



TRIRATNA
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL
March 2017

DATES FOR THE
2018 INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL
13-21 FEBRUARY, BHAJA

The members of the International Council will be gathering just after the International Convention at **Saddharma-Pradeep Retreat Centre in Bhaja from 13-21 February 2018.**

Later in the year, we'll be asking for suggestions for the programme. Do contact your area council about things that are important to you.

Above: Stupa Hall, Bhaja Caves



Sikkha is a Pali word that means 'training'. It is the name of a joint project started by the College of Public preceptors, the International Council and Adhithana last year. Over the next few years we will work to strengthen a single progressive framework of dharma practice and teaching of the system of practice. Last year we talked to lots of people about the project, and began to get a sense of what might be needed and how we could go about it. We spoke with groups of private and public preceptors, chairs, mitra and order convenors, some centre teams, groups of order members, experienced dharma teachers and the International Council. Many we spoke with expressed the hope that this initiative could contribute to confident and skilful teaching and better connections between people communicating the dharma in a range of situations. It will also offer opportunities to deepen our understanding the dharma and resources and conditions for its communication.

It is potentially a very big project, so in 2017 we have prioritised looking at dharma teaching at centres. A few centres have volunteered to have discussions about how they offer a progressive training path, and how they understand and facilitate spiritual death, rebirth and receptivity in particular. So far we've had workshops or visits to Mexico City, Auckland New Zealand, the LBC, Bristol, Birmingham, Nottingham, Ipswich, Sheffield, Shrewsbury and Deal. We have a few more to go in the next few months in Mainland Europe and North America. We hope that a parallel process will take shape in India. We'll be collating and communicating what we're finding so far and convening a *dharmakata* ; a gathering of a group of creative and experienced dharma teachers at centres to chart a way forward. Ratnaguna is joining the team this year and next. There are many things that could come out of this including resources, guides, opportunities for training, syllabus materials and retreats.

Given current conversations, we have brought forward work on a new Order survey. This will enquire into practice, perspectives and life in the Order. The results will be widely communicated as a way of understanding effective Order life and practice more deeply together.

For more information or to get involved, contact **Dhammamegha** .

A large, golden Buddha statue is seated on a raised platform in a dimly lit room. Three people are standing in front of the statue, looking at it. The room has dark walls with vertical light slats on either side of the statue. The floor is made of light-colored wood. The text "what is a triratna centre?" is overlaid on the image in white, lowercase letters.

what is a **triratna** centre?

After nearly 18 months of discussions, the International Council unanimously agreed to a document called *What is a Triratna Centre?* in August last year. If you haven't seen it yet, take a look **here** . It sets out the common organisational principles for Triratna Centres that are based on long experience and agreed by chairs and center teams around the world. It's the first time, perhaps, that such a wide consultation in Triratna has been practical, made possible by the structure of the International Council and the Area Councils.

One important addition to the document has been proposed. Because the role of a Centre Chair is such an influential one, we're recommending that Chairs should serve for a period of no more than ten years. Triratna centres operate in a wide range of contexts, so the Steering Group also strongly recommends that this needs to be applied flexibly and with sensitivity to our different situations. All centres have been asked to discuss this addition and give their feedback.

Picture: *Vajrasana Retreat Centre*

A group of people are sitting in a circle on the floor in a room with large windows. They appear to be engaged in a discussion or a meeting. The room is bright and modern. The text "discussion in the Order" is overlaid on the image in white, lowercase letters.

discussion in the **Order**



There is a lot of questioning and discussion going on within the Triratna community and among those interested in us. Many of the conversations reflect on the early days of Triratna (or the FWBO, as it was then called) and include concerns around some of the past sexual activity of Sangharakshita, the founder of Triratna. Sangharakshita has acknowledged from the beginning that he was sexually involved with some of his adult male disciples thirty years ago and more. A number of personal accounts raise problems about sexual activity between teachers and students. This has led to many Order members questioning ideas that influenced people's behaviour at that time, and how they may be influencing current culture and structures.

The Triratna Buddhist Order now numbers over 2,000 members in 30 countries, and the associated Community is many times bigger. This presents quite a challenge when it is necessary to share complex information and have wide-ranging and open discussion. The International Council and Area Councils could play an important role in helping this discussion take place, and we will invite input from the Area Councils on how they and the International Council could most helpfully contribute to this discussion.

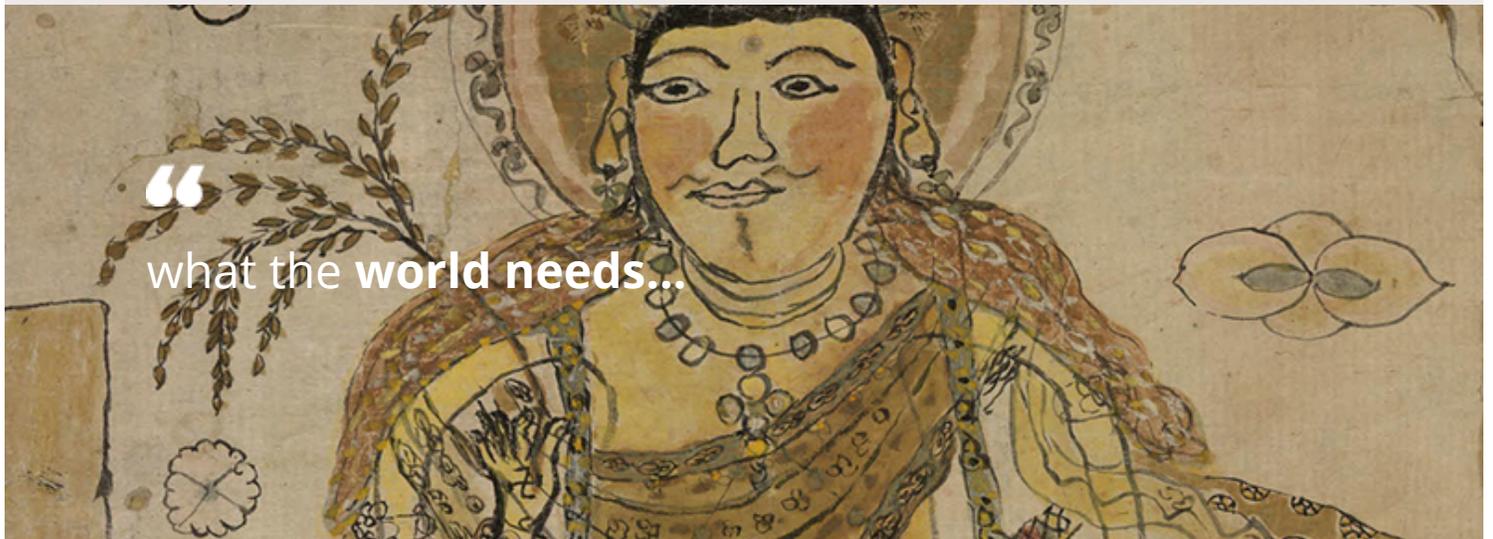


Over the weekend of the 8th and 9th of April, Triratna Centres and Groups across the world will gather to mark the 50th anniversary of Triratna. Sanghas in your regions are invited spend a day exploring the past and what we have to offer to the world today and for the next 50 years. You may want to explore the Six Emphases or look back at your history or this about creative initiatives for the future. It would be great if all the event could include: The dedication ceremony composed for the founding of the FWBO to rededicate our

practice for the next 50 years; A metta bhavana bringing to mind all those practicing within Triratna across the world; A reading of the founding event, from Bhante's memoirs; Making our international sangha visible by reciting the precepts in different languages.

One way we can help Triratna thrive in the future is by giving to the **FutureDharma Fund** or **Windhorse Publications** . They will be marking the 50th anniversary by launching 3 more volumes of the Complete Works. You can get involved by sending images or videos of your activities. Be creative with the number '50' and upload a series of images, or a 20 second video clip with members of your sangha. Upload your posts/images/ videos to Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, www.thebuddhistcentre.com or to Clearvision making sure they include the hashtag #triratna50 so we can find them. For more, contact **Mokshini** .

Picture: Lokamitra at Pundarika Centre , Archway, London, early 1970s



ACCESS AND INCLUSION

The International Council and the Combined convention both had powerful personal presentations by Order members



DIVESTING FROM FOSSIL FUELS

Some suggestions by Tejopala

Many people in our Sangha would like to

about the racial and other diversity of our Order. Viveka, Vimalasara and Yashosagar raised questions about how to make the dharma accessible to a wider range of people, how to support all of us to feel at home in the movement, how to lower barriers to access, and how to develop a better understanding of social conditioning and exclusion. About 90 Order members went to a follow-up workshop at the convention. There was many suggestions about how to be more aware of the dynamics of race and privilege, the wish to become better allies, fears about being perceived as racist, visibility, and ways of supporting more people of colour who come to centres to be able to deepen their practice through ordination training. Many individual Order members and centres have continued these discussions. The Steering Group of International Council has developed a proposal to give support to new and ongoing efforts. Work will start this year with initiatives in each of the strands. At College level, there is interest in developing ways of working with social conditioning in ordination training. At order level, there is interest in doing consciousness and awareness raising training and create multi-racial practice groups. Within the movement, there are a number of centres that are interested in developing pilots and experiments to increase access and diversity. There is also support for a diversity or access coordinator along the lines of the young people's coordinator post. For more information or to get involved, please contact **Dhammamegha** .

Here are links to videos of **Vimalasara** (

do something effective to make a difference about climate change but wonder where to start. One of the most tangible and effective things one can do is to financially withdraw support from fossil fuel companies. This is known as divestment. Most banks provide finance in some form to coal, oil and gas companies. So, divesting involves changing bank to one that doesn't do this. It also involves changing any pension fund or shares you may have one that refuses to invest in these companies. And it means changing electricity company to one that offer 100% green energy, People around the world have been divesting from fossil fuels over the past few years. Already around \$5 trillion has been wiped off the value of coal, oil and gas companies in this way. This June, as part of Buddhist Action Month (BAM) there will be a new initiative to ask as many people as possible in Triratna to divest. This will involve three levels of involvement: divesting one's own personal finances as individuals, asking one's local Centre to divest and holding divestment days at Centres to ask others to do the same.

Two things that would really help with this would be having at least one person at each Centre to be a local divestment champion and having Centre Chairs get behind the idea. If you'd like to find out more about what's involved in being a local champion or if you're the Chair of a Centre and you'd like to get involved please contact **Tejopala** .

above), **Yashossagar** and **Viveka** exploring this area in recent talks.



What is the International Council?

We are a gathering of Order Members from across the world. In India; the USA and Canada; UK and Ireland; New Zealand and Australia; Spain and Latin America and Mainland Europe representatives from the College of Public Preceptors, the Order Convenors and the Movement meet together regularly, sometimes with Mitra convenors. Every 18 months or so the whole council gathers in a big international meeting.

What exactly does the International Council do?

The council exists to create ways to connect, consult, deepen Kalyana Mitrata and support new developments. Our aims include unity and harmony, ethical and spiritual standards, guidance and support, effective decision-making, consultation and coordination. In practice that means finding ways of meeting to get to know each other, learn together, deepen our understanding of how things are going, identify situations that might need support and development, and respond through projects and consultations. **Here** is a presentation from the last International Council gathering in August 2016.

How can the International Council support your situation?

For the international council to be effective, it needs to be sensitive to the many different contexts in which we're communicating and practicing the dharma together. The more you are in communication with people on your local Area Council, the more they are equipped to serve you. Let them know what you are interested in and concerned about and need from a world-wide Triratna, and make suggestions.

The Council

Below, the Council members, from L to R.

UK + Ireland : Jnanadhara, Shantigarbha, Dhammadinna, Sucimani, Paramabandhu, Dassini

Europe : Kulanandi, Akasasuri, Amogharatna, Advayasiddhi, Arthakusalin (Jnanacandra is shown later with the Steering Group)

India : Ratnashri, Vijaya, Nagaketu, Amrutdeep, Karmavajra, Yashosagar (Co-opted onto Steering Group)

Latin America and Spain : Vajranatha, Jnanadakini, Viryakirti, Moksananda, Paramachitta

N America: Viveka, Amala, Dharmashuri, Karunadevi, Shantinayaka, Viradhamma

Australia and New Zealand: Dhiramani, Vajrajyoti, Dharmananda, Maitripala, Purna

Steering Group : Saddhaloka, Jnanacandra, Dhammarati, Lokeshvara, Parami, Ratnadharini, Amrutdeep (above) Viveka (above), Vajrajyoti (above),

Staff: Dhammamegha

Thank-yous

Nagasuri, Mahamati, Bodhivamsa, Sudaya and Yashosagar have contributed greatly to the development of the International Council in the last few years and they are now handing on their batons. Dharmananda will also step down in May this year. Thank you all so much for your efforts. A very warm welcome goes to Shantigarbha, Amogharatna and Dhiramani who are joining the council.

With Metta,

The International Council Steering Group







Contact us:

 Internationalcouncil@adhithana.org