investigation. In private, some senior Order members did speak frankly with Sangharakshita in the hope that he would respond to the criticism, and especially to the individuals who had found their sexual involvement with him to have had a negative emotional impact on them.

In 2009, following a number of years of ill health, Sangharakshita re-emerged to take a more active role in Triratna, and discussion with some senior Order members resulted in a paper entitled '*What is the Western Buddhist Order*'.² In the '*Conversations with Bhante*'³ which was also published in 2009 Sangharakshita does discuss his sexual activity to some extent. However, over the next seven years he collaborated with Subhuti on a series of papers on doctrinal and sangha matters, which made no reference to problematic elements of Sangharakshita's ideas or behaviour.

In more recent years we have entered a new phase. The European Chairs' Assembly (ECA) appointed its first Safeguarding Officer in 2016. The Adhithana Kula was formed early in 2017 in the context of renewed criticism in the national media and worked closely with the Safeguarding officer.

1 <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/timeline/the-triratna-story-by-vajragupta.pdf>

2 https://www.sangharakshita.org/What_is_the_Western_Buddhist_Order.pdf.

3 https://www.sangharakshita.org/interviews/CONVERSATIONS_FEB_2018_REVISED.pdf,

3 / UNHELPFUL ATTITUDES AND IDEAS

In the period after its foundation in 1967 Triratna (then called the Friends of the Western Buddhist order or FWBO) actively attempted to develop new ways of thinking and communal living as alternatives to what it saw as conventional in western society. The intention was to create a movement that would support Buddhist practice without adopting traditional forms such as monastic ordination. Sangharakshita guided the development of this movement according to his own instincts, experience and views, and he encouraged a range of attitudes and practices.

Over the last five decades these ideas have been tested in the lives of thousands of people. In our view, much of what developed was positive and it continues today because of the enthusiasm of the people involved for the benefits they experience. However some other attitudes, underpinned by teachings and beliefs, proved unhelpful and have left, for some, a legacy of pain and mistrust that must be acknowledged and addressed.

WE IDENTIFY FOUR PRINCIPAL PROBLEMATIC IDEAS:

- Sex can be an aid to spiritual friendship (kalyana mitrata)
- Male homosexuality is spiritually superior to heterosexuality
- Men are spiritually superior to women
- Single people are spiritually superior to those in relationships or families

WE WISH TO EMPHASISE AT THE OUTSET THAT THESE IDEAS FORM NO PART OF TRIRATNA TEACHING TODAY.

In the post in January 2017¹, which announced the creation of the Adhithana Kula, its members felt it was important to make absolutely clear that ‘these teachings do not form any part of Triratna teaching today’. We must also express our regret that they were promulgated by people within Triratna and our deep concern at any suffering which resulted.

In engaging with this area, our concern was the impact of these views on Triratna and people engaged with it. We recognise that the bald summaries of these ideas above leave out important qualifications that were present when Sangharakshita discussed these areas himself. However, the ideas themselves had enthusiastic proponents, many of whom were influential members of our community, and these people sometimes left out the qualifications. Their influence gave these attitudes a significant cultural weight perhaps beyond that initially intended.

¹ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/introducing-adhithana-kula>,

APPROACHING THESE ISSUES AFTER MANY YEARS, WE RECOGNISED SEVERAL WAYS WE COULD HELPFULLY ENGAGE WITH THEM:

- Understanding how these problems arose
- Assessing the impact on individuals who were affected badly, neither understating or overstating the problems
- Expressing our deeply felt sadness and regret for any suffering that resulted
- Encouraging the development of conditions in which continuing unhappiness can be addressed and, if possible, resolved
- Assessing whether these issues remain current, clearly stating that the views in question are not part of Triratna's current teaching and, where necessary, identifying what should happen to prevent a recurrence.

Much had already been done to address these problematic ideas over a period of decades, long before the Adhithana Kula was formed. Sources of information about Triratna's changing relationship to these ideas include a long article by Vishvapani entitled *Growing Pains* (2006)¹, and *The Triratna Story* (2009) by Vajragupta².

This is a complex story of the development of a community, and we welcome future accounts of these issues by other writers.

In stating that these ideas form no part of Triratna teaching today, we are not saying that no one within Triratna holds these views or communicates them. A range of views exist in our society on many cultural issues, and we have no desire (or capacity) for ideological policing of individual opinions. We are stating the mainstream position that is reflected, for example, in common teaching materials, and our commitment to ensuring that this is reflected in teaching situations.

As well as adding nuance to these ideas, Sangharakshita also made it clear that they concern matters that are peripheral to the main body of his teaching, which concerns the Dharma as a path, and that people within Triratna are under no obligation to agree with him on such matters.

THE CHARGE OF 'IDEOLOGICAL GROOMING'

Each of these ideas raises slightly different issues, but we first need to consider them together. An important element in many of the charges that have been made against Sangharakshita is that these ideas were, in effect, a form of grooming by Sangharakshita and others, creating an outlook that made young men in particular more amenable to sexual advances from older men in senior positions within Triratna. There is little doubt that these ideas did indeed open sexual opportunities for homosexual men including Sangharakshita. To a lesser but still significant extent this also affected relationships between women.

¹ https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/texts/othertexts/Vishvapani/FBA104_Growing_Pains.pdf

² <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/timeline/the-triratna-story-by-vajragupta.pdf>

One interpretation is that these views were propounded in a cynical attempt to manipulate others for the sake of sexual gratification. Another is that they were held sincerely and the risk of harm of which we are now aware was obscured by prevailing cultural attitudes and the intensity of Triratna's culture, as well as personal and collective ethical blindspots.

We incline towards the second of these interpretations because we see no reason to doubt that Sangharakshita and others genuinely believed the ideas they put forward. However, this does not detract from the serious consequences of these ideas for some people, which we deeply regret.

3.1 / SEX AND KALYANA MITRATA (SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP)

Section 2/ **Sangharakshita's Sexual Activity** discusses the impact of Sangharakshita's sexual behaviour with some of his followers in the 1970s and '80s.

Kalyana mitrata – spiritual friendship based on the Dharma – continues to be a central part of Triratna's approach. In keeping with our understanding of the fluidity of human relationships, *kalyana mitrata* relationships are less formally boundaried than those shaped by traditional ideas of discipleship. This informality has been a strength but it has also, in some cases, meant that important boundaries have not been observed. Sangharakshita engaged sexually with some male students, motivated, he said, by a 'desire for a deeper and more authentic human communication'. He also shared the idea that sex could be helpful in this way, and some others acted in similar ways.

CLARIFYING TRIRATNA'S TEACHINGS

It is now widely understood within Triratna that regarding sex as an aspect of spiritual friendship was a mistake that led to significant confusion and suffering. We acknowledge this and deeply regret that this has happened.

This understanding has been widespread for many years. In 1986 a meeting of senior Order members reviewed the practice of *kalyana mitrata* and agreed that it was unwise to include sex within it; in 1992 Sangharakshita wrote a 'Letter to a Friend' in which he commented: 'I do not believe in sexual activity as a means of 'opening people up' and have never personally engaged in it with this end in view.'¹

In August 2017 Sangharakshita reaffirmed previous statements when he wrote: 'Personal experience has shown me that it is better to keep one's sexual relations and one's spiritual friendships separate.'²

¹ https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/sangharakshitas_letter_to_a_friend_1992.pdf

² *A Complex Personality*: A note by Sangharakshita
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhisthana-kula/complex-personality-note-new-piece-writing-sangharakshita>

Frequently Asked Questions 2018:3. <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/controversy>

This issue has long been raised as a matter of ethical sensitivity and responsibility and in 2017 the College of Public Preceptors reinforced this in a statement declaring: ‘it has long been our position that sexual contact between teachers and their students is undesirable’,¹ The relationship between a preceptor and the person they ordain is particularly sensitive and the College affirmed that ‘Preceptors should not enter into sexual relations with those they have ordained or are helping to prepare for ordination, and they should not ordain anyone with whom they already have such a relationship.’

In 2016, following some discussions, a set of Model Ethical Guidelines was agreed by the Triratna International Council and the European Chairs Assembly (ECA) to Triratna Centres and enterprises stating that ‘is highly inadvisable for those leading Buddhist activities, or in positions of leadership, responsibility or spiritual mentoring, to enter into sexual relationships with those new to Triratna.’²

In addition to these general guidelines for ethical conduct, it is important that in the case of more serious ethical breaches members of our community encounter sanctions. Details of what we have done in this area can be found in section **5/ Addressing Ethical Concerns Today**.

The issue of sex within *kalyana mitrata* relationships is distinct from that of sexual relationships between members of the Triratna community as a whole. The informal nature of many personal connections within Triratna and the non-celibate status of most Order members means that sexual relationships often develop between people within Triratna as a normal part of their lives. These sometimes involve people of somewhat different levels of experience when there is no teaching relationship. These are not inherently problematic, but the risk that an important boundary will be breached means that caution and sensitivity are essential.

RESTORATIVE APPROACHES

To support people who have suffered as a result of unethical sexual behaviour, we initiated the use of Restorative Process. You can read about that in section **6/ Restorative Processes**.

3.2 / HETEROSEXUALITY AND HOMOSEXUALITY

The belief that male homosexuality is superior to heterosexuality undoubtedly had currency among influential individuals in Triratna, including a few senior Order members. An associated idea, was that homosexual relationships (male or female) were preferable for practical reasons for people who wished to avoid the entanglements of family life because

¹ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/preceptors/statement-about-sex-between-preceptors-and-those-they-ordain-preceptors-college>.

² The 2020 version of the Guidelines is here: <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/triratna-model-safeguarding-policies-and-ethical-guidelines-2020>

they left them free to engage in Dharma practice. This meant that some people engaged in homosexual sex, who would not otherwise have done so.

This idea does not feature in Sangharakshita's lectures or books, and the best records of what he communicated as a teacher in the 1970s are the verbatim transcripts of his seminars (intensive study sessions with his disciples), most of which are publicly available. In a 1998 article Dhammadinna reviews these transcripts and comments that in one seminar:

Sangharakshita concluded that, spiritually speaking, there is probably not much difference between heterosexual and homosexual relationships, and that we must be equally mindful in either. What is important, he said, is that we cultivate friendship, which will help us to leave sex behind.¹

However, it is undoubtedly true that these ideas were influential in affecting how people behaved. In 1977 an Order member wrote an article advocating sex between younger men and older male mentors entitled '*Leaving Mother and Initiation into Manhood*' which was widely read, and other texts circulated in a similar way.

This idea forms no part of Triratna's current teaching, and so far as we are aware, it no longer has currency in its practice. The ethical considerations and sanctions already mentioned of course apply equally to homosexual and same-sex relations.

3.3 / MEN AND WOMEN

In 1979 Sangharakshita published an aphorism: 'Angels are to men as men are to women – because they are more human and, therefore, more divine.' This baldly asserted a view that he had elsewhere expressed with greater nuance that, at least in the early stages of spiritual life, women in general, had less spiritual aptitude than men. It also expressed an attitude towards women that was evident elsewhere: although Sangharakshita founded an Order where women had an equal ordination and he mentored and encouraged many women in his personal communication, he preferred the company of men and seemingly valued their qualities more highly than women's.

Single sex living and working situations and largely separate settings for Dharma practice developed early in Triratna's history, and they continue to be an important element in its practice. This has been a matter of discussion and debate from the outset, but the approach proved effective, and has now continued for several decades. So, while many Triratna activities are mixed, single-sex activities continue to be a significant aspect of practice in Triratna.

The presence among us of people who no longer identify as female or male and the wider questioning of gender roles in western societies raise further issues for Triratna (in common with many other communities). However, these discussions are distinct from the ethical

¹ *Sexual Evolution*, Dharma Life 8, Summer 1998
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/sexual_evolution_by_dhammadinna_1998.pdf

issues with which our investigation was concerned; in that regard, we note that single-sex practice implies that men and women may have somewhat different needs, but it does not in itself imply that one gender is superior to another.

We also acknowledge that an element of antipathy sometimes accompanied the separation of the sexes in Triratna's early years; that some people suffered as a result, especially when it affected family life (see the next section); and that their experience has continued to affect the movement. In some institutional contexts single sex practice was enacted in extreme ways that resulted in women lacking equal access to supportive conditions and teaching and encountering misogynistic attitudes. For a long time it was common to hear that it was preferable for men to be chairs of Triratna Centres because other men would find it hard to follow the leadership of a woman; a view disproved by the many female Chairs leading Triratna centres around the world today.

These views and attitudes around gender have been the source of pain and controversy within Triratna over many years and do not form part of our teaching today. The Triratna Story offers a detailed account of how these ideas were debated, assessed and largely rejected in Triratna up to 2009.¹

ADDRESSING VIEWS

In 1994 Subhuti outlined Sangharakshita's views on gender in his book *Sangharakshita: a New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition*, and expanded this section in a long essay entitled *Women, Men and Angels*, which was published by Windhorse in 1995.

In 2004 Subhuti expressed his regret at the publication of *Women, Men and Angels*. In 2017, in parallel to the work of the Adhithana Kula, he made a public statement of his current position, clarifying his views about both the book and women in the spiritual life, adding:

I want to make it quite clear that I very much regret the publication of my book, *Women, Men and Angels*, which I think was a serious mistake. I am happy that the book was long ago withdrawn from distribution by the publisher and that all remaining copies were pulped for recycling about 10 years ago.²

Following this statement, Maitreyi interviewed Subhuti on these topics.³ In this interview he adds that not only did he regret the publication, he thought that 'the comparison of two classes of individuals ... of any kind in relation to a term such as 'spiritual aptitude' is useless ... dangerous and problematic.'

¹ https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/the_triratna_story_-_trouble_with_angels.pdf.

² *A Personal Statement*, Subhuti, 2017
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/women-men-and-angels-personal-statement-subhuti>

³ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/maitreyi-interviews-subhuti-women-men-and-angels>.

A further test of the current impact of views on gender within Triratna is the representation of women within the Order and Triratna's leadership. The balance has changed dramatically over the years and, leaving India with its distinctive cultural conditions aside, the proportion of women, as opposed to men, Order members has increased from 15% in 1978 to 46% in 2020. The appointment of Ratnadharini as the Chair of the College of Public Preceptors (the most senior role within Triratna), is a significant step and attests the presence of many women at all levels of Triratna's leadership.

3.4 / SINGLE PEOPLE AND THOSE IN RELATIONSHIPS OR FAMILIES

Triratna has always presented itself as a community that is open to all, irrespective of lifestyle. At the same time a strong cultural emphasis in the early decades of Triratna was placed on living in a residential community without a family. This lifestyle was identified as the one most conducive to Dharma practice.

In this extract from one of Sangharakshita's seminars he describes living in a single-sex community as 'an assault on the existing social setup':

It changes your whole pattern of domestic life; it changes your whole pattern of work; it changes the whole rhythm of your day-to-day existence. It changes your psychological attitude, changes your emotional attitude; corrects your emotional dependence [on the opposite sex]; gives you a completely different sort of environment and context within which to function.

Sangharakshita, 1978

The result was that the early years of residential communities, Team-based Right Livelihood businesses and single-sex practices saw tensions between people who were fully engaged with these new ways of living (usually young people without families) and those living in committed relationships or with their families. People living in families sometimes felt that their place within Triratna was marginal, and some people left their families to live in ways they believed would enable them to commit themselves more fully to Dharma practice. This caused confusion and sometimes suffering, including an impact on the next generation.

As with other areas, these experiences have been discussed extensively over many years and, on the whole, Triratna has evolved into a community that includes many lifestyles, including families. At the same time, Triratna's engagement with alternative lifestyles has been based on the understanding that supportive conditions are important for Dharma practice and that effective communities offer them. The challenge for Triratna is to balance these, without disparagement or marginalisation, and so far as we can ascertain, these are things of the past.

The Triratna Story (chapter 5) describes this changing relationship with family life.¹

¹ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/timeline/the-triratna-story-by-vajragupta.pdf>.

In March 2017 Saddhaloka (the Chair of the College of Public Preceptors) wrote to Order members acknowledging the difficulties that had arisen, for example in relation to single-sex activities. In January 2018 we used the Adhithana Kula Blog to address this more fully. Saddhaloka wrote a short article, commenting:

Nowadays there is a great span of ages and lifestyles in the Order, and it is a minority who work full time in our Triratna institutions. There is a lot more human — and spiritual — maturity and experience that we can draw on and it is hopefully much more straightforward for anyone to find their place in our community, whatever their lifestyle.

Dharma Life – Family Life, Saddhaloka, 2018¹

Issues about lifestyle – e.g. whether to have a baby; whether to move in with a partner; how to balance a wish to go on retreat or take on a project with the needs of other people – are very personal. Saddhaloka’s article introduced a series of videos and articles in which Public Preceptors and others frankly discuss their experiences of family life, sexual relationships and celibacy.²

1 <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/highlights/dharma-life-family-life>

2 Saddhaloka and Moksananda in Conversation about Families
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/highlights/saddhaloka-and-moksananda-conversation-about-families>

Some Thoughts on Motherhood: the Path of Loving and Letting Go by Punyamala
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/highlights/some-thoughts-motherhood-path-loving-and-letting-go-punyamala>

Me and Babies by Dhammadinna
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/highlights/me-and-babies-dhammadinna>

Maitreyi Interviews Punyamala About Families
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/highlights/maitreyi-interviews-punyamala-about-families>

4 / SANGHARAKSHITA'S PLACE IN TRIRATNA

IN LIGHT OF OUR CRITICISMS OF SANGHARAKSHITA'S SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR, WHAT IS HIS CONTINUING ROLE WITHIN TRIRATNA? WE EXPLAIN HERE WHY WE CONTINUE TO REGARD HIM AS TRIRATNA'S CENTRAL TEACHER AND GUIDE

In this report we fully acknowledge that some people experienced harm as a result of their contact with Sangharakshita and we understand that in the eyes of some observers this entirely negates his legitimacy as a Buddhist teacher. The members of the Adhisthana Kula take this perspective seriously and believe that the interests of Triratna as an organisation should never take precedence over the wellbeing and safety of people who engage with it. At the same time – and even taking account of the cognitive bias that inevitably comes from our commitment to Triratna – we also believe that in considering Sangharakshita as an individual, as a Dharma teacher and the central figure within Triratna we must include more than this.

As we say in section 2/ **Sangharakshita's Sexual Activity** – it is clear to us that some of his sexual activity was unwise, and that in certain instances he acted unethically. In his 2016 Statement of Apology and Regret,¹ Sangharakshita recognised this himself and we feel it is important to state this clearly, without caveats that detract or excuse. We will continue to acknowledge openly what has happened in Triratna in the past and do our best to resolve any harm that has resulted.

However in reflecting on Sangharakshita's role in Triratna's future we need to take account of the various forms his influence has taken.

MOST FUNDAMENTALLY, SANGHARAKSHITA'S PLACE IN TRIRATNA STEMS FROM HIS ROLE AS ITS FOUNDER AND GUIDING TEACHER

It is possible for members of Triratna to be an effective Buddhist community (or *sangha*) because we understand and practise the Dharma in shared ways that derive from Sangharakshita's presentation of it. Becoming a member of the Order involves Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels in light of that presentation, and therefore the Order cannot exist apart from it.

By extension, Sangharakshita's practice and understanding of the Dharma – his 'Going for Refuge' – underpins the Order as a whole, and he stands at the head of a lineage of practice and inspiration. The nature of this relationship was one of the topics that Sangharakshita

¹ <https://www.sangharakshita.org/personal-statement.html>

himself discussed in his 2009 interview ‘*What is the Western Buddhist Order?*’ in which he spoke of Order members as being in a position of discipleship.¹

He later revised this formulation by saying:

I know that there are Order members who also share and accept my understanding of Going for Refuge and the Dharma in the way I have described for whom the term ‘disciple’ implies an unrealistically intimate, uncritical, or reverential view of me. Therefore, taking account of such differences, I have come to think that no single term, including the term ‘disciple’, can adequately define all those who share my understanding of the Dharma and follow practices that flow from that understanding.²

This important clarification deserves more attention than it has perhaps received, for example from the ordination teams, but whether or not individuals consider themselves disciples of Sangharakshita he remains, necessarily, a significant figure for everyone involved in Triratna.

ANOTHER ASPECT OF SANGHARAKSHITA’S INFLUENCE IS HIS EXTENSIVE BODY OF WRITING AND TEACHING

As we outline in section 3/ **Unhelpful Attitudes and Ideas**, we recognise that some of the ideas he shared contributed to the problems we have been examining. He made it clear that, while it is important that members of the sangha share a common understanding of the Path and the Goal of Dharma practice, this does not include ‘ideas’ concerning such matters as gender, sex and so on. This is relatively straightforward in principle, and in fact an important theme in Sangharakshita’s work is the need to distinguish central elements of the Dharma from particular ideas about its application. But in practice, considerable maturity is required to be – on the one hand – engaged with a teacher, committed to practising their teachings and immersed in the culture of a particular movement, and – on the other – to stand back from those things and make these important distinctions.

Taken in the round, we believe that Sangharakshita’s presentation of the Dharma is both true to the central teachings of the Buddhist tradition and innovative in important ways. We find great depth and richness in the teachings and believe they make a distinctive contribution to Buddhism in the modern world. We know that they have been a source of inspiration and a doorway into effective practice of the Dharma for thousands of people, and while recognising past difficulties and mistakes, we also want to honour that experience.

THE LEGACY OF SANGHARAKSHITA’S PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH OTHERS IS ALSO MIXED

1 https://www.sangharakshita.org/What_is_the_Western_Buddhist_Order.pdf

2 *A Note on ‘Disciple’: A Postscript to ‘What is the Western Buddhist Order?’*
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhisthana-kula/urgyen-sangharakshita-discipleship-postscript-what-western-buddhist-order>

Most of those who knew Sangharakshita as students, disciples or friends remember him as a deeply intelligent and sensitive man with an insight into the Dharma that supported their own deepening experience. Spending time with visitors and responding to letters were important parts of his life over several decades and many of the people he engaged with in this way recall his kindness, encouragement, and perceptiveness. For most of those who knew Sangharakshita, the depth of his Dharma practice was very evident and the challenge is to understand how this coexisted with any problematic elements of his behaviour.

For this reason, we do not recognise the overwhelmingly negative account of Sangharakshita's character that has featured in some recent media accounts, which reduce his character to certain ethical failings. For many Order members, Sangharakshita's failings in his sexual behaviour are relatively minor matters when set against his achievements and virtues, and they are happy to consider themselves his wholehearted disciples.

However, we also recognise that for some people, especially where sexual contact was involved, their connection with Sangharakshita caused considerable confusion and suffering. Additionally, many who were not personally involved in these events have been troubled by his behaviour and this has disrupted and sometimes ended their relationship with both the Dharma and the Triratna Community.

Although some Order members tell us that they did attempt, individually, to discuss these matters of sexual ethics with Sangharakshita, for many years he did not acknowledge that he had acted wrongly. He left it very late in his life to express his regret for having 'hurt, harmed or upset' people through his actions before he finally did so in 2016, and the considerable delay compounded the problem his initial actions had caused. He was also open to engaging in Restorative Process (mediated by an external specialist) with any of those with whom he had had sexual relations who wanted this.

FINALLY, IN FOUNDING TRIRATNA SANGHARAKSHITA BROUGHT INTO BEING A COMMUNITY WITH A LIFE OF ITS OWN

He encouraged people to make the Dharma their own, understanding the principles of Dharma practice and allowing space for the many ways these can be put into effect. He set up autonomous structures that were connected by bonds of friendship and shared commitment, rather than controlled centrally. He handed on responsibilities such as conducting ordinations many years before his death and let others know that they had his confidence. And he encouraged people in Triratna to act ethically and to develop an ethical sensibility that would inform our lives.

The result is that Triratna today, as we experience it, is an effective Sangha, or spiritual community, in which the Dharma is alive in the practice of individuals and in the connections between us. We recognise that not everyone experiences Triratna in this way, and we recognise that it has many limitations and some problems, but our experience is that most people with extended experience of Triratna recognise this characterisation. We do not think this would have come about without Sangharakshita's inspiration and guidance.

One irony of the current situation is that the understanding of ethics that we have learned, ultimately, from Sangharakshita has informed the criticisms of him that we make in this report.

Taken together, these points show the complexity of Sangharakshita's place in Triratna, and it is likely to remain so in years to come. We believe it is important to recognise that complexity, neither dismissing the problems nor reducing the relationship to them. Triratna's future will be worked out in relation to Sangharakshita, in all his complexity and his mixed impact on others. Beside his limitations, flaws, errors and the harm experienced by some we set the inspiration, brilliance and depth of his teachings; the memory of his kindness and friendship; and his legacy as a founder.

The Adhithana Kula was set up to investigate and respond to accounts of hurt or harm in the past and their continuing effects in the present, and to establish effective ways of dealing with ethical issues when they arise in the future. The starting point for this work is that everyone attending Triratna activities should be safe and treated with respect and our approach was guided by Buddhist ethical principles, and by the law if criminal matters came to light.

We worked with others to develop a system with a number of elements operating in tandem. Restorative Approaches are discussed in the next section; here we describe Safeguarding policies and procedures, ethical guidelines for teachers and a clarified system of sanctions in the case of more serious ethical breaches by Order members. A new body called the Ethics Kula handles matters of Order Ethics which are not Safeguarding issues. The Adhithana Kula initiated some of these developments, and in other cases they supported developments that were already underway.

The matters we have been dealing with often prompt strong feelings, and the best ways forward have been a matter of debate. This is work in progress, and we are still in the process of establishing new systems, finding resources to support them and engaging with concerns from Order members.

We regret that we were not able to engage with all the more general areas of past difficulties and think this should be a priority for future work.

The systems described here are not perfect and do not align neatly. We continue to explore where the boundaries between them lie, and they are continuing to evolve as we learn more.

ORDER ETHICS + THE ETHICS KULA

Since its foundation, Triratna's College of Public Preceptors has had responsibility for suspending or expelling Order members in the event of serious ethical misconduct. (Rather than 'expulsion' we usually speak of 'recognising that someone is no longer acting in a way compatible with membership of the Order').

In 2017 the overall Safeguarding Officer raised the need for the College to work in concert with the Safeguarding Team, and the Ethics Kula was established.

Where a serious concern is raised about an Order member's conduct, the Safeguarding team will first address any Safeguarding aspects of the case, for example, where appropriate and/or required, reporting the matter to the police and/or social services, and then the Ethics Kula will determine how best to address the matter within the Order.

Less serious concerns arising in the course of the activities of a Buddhist centre are addressed at a local level if possible, sometimes with the involvement of a Centre's President (an experienced Order member who is not directly involved in the situation). Other matters, for example those involving probation, suspension, or recognising that someone is no longer a member of the Order, are the responsibility of the College of Public Preceptors.

In common with other religious communities, we are still exploring important issues of principle; for example the issue of confidentiality in relation to formal confession, and how to include in the Triratna sangha those previously convicted for serious crimes – both of which are potentially Safeguarding matters. Our sincere belief that the Dharma should be available to all and that everyone is capable of radical transformation has to be framed by our ethical, legal and regulatory duties to protect others from harm. Mindful of these obligations the Ethics Kula welcomes discussion of these complex matters in various Triratna bodies.

The Ethics Kula is currently drawn from the people who hold positions of responsibility for the Order as a whole, including the College Chair and some Deputies (who have responsibility for applying sanctions in the event of serious breaches of the Order's Ten Ethical Precepts), the International Order Convenors, and a representative of the Restorative Coordinating Group. They are keen to involve more Order members, including some without institutional responsibilities of this sort, and are considering ways to do so. A third Order Convenor is being appointed who will have particular responsibility for addressing ethical values and concerns in the Order.

In May 2020 the members of the Safeguarding Team ceased to be part of the Ethics Kula, recognising that their function would be better fulfilled as independent advisers.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS

Triratna Centres

Each Triratna Centre is legally independent. In the UK the trustees of each charity have Safeguarding responsibilities to ensure that their beneficiaries are protected from harm in the course of their charities' activities.

In 2013 work began on developing a set of ethical guidelines for those in Triratna offering activities to the general public, including classes in meditation or Buddhism, study groups, yoga classes or therapeutic interventions such as mindfulness classes. The Triratna Model Ethical Guidelines were first published in 2016 and are regularly reviewed.¹

¹ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/triratna-model-safeguarding-policies-and-ethical-guidelines-2020>.

Preceptors

In January 2017 the College of Public Preceptors made a statement about sex between Preceptors and those they ordain making clear that the College had long since determined, with Sangharakshita's support, that Preceptors:

- should not enter into sexual relations with those they have ordained or are helping to prepare for ordination,
- should also not ordain anyone with whom they have such a relationship, or with whom they have previously had sexual relations.¹

COLLEGE WORK ON SUSPENSION, EXPULSION AND PROBATION

The growth of the Order and its increasingly international character have meant that the College has needed to work on clarifying principles and procedures around probation, suspension and expulsion. They also needed to ensure that Order members from very different cultures across the world have a shared understanding of these procedures and are implementing them consistently.

In 2018 Saddhaloka (then Chair of the College of Public Preceptors) published a letter to the Order entitled Suspension, Expulsion and Probation spelling out in detail when these sanctions might be applied and discussing the principles involved in doing so.²

In response to a particular case, in 2018 the Ethics Kula developed a Panel Process as a means of addressing allegations of serious ethical misconduct within the Order where the facts are disputed. Using this approach for the first time was not straightforward. A number of Order members have had questions about it and the Ethics Kula have undertaken to review the Panel Process in dialogue with others. We hope we will rarely use such a process, but we need to have effective processes in place, which meet the requirements of any external review, to deal with similar situations in the future.³

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

As in any community, personal conflicts and disagreements are inevitable in Triratna and most will require resolution, not sanctions. The Triratna International Council discussed this in 2016, and in 2018 they agreed a Conflict Resolution document.

Drawing on traditional procedures for resolving conflict outlined in the Buddhist Monastic Code (Vinaya), this document outlines the stages for dealing with a conflict, starting at the local level with face-to-face meetings and – if that doesn't work – bringing in help from other people including the centre's President where this is relevant. In some cases, individuals might choose to involve a mediator or an expert in Restorative Processes.

¹ https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/college_statement_-_january_2017.pdf

² https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/suspension_expulsion_and_probation_in_triratna_o.pdf

³ <https://alaya.thebuddhistcentre.com/index.php/s/764Mz1WE42GK66r#pdfviewer>

Members of the Adhithana Kula have been working with Triratna's International and Area Councils to implement the conflict resolution document's recommendations in each of the geographical Areas into which Triratna is organised.

SAFEGUARDING

Triratna's Safeguarding system is overseen by the Safeguarding Team who work for Triratna's European Chairs' Assembly (the ECA)¹: a charity run by the leaders of all Triratna centres and charitable projects in Europe. The Adhithana Kula worked closely with the Safeguarding Team in addressing unresolved concerns about ethical misconduct in Triratna's past.

'Safeguarding' is a term used in England and Wales to refer to the regulatory requirement of legally established organisations to ensure that all are protected from harm in the context of their activities. In Scotland it may be referred to as 'Protection'. This includes sexual, physical and psychological harm, as well as discrimination, for example on grounds of race, gender or disability. The Charity Commission for England and Wales and the Scottish Charity Regulator hold trustees responsible for Safeguarding and Protection in the course of their charity's activities.²

Discussion of the need for formal Safeguarding provision in the activities of Triratna centres began at a meeting of the ECA in 2013. In 2015 the ECA's Communications Officer Munisha published the first Model Safeguarding policies and in 2016 the Triratna International Council³ published Triratna's first Model Ethical Guidelines⁴. Also in 2016, Munisha ceased to be Communications Officer and became the ECA's first Safeguarding Officer, supporting centres' own Safeguarding Officers with policies and advice. Amaladipa, who has a senior role in the UK criminal justice system, joined her in 2017 as volunteer Safeguarding Adviser and together they comprise the ECA Safeguarding Team.

PRIORITISING SAFEGUARDING IN TRIRATNA INSTITUTIONS

By 2018 almost all Triratna charities in the UK had their own Safeguarding Officer and policies. For UK charities Safeguarding is a regulatory and legal obligation and some other countries have similar requirements; but many do not. Nevertheless the Safeguarding Team recommends that all Triratna charities worldwide have Safeguarding policies and a Safeguarding Officer (or the local equivalent).

1 <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/eca>

2 *Charities' Safeguarding Duties*, The Charity Commission for England and Wales
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>.

What is Safeguarding? The Scottish Charity Regulator
<https://www.oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms/safeguarding-guidance-keeping-vulnerable-beneficiaries-safe/what-is-safeguarding>

3 <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/internationalcouncil>

4 <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/triratna-model-safeguarding-policies-and-ethical-guidelines-2020>

The Model Safeguarding policies are offered to Triratna bodies worldwide as the basis of their own documents, and any individual charity may adopt the model policies as their own, adapting and translating them according to local legal, regulatory and cultural needs. Reviewed and republished each year, the range of model policies and guidance documents provided by the Safeguarding Team cover the protection of adults and children from harm, care of teenagers and the safe inclusion of ex-offenders (who have joined Triratna sanghas following convictions for serious criminal offences).

A centre's Safeguarding Officer is there to receive concerns about the behaviour or welfare of Order members, Mitras and Friends in the context of that centre's activities. They are responsible for ensuring that Safeguarding policies have been adopted by the trustees and that anyone teaching, leading or volunteering at the centre has agreed to abide by them. Where necessary, concerns can also be reported directly to the ECA Safeguarding Team at safeguarding@triratna.community.

Typically, centres' own Safeguarding Officers seek the help of the Safeguarding Team with such matters as the proper Safeguarding of family events, management of ex-offenders and addressing mental health problems in the sangha where these compromise the welfare of others.

Triratna's UK-based development charities, Karuna and the India Dhamma Trust, and Triratna's central fundraising charity, Future Dharma Fund, also recognise Safeguarding as an important element of their work. As required by the Charity Commission, partner organisations seeking funding from these bodies must demonstrate Safeguarding provision.

TRAINING

November 2016 saw the first Triratna training day, attended by around thirty Safeguarding Officers, trustees and others in leadership positions from UK centres, led by a trainer from the CCPAS (now known as Thirtyone:eight)¹, who specialise in Safeguarding training and advice for UK faith groups. Further training followed in Safeguarding Adults and in Child Protection. Subsequent training days, hosted by the Network of Buddhist Organisations UK,² have been well attended by people from Triratna. More recently, UK Safeguarding officers have been encouraged to take part in online training with bodies such as Thirtyone:eight or the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).

More about Safeguarding in Triratna here.³

¹ <https://thirtyoneeight.org/>

² <https://www.nbo.org.uk/>

³ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/text/safeguarding-triratna>
Follow the work of the ECA Safeguarding Team,
<https://thebuddhistcenter.com/triratna-safeguarding?display=latest>

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ADDRESS THE IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS OF THE EVENTS WE HAVE BEEN EXPLORING IN THIS REPORT? WE EXPLORED A RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES AND THEN WORKED WITH OTHERS TO ESTABLISH RESTORATIVE PROCESSES THAT COULD HELP WITH DIFFICULTIES FROM THE PAST AND CONFLICTS IN THE PRESENT.

THE ISSUES

The Adhithana Kula's first step was to invite people who had experienced difficulties in the past to contact us or share their story on the confidential Order space '*Stories of the Past...*' We visited Triratna Centres all over the world, attended many Triratna gatherings and invited others to join our meetings at Adhithana.

It became apparent from listening in this way that, among a range of concerns about past unethical behaviour in Triratna, the chief concern remained Sangharakshita's sexual behaviour in the 1970s and '80s. Thirty or forty years later, some were still in distress as a consequence.

It was clear that we needed to focus our efforts on this area and our response is discussed in section 2/ **Sangharakshita's Sexual Activity**. However, it was also clear that the Adhithana Kula needed to address the cluster of ideas and attitudes that are discussed in section 3/ **Unhelpful Attitudes and Ideas**, as these also affected people unhelpfully in many ways.

While it was important that we expressed regret (1/ **Apology and Regret**) we recognised that some of those who had suffered still needed both a hearing and a response and that we needed to set up effective procedures to deal with fresh difficulties when they arose.

The emerging systems we have established continue to evolve. Once again, we present these as works in process, not definitive responses and we recognise the presence of difficulties that remain unresolved.

A RESTORATIVE RESPONSE

We looked at various approaches to addressing this material and several Order members drew our attention to An Olive Branch, a US-based organisation which primarily works with Buddhist communities in North America in the areas of conflict resolution and addressing misconduct. At the same time an Order member called Jnanasiddhi, introduced us to the Restorative approach with which she is familiar through her work with a UK Quaker charity.

Restorative approaches follow a distinctive philosophy in addressing wrongdoing. Traditional approaches tend to pose three main questions: What rules were broken? Who did it? And what do they deserve? Restorative approaches ask instead: Who has been hurt? What are their needs? And whose responsibility is it to put it right? In the criminal justice system this is known as 'Restorative Justice', where it is widely recognised as an effective method in preventing re-offending.

Participation in a Restorative process is voluntary and the method can be useful in a range of situations, from relatively minor discord to more serious wrongdoing. In the most serious cases a Restorative approach may be used alongside more formal responses such as Safeguarding and reporting to the police (which it can never replace).

The Adhithana Kula invited Janine Carroll, Director of Restorative Now,¹ to lead a workshop for its members. We found the Restorative approach she presented to be strongly aligned with our Buddhist values of transformation through communication and taking responsibility for the effects of our actions. Triratna's Model Ethical Guidelines² suggest that ethical issues would ideally be explored at a local level and by those involved, meeting face-to-face, if at all possible, which is also in accord with Restorative approaches. Triratna already has a strong emphasis on spiritual friendship and communication as methods of transformation and we thought we could build on this in bringing Restorative approaches into our community.³

OUR OBJECTIVES FOR RESTORATIVE PROCESSES

WE UNDERTOOK TO WORK WITH OTHERS TO DEVELOP A NEW SYSTEM WITHIN TRIRATNA THAT WOULD ENABLE US TO ADDRESS DIFFICULTIES MORE EFFECTIVELY. WE SET OUT:

- to offer an externally facilitated Restorative process, where needed, beginning with those who had been sexually involved with Sangharakshita.
- to review the Triratna projects and Centres that we knew have had serious upset or disharmony in the past and check that we had done everything possible to acknowledge harm and repair relationships.
- to train members of Triratna to use Restorative processes and support them in using them to help with conflicts and other difficulties.

1 <http://restorativenow.com/>

2 <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/triratna-model-safeguarding-policies-and-ethical-guidelines-2020>

3 Why Restorative Approach?

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/why-restorative-approach>

A proposal for a Conflict Resolution Process in Triratna

2018 Restorative Process update

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/update-restorative-process-triratna-october-2018>

Restorative process and how it's being used in Triratna (Audio)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/ratnadarini-and-shantigarbha-restorative-process-triratna>

6.1 / AN EXTERNALLY FACILITATED RESTORATIVE PROCESS

As we describe in section 2/ **Sangharakshita's Sexual Activity** we attempted to make contact with the 24 men believed to have had sexual relations with Sangharakshita, to offer the possibility of Restorative work, and were able to contact 17 men altogether, including five who have left the Order. In the cases of those who have left the Order we asked Janine Carroll, an external Restorative expert to make contact, as any internal Triratna facilitator might be seen as partial. All were offered her services as an external Restorative facilitator.

Four Restorative conversations took place: two involving current Order members and two involving people who have left the Order. Because the process remains confidential to those involved in it, we are not able to give further details.

6.2 / REVIEWING PROJECTS AND CENTRES

Our intention was to review the Triratna projects and Centres that we knew have had serious upset or disharmony in the past and check that we had done everything possible to acknowledge harm and repair relationships. In Restorative approaches it is good practice to invite concerns but not to solicit them more actively. So we invited people to tell their stories, publicised the availability of both Safeguarding and Restorative responses to concerns, and invited people to contact us.

Order members with experience in Restorative approaches formed a Co-ordinating Group to receive referrals either directly or from others such as the Order Convenors, the Safeguarding Team or the Ethics Kula. Where the Group considers that a Restorative approach may be the right way to address a particular case they liaise with Restorative-trained Order members to find a suitable person to take it on. The cases brought to their attention have covered a wide range of topics, most of which have nothing to do with historical controversies.

Both we and the Safeguarding Team have received very few reports of unethical behaviour said to have occurred before the year 2000. We regret that the Adhithana Kula was not able to review past difficulties in the systematic way it had intended and recognise that this area still requires attention. We would like to see more work in this area and encouragement for people to come forward with first-hand accounts. Anyone with concerns they wish to raise is welcome to contact the Safeguarding Team in the first instance, at **safeguarding@triratna.community**.

However, an exception was a series of Restorative Circles – a method for using Restorative process in a group – for Order members who were involved in the serious difficulties at the Croydon Buddhist Centre in the 1980s. One individual request for a Restorative process has come from a person involved in the difficulties at Croydon and the Co-ordinating Group is responding.

The Restorative Coordinating Group has run a pilot project using Restorative approaches to resolve conflict and repair harm in Triratna. This work has grown out of the Adhithana Kula's decision to offer Restorative processes to those harmed by Sangharakshita's sexual behaviour but is a separate project.

The Coordinating Group has organised training days on how to facilitate Restorative facilitation. One- and three-day training programmes have been completed by many of those in leadership roles in Triratna, as well as two training programmes for Order members without any institutional responsibilities. One hundred and thirty two have completed a one-day training, 46 of whom have gone on to do a further two days; 15 have also trained in working specifically with larger groups. Most of those who have done more training have joined a network with the aim of developing their skills further and offer facilitation where appropriate. Training has taken place in India, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as in the UK.

The Co-ordinating Group has built up a network of people trained in this way and finds facilitators for people who approach the Group for help with a conflict or difficulty. They have written a report summarising this work.¹ The Coordinating Group would like to find ways to offer continuing support to Restorative volunteers at all Triratna centres, and there is more that can be done to establish this work.

This comment from a participant in India suggests how Restorative approaches can help:

In India the Restorative Pilot Project will definitely help us with situations where there is no clarity, for instance who will be Chair of a Trust. It will help us to develop a wider approach, not to fall into a punitive approach. In the Sangha we believe that everyone has the same goal. But sometimes we miss our goal, or we fall down, so it will help us to uplift our consciousness.

Karmavajra, India²

It is important to state that a Restorative approach is not the only method we have for addressing ethical issues and disharmony and will not be appropriate in every instance (see section 5/**Addressing Ethical Concerns Today**). We also wish to emphasise the germinal nature of these developments. However, this work has sometimes enabled transformational conversations to take place among those affected and the Adhithana Kula considers it a useful resource for Triratna as we continue to engage with difficulties.

¹ <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/update-restorative-process-triratna-october-2018>.

² <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/indian-restorative-pilot-project>

The Adhithana Kula arose from a wish to acknowledge openly and respond effectively to issues from Triratna's past. That process is now underway and it is hard to say when it will be completed; but, with the publication of this report, the Adhithana Kula is stepping aside and Triratna's International Council Steering Group will commission a working group to gather comments and suggestions and oversee whatever responses are needed. This will involve continuing to engage actively with past areas of difficulty or harm, and ensuring that we have robust systems in place to respond to whatever arises.

WE ARE SHARING THIS REPORT WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF OUR ORDER AND COMMUNITY, AND ANYONE ELSE WHO IS INTERESTED OR AFFECTED BY THE ISSUES IT ADDRESSES. WE INVITE RESPONSES TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- Having seen the material in this report, is there anything further you would like to bring to our attention?
- What more do you think needs to be done to address issues from the past?
- Are you confident that Triratna is a generally safe and inspiring community for those practising within it today?
- Are you aware of more that needs to be done to improve on the measures now in place for preventing and addressing ethical misconduct in Triratna?
- Is there anything you personally need to follow through, or anything you would like to contribute in helping take things forward?

CONTACT INFORMATION

Comments and questions can be sent to the working group who will oversee the next phase of this work at next.steps@triratna.co.

We are committed to responding openly to any difficult issues within Triratna, and we encourage anyone else who has been hurt or harmed in any way to come forward. Anyone with Safeguarding or other ethical concerns in Triratna, past or present, is welcome to email safeguarding@triratna.community in the first instance. Where a matter may be criminal the Safeguarding team will talk to the police. Alternatively, concerns may be reported directly to the police.

8 / DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

Many documents have been written about the subjects in this report, including those produced by the Adhithana Kula itself.

This listing is a guide for anyone wanting to research these issues and to navigate what has been said. Without seeking to be comprehensive, it includes the main recent documents, especially those produced by the Adhithana Kula, and some older ones produced by Triratna, as well as critical testimonies and coverage.

THE ADHITHANA KULA AND ITS WORK

Adhithana Kula Blog

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula?display=latest>

Information on Triratna Controversies (FAQs)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/controversy>

Introducing the Adhithana Kula (February 2017)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/introducing-adhithana-kula>

A Conversation with the Adhithana Kula (February 2017)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/conversation-adhithana-kula>

Responding to Triratna Controversy (February 2017)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/responding-triratna-controversy>

The Adhithana Kula – An Update On Our Work (September 2017)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/adhithana-kula-update-september-2017>

An Initial Response to The Observer (July 2019)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/initial-response-observer-article-critical-triratna>

Next Steps: Further Response from the Adhithana Kula to the Observer Article (July 2019)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/further-response-adhithana-kula-observer-article>

EXPRESSIONS OF APOLOGY AND REGRET

A personal statement from Urgyen Sangharakshita (December 2016)

<https://www.sangharakshita.org/personal-statement.html>

Translations of Sangharakshita's statement into several other languages:

<https://www.sangharakshita.org/personal-statement.html>

Preceptors' College Letter to the Order responding to Sangharakshita's statement (January 2017)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/preceptors/preceptors-college-letter-order>

Translations of this Letter into several other languages:

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/letter-chair-college-public-preceptors-all-order-members-o>

A Message of Apology and Regret (August 2019)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/highlights/message-apology-and-regret>

TRIRATNA'S VALUES AND HISTORY

Our Development & Values: a page on The Buddhist Centre Online, Triratna's main web platform since 2013, referring to past controversy and linking to material critical of Triratna.

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/text/our-development>

The Triratna Story (free eBook)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/text/triratna-story>

Growing Pains: An Inside View of Change in the fwbo (2006) by Vishvapani

https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/texts/othertexts/Vishvapani/FBA104_Growing_Pains.pdf

SAFEGUARDING

Supporting the Development of Ethical Policy: Safeguarding

see section 5/**Addressing Ethical Concerns Today**

Posts about Triratna Safeguarding

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/search/node/safeguarding>

Podcast: Safeguarding in Triratna

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/features/new-podcast-safeguarding-triratna-buddhist-community>

Triratna's Panel Process and Safeguarding – Questions and Answers

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/preceptors/triratnas-panel-process-and-safeguarding-questions-and-answers>

RESTORATIVE PROCESS

See section 6/**Restorative Processes**

Posts about the Triratna Restorative Process

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/search/node/restorative>

About the Restorative Process for Triratna (October 2017)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/reconciliation-process>

How do we have the difficult conversations? Building reconciliation and a sustainable basis of trust for Triratna (October 2018)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/how-do-we-have-difficult-conversations>

TRIRATNA POLICY ON SEXUAL ETHICS

Statement from the College of Public Preceptors making explicit their pre-existing rule on sexual relationships between those conducting ordinations and those they ordain.

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/preceptors/statement-about-sex-between-preceptors-and-those-they-ordain-preceptors-college>

Triratna Model Child Protection Policy 2020

https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/triratna_model_child_protection_policy_2020.pdf

Triratna Model Child Protection Code of Conduct 2020

https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/triratna_model_child_protection_code_of_conduct_2020.pdf

Triratna Model Safeguarding adults policy 2020

https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/triratna_model_safeguarding_adults_policy_2020_o.pdf

Triratna Model Ethical Guidelines 2020

https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/triratna_model_ethical_guidelines_2020.pdf

WHAT SANGHARAKSHITA SAID...

Sangharakshita Interview With Nagabodhi in Golden Drum (1987)

<https://alaya.thebuddhistcentre.com/index.php/s/sEpzAgOwVwrzGq6#pdfviewer>

Sangharakshita's Letter To A Friend (1992)

https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/sangharakshitas_letter_to_a_friend_1992.pdf

In Retrospect: A Conversation With Sangharakshita (2007), Audio

<https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=IVo2>

Conversations with Bhante (2009)

https://www.sangharakshita.org/interviews/CONVERSATIONS_FEB_2018_REVISED.pdf

A Complex Personality: A Note (July 2017)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/complex-personality-note-new-piece-writing-sangharakshita>

DISCUSSION BY ORDER MEMBERS

A great deal has been written by Order members about these issues, some of which is available online. This is a small selection of more-widely cited articles.

Letter to Norman Fischer by Vishvapani (2003)

https://issuu.com/thebuddhistcentre/docs/a_letter_to_norman_fischer_by_vishvapani

Sexual Evolution by Dhammadinna (1998)

https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/sexual_evolution_by_dhammadinna_1998.pdf

Opening Up The Thatch by Tejananda (January 2017), and Tejananda in Conversation with Parami (March 2017)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/opening-thatch-parami-conversation-tejananda>

Various articles and comments written in the early 2000s

[http://fwbodiscussion.blogspot.com/search/label/FWBO criticism](http://fwbodiscussion.blogspot.com/search/label/FWBO%20criticism)

CRITICAL TESTIMONIES

Mark Dunlop's account of his involvement with the FWBO/Triratna

<https://alaya.thebuddhistcentre.com/index.php/s/UyG77PHLbfPhta6/download>

Three other testimonies from Order members who have resigned have been posted online, but as we suspect they may have been posted without the authors' permission we are not linking to them here.

CRITICAL MEDIA COVERAGE

The Guardian, September 1997

The Observer, 19 Feb 2017

[https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/19/buddhist-sexual-abuse-triratna-dennis-lingwood+](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/19/buddhist-sexual-abuse-triratna-dennis-lingwood)

The Observer, 21 July 2019

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/21/sangharakshita-guru-triratna-buddhist-dark-secrets>

The Observer, 15 February 2020

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/feb/15/new-attorney-general-suella-braverman-in-controversial-buddhist-sect>

The Daily Mail, 16 February 2020

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8349293/Attorney-General-Suella-Braverman-religious-sect-mired-sex-abuse-scandal.html>

PAST CONTROVERSY

The FWBO Files (March 1998)

The FWBO Files: A Response (August 1998)

https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/a_response_to_the_fwbo_files_1998.pdf

These sources are cited in some critical coverage:

'The single-sex community as assault on existing social setup'

'The couple as the enemy of spiritual community'

RESPONSES TO MEDIA COVERAGE

Response to The Guardian (October 1997)

https://thebuddhistcentre.com/system/files/groups/files/response_to_the_guardian_article_1997.pdf

Triratna Communications Team response to BBC request for comment about 'Inside Out' (September 2016)

<https://alaya.thebuddhistcentre.com/index.php/s/jzirWGf2nJVWBgD#pdfviewer>

The Observer interview: what I really said, by Munisha (March 2017)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/observer-interview-what-i-really-said-munisha-triratna-safeguarding-officer>

Letter to the Editor in Response to Observer Article (February 2020)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula/letter-editor-observer-february>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS + CREDITS

The Adhithana Kula would like to thank the ECA Safeguarding team (Munisha and Amaladipa) and Candradasa at The Buddhist Centre Online, for all their work and support over the past four years. We would also like to thank Kusaladevi, Vishvapani and Akasajoti, whose assistance in producing the report was invaluable.

Cover:

Mishima tea bowl
with kintsugi gold repair,
Japan, 16th century,
Ethnological Museum of Berlin