

Triratna Controversy FAQ (October 2018)

Introduction

We've assembled this FAQ in response to questions people have asked about historical controversy and unskilful behaviour in FWBO/Triratna, and the ways these are sometimes represented online. The main intention is to provide, in good faith, information we believe to be accurate. We wish to represent what are often complex issues in a fair-minded way without over simplifying, aware that other views are possible and are already well represented elsewhere. We'll keep it updated regularly, adding new questions and answers from time to time as seems helpful.

If you have a question that isn't covered, feel free to contact us any time and we'll try to put you in touch with someone who may be able to respond: kula@adhithana.org

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Additional questions (October 2018)

Questions on Triratna after this controversy

1. **How is the Restorative process going? Is there any way we can get updates about it?**

You can read a [new update on the Restorative process](#) on the [Adhithana Kula blog](#). This will also be the space to find future updates and other resources.

[Read the October 2018 Restorative Process update](#)

[Listen to an introduction to Restorative process and how it's being used in Triratna](#)

2. **Why don't you have an independent inquiry about what happened in the past? Surely that would establish what happened and stop it from happening again.**

Read Lokeshvara's article responding to this question:

['How Do We Have the Difficult Conversations'](#)

Questions about Sangharakshita, the FWBO and sex

3. **Did the FWBO teach that sex is an aid to spiritual friendship?**

It is widely understood now that notions that circulated in the past in the FWBO about using sex as a way of developing closer spiritual friendship were a mistake. [The Adhithana Kula's post introducing their work](#) says clearly that we do not teach that sex is an aid to *kalyana mitrata* (spiritual friendship).

[Read the Adhithana Kula's introduction to their work](#)

You can also read about [the Restorative process](#) being used to identify, recognise and try to resolve the pain caused to some people in the past.

[Read the October 2018 Restorative Process update](#)

This is not to imply, of course, that there is no spiritual friendship possible within sexual relationships. Very many people practising within our community

are in committed relationships (with Buddhists or non-Buddhists) and these may well provide supportive conditions for Buddhist practice.

4. I've heard that when Sangharakshita lived at Padmaloka Retreat Centre in the early 1980s men were allocated to share his bed. Is this true?

In 2003 a then Order member published an account of how, in the early 1980s, he attended an Order weekend at Padmaloka and found himself allocated to Sangharakshita's bedroom. He said that there was no extra bed in the room and that Sangharakshita indicated that he should share his double bed. He said that Sangharakshita approached him sexually. He believed this might have happened to others too.

Though it is difficult to establish facts after more than 35 years, Triratna's Safeguarding Team and Ethics Kula have been looking into this matter during 2018 and are continuing to do so, including consulting with the man himself as to his wishes. To do this we have contacted as many people as we could find who lived at Padmaloka in the 1970s and 1980s, including retreat organisers responsible for room allocations.

So far, nobody has told us they were aware of anyone allocating anyone to Sangharakshita's bed, but we are aware of two other men who have said they were allocated to Sangharakshita's room and found they were expected to share his bed. One did so, the other did not. It may be that this happened to others but that they have not come forward.

We do know some were allocated to sleep on a second mattress in his room. It may also have appeared that other men were being allocated to Sangharakshita's bed because the list on the noticeboard would indicate only to which room a person had been allocated, without mentioning the number of beds in the room on that occasion.

It was also the case that people were allocated to sleep in his room when he was away, but whether or not he was using the room would not have been indicated on the list on the noticeboard. (It was common for all members of the community to share their rooms with visitors on large events, due to lack of space.)

Asked about this matter by the Safeguarding officer, Munisha, Sangharakshita himself said it was possible men were allocated to share his room, but he did not remember asking the retreat organiser to allocate any particular person to

his room. He said he always remembered the room with a second mattress in it, though he could not remember for certain that there was always a second mattress.

As is standard Safeguarding practice when addressing serious allegations, the Safeguarding officer has been in touch with the police about this matter. They confirmed that the information they have gathered over the years about this does not indicate need for any criminal investigation by them. This means we are dependent on people coming forward to share their experience with the Safeguarding team.

We would encourage anyone with information to email us at safeguarding@triratnadevelopment.org

Read about Safeguarding at Padmaloka today:
<https://www.padmaloaka.org.uk/our-values>

5. Did Sangharakshita have sex with men under the then legal age of consent? This in itself is questionable, isn't it?

We're mindful that in answering this very specific question about legality we touch on a whole set of related and interconnected issues which are very much alive in westernized culture in 2018 and are likely to continue to be widely discussed into the future: issues around the interplay between power and sexuality, gender and power, sexuality and gender, etc. In a FAQ document there is no likelihood of being comprehensive about such important and complex matters, nonetheless it does seem important to try and address some of the factual aspects around persistent questions about the legality of Sangharakshita's sexual activity.

A few of the men Sangharakshita had sex with were under the then age of consent of 21. We have not heard of any who were under 17. Leaving aside for a moment the important ethical questions dealt with throughout this long document, especially those pertaining to power and the mixing of sex and spiritual friendship, we are not aware of anyone who has accused Sangharakshita of anything which would be considered illegal today.

To be clear, Sangharakshita himself apologised for some of his sexual activity, and we don't present the following background information to condone any unskilfulness, nor would we generally condone the breaking of a law. In terms of the question asked here about legality we think the context is

relevant, and understanding that the age of consent for sex between men was 21, not 16 as it is now, makes a significant difference, at least in understanding the legal aspects.

The Sexual Offences Act 1967 partially decriminalised sex between men in England (only) by setting an age of consent of 21, when the age of consent for heterosexual or lesbian sex was 16 across the UK. In 1994, the age of consent for sex between men was lowered to 18 in England, Scotland and Wales. It was finally lowered to 16 in England, Scotland and Wales with the passage of the Sexual Offences Act 2000.

The 2000 Act also says that, regardless of the sex of the partners, where the older partner is in a "position of trust", such as a social worker or teacher, the age of consent is 18. Though presently this does not apply specifically to religious teachers/leaders, since 2017 there have been calls for this to change.

As mentioned above, 1967, the year in which Triratna was founded, was a landmark year in British history more generally. That year sex between men became legal in England, if they were aged 21 or over. Many people, including many heterosexual people, felt that setting the age of consent for sex between men at 21 was still unfair. They felt it was therefore a law they could not respect. It was a law which was broken by many men, including Sangharakshita.

Ultimately the law was changed because the European Commission of Human Rights found it a breach of the European Convention on Human Rights.

6. 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?

It is important to restate that, while we do acknowledge the ethical issues around some of Sangharakshita's sexual relations, these would not be regarded as illegal by today's standards, given that they do not involve anyone under the age of 17, and given that nobody has alleged anything which the police consider to be rape or sexual assault. And those who were aware of the then unequal age of consent of 21 for sex between men would have been likely to consider this law unfair and unworthy of respect.

(See above for an explanation of age of changing consent laws in the UK.)

We do not know whether anyone was aware of any illegal sexual behaviour by other Order members, and if so, whether they went to the police. Asked whether they would ever have thought of going to the police about anyone's questionable sexual behaviour, some of those who were in the FWBO at the time say it would never have occurred to them. Others remember that as young people in the 1980s they would never have gone to the police about *anything*, either because they viewed the police with mistrust or because of a misapplication of the FWBO ideal that one should use communication and friendship to resolve disputes rather than resorting to law.

Sexual culture changed dramatically between 1967 and the early 1980s. Sexual habits and thinking among young British Buddhist hippies of the late '60s were different from what we might expect today. They saw themselves as part of a counter culture; a sexual revolution. Their stories suggest most of them were fully engaged with sexual lives with many people (women and men); they believed in sex as a way to liberation and more truthful, open communication.

It's also significant that there were as yet very few people in the very informal Western Buddhist Order: in 1970 there were just 20 men in the Order in Britain. They all knew each other and were mostly 16-30 years old. By 1990 there were still only 216 men in the Order in Britain.

"Safeguarding" as we know it today in Britain (or its equivalent where it exists in some other countries) forms the background to the societal expectations of many of us in this area. But, as an area of wider public discourse, Safeguarding in Britain began only in 2004 with the creation of the Independent Safeguarding Authority (later the Disclosure and Barring Service). Again, while this does *not* excuse unethical behaviour by anyone, the context is of historical relevance.

Allegations of a "cover-up"

[See questions about Triratna's attempts to address these issues in the past](#)

[See also this question](#) about why controversies around the past have resurfaced.

Munisha writes: *"In my view as Triratna's overall Safeguarding officer, there is no doubt that we as a community have not had sufficient awareness of the risks of sexual (and other) harm between those of more and less experience within a spiritual hierarchy. This is deeply regrettable.*

In my conversations with many senior members of the Triratna Buddhist Order about Triratna's past, I have not encountered any evidence of cover-up, meaning specific, deliberately dishonest attempts by specific people to hide specific events.

What I have encountered is people who were then in their 20s and 30s and either didn't know, or, if they did hear things, didn't know how seriously to take them or what should have been done – or by whom, until recently. The events in question took place over 30 years ago, long before the development in Britain of the concept of Safeguarding and society's much greater awareness of these issues.

Only the existence of Safeguarding officers makes it clear to everyone to whom concerns can be reported, and whose responsibility it is to know what to do about those concerns, and do it.

Today we are committed to modern standards of Safeguarding. Formal central Safeguarding work began in 2013 and since 2015 all Triratna institutions have been provided with model policies for the Safeguarding of children and of adults. Every UK Triratna centre is expected to appoint a Safeguarding officer and adopt its own policies (and those outside the UK are recommended to do so). I now work as part of Triratna's new Safeguarding team, which is working on a number of other policies and guidance documents.

During 2018 I have been addressing gatherings of Public Preceptors, Centre Chairs, mitra convenors and private preceptors, as part of a process of training and awareness-raising which began in 2013.”

You can read more about Triratna Safeguarding here:

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

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

7. What is the idea of 'Greek Love' I sometimes read about in connection with the FWBO in the past?

The idea of 'Greek love' – a romanticised reference to traditions of sexual relations between men and youths in Ancient Greece – became popular among the English Romantics of the 18th century including Byron and

Shelley. It was also the title of a 1971 book by the American Walter Breen (originally published under the pseudonym J.Z. Eglinton). Though the book is referred to in passing in early seminars with Sangharakshita, (as part of discussion of male friendship) it never had any place in the FWBO's formal teaching.

As noted above, you can see from the Adhithana Kula's post introducing their work, we do not teach that sex is an aid to *kalyana mitrata* (spiritual friendship).

Triratna/FWBO has never condoned or encouraged or attempted to normalize the acceptability of sexual relations with minors, regardless of gender. The precepts taken by all members of Triratna, whether ordained or not, include the third, to abstain from sexual misconduct. We view sex with minors as a very serious breach of this precept and the law.

Questions about gender, power and FWBO culture in the past

8. Does Triratna discriminate against women? The publication of *Women, Men and Angels* indicates issues in the past. Why was it published?

The Adhithana Kula has made it clear, on behalf of the Order and the College of Public Preceptors, that the idea that men are spiritually superior to women forms no part of Triratna teaching. See here (point 4)

Read more here about the 'Restorative process' intended to help address pain arising from negative attitudes to women within the FWBO in the past.

Read the October 2018 Restorative Process update

A very brief history of *Women, Men and Angels*

In 1993 Subhuti, one of Sangharakshita's senior disciples, wrote the essay *Women, Men and Angels*, looking at some of Sangharakshita's personal views around his experience of women in the early days of their spiritual training, particularly as he'd encountered them in the first three decades of the FWBO. This was formally published by Windhorse Publications in 1994 and sold in bookshops at FWBO Buddhist Centres and elsewhere for a number of years. This represented an aspect of official FWBO discourse at the time and the book was routinely brought to the attention of women and men preparing for ordination. Some members of the Order and wider community, female and male, were dismayed by the publication and the views behind it, and strongly objected. The book received a negative review in *Tricycle* magazine and there

were renewed calls for it to be withdrawn.

Much has been said and written since about the decisions made around the writing and publication of *Women, Men and Angels*, with both the author and publisher expressing regret and remorse for the pain it caused over many years and repudiating the decision to write and to publish it:

“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.”

Subhuti (Author), 2016

[Read Subhuti’s full statement of personal regret about *Women, Men and Angels*](#)

[Watch Maitreyi and Subhuti in detailed conversation about *Women, Men and Angels*](#)

9. Were young women or men getting involved with the FWBO (as Mitras or training for ordination) encouraged or asked to promise not to have children in the past? Are they in the present within Triratna?

The Adhithana Kula has made it clear, on behalf of the Order and the College of Public Preceptors, that the idea that single people are spiritually superior to those in relationships or with families forms no part of Triratna teaching. [See here \(point 4\).](#)

[See here for some resources on family life in Triratna today](#)

Questions like this about the past are very hard to answer in any definitive way. The experiences in question necessarily involve many different contexts, all of which were autonomous, operating within a culture that nonetheless had distinctive and definitive aspects to it.

In a 1991 talk, “Going for Refuge” by Subhuti, used as ordination training material for women and for men for some years, the view was expressed that, given the centrality of the commitment to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha entailed in ordination ‘...in general, one would expect anyone being ordained to have decided against family life – if they did not already have one” and that

an Order member who “settles down” with a family is “very likely backsliding in some way”.’ He also said ‘From time to time we do see Order members getting married and starting families... Usually they have rather carelessly got themselves caught up and what they are doing is not very helpful to their effective Going for Refuge.’

Some women have said that the way it was put to them was that the care of young children is a considerable commitment, as is ordination, and it would be unhelpful to do the two things at the same time. That said, women who were pregnant, or who had young babies and young children were ordained at the time in question. Others say they were told to ignore the views expressed in the 1991 talk.

[View some stories around family life and practice in the FWBO as it developed](#)

The views of Sangharakshita and the current Triratna ordination teams (women and men)

Regarding Sangharakshita’s own views, here is Vidyasri, former Mitra Convenor at the London Buddhist Centre, describing a conversation she had with him in the early to mid 1980s:

“He wanted to make it very clear that he only wanted women to question whether they really needed to have children once they were ordained. He didn’t per se think women shouldn’t have children, or that it was a ‘spiritual handicap’ in any way, he said. It was more that if you were free to choose whether to have them or not, as a Dharmacharini, he felt that we were so much needed in establishing the Dharma and that that would be a better use of our energies. But more than anything he wanted me to pass on that he felt it was absolutely imperative that women Mitras felt free to have children. That as Order members we should strongly encourage Mitras and Friends to explore the issue, and to feel completely free to have them – he didn’t believe it was an impediment to spiritual progress, and he had no qualms about ordaining women who already had them, if they were considered ready – as had always been and continued to be the case. He went on to say he thought that for many women, and some men, it was a significant factor in helping them get ordained – an integrating, ‘humanizing’, experience, as having a career could be. He ordained many mothers – Srimala was our overall women’s mitra convenor. Vajramala and Ratnamala were ordained when their sons were still babies/little toddlers...”

Tiratanaloka Retreat Centre trains women for ordination and has made the following statement regarding their attitudes today (statement from late 2017):

“At Tiratanaloka we help women train for ordination. This means helping them to develop individually, each woman finding her own way to practise the Dharma. Some women are drawn to parenthood whilst others prefer to remain childless. We encourage women to make major life decisions through exploration of what’s important to them and in the context of their Dharma practice.”

Padmaloka Retreat Centre trains men for ordination and has made the following statement regarding their attitudes today (2017):

“All who come on retreat at Padmaloka are encouraged to think for themselves in terms of how they live their lives and to make important life decisions informed by the wisdom of the Buddhist tradition. People are related to as individuals and encouraged to take full responsibility for themselves.

There is no policy of encouraging people not to have children, but they will be encouraged to think through such an important decision fully and take responsibility for their own choices.”

The wider culture in the FWBO historically around ideas of practice

At any FWBO Centre in the past (as in Tiratna now) there was, naturally, discussion of how best to live as practising Buddhists, including the consequences of the choices we make in life regarding such things as family, jobs and relationships, etc.

Many people appreciated Sangharakshita's encouragement not to rely exclusively on a partner for emotional intimacy and support. They also valued the many opportunities FWBO life offered for developing lifelong and deep friendships with other Buddhists, often through working and living together.

However, there developed an FWBO culture and norms in which there was often an explicit link made between the degree of one’s commitment to spiritual life and questions about lifestyle, relationships and children. There was a prevailing (though not universally held) view that choosing to live in a single-sex community, and/or not starting a family, was the “better” choice.

That the Buddha talks in ways reminiscent of this in the Pali suttas was

sometimes cited to support this perspective. People were sometimes encouraged to keep their sexual/romantic partners “at the periphery of their mandala”; ie putting spiritual friends first and not overloading romantic relationships with too much emotional demand or need.

While there was also allowance for variety and for the fact that not everyone would want or be able to live in community, taking on the idea that there was what was sometimes referred to as a ‘hierarchy of lifestyles’ (that one could usefully talk about when discussing conditions for practice) was effectively proposed as an aspect (among many) of training for ordination.

This discourse was believed to derive from Sangharakshita’s own perspective (notwithstanding Vidyasri’s account of his views – see above) on what conditions were generally most conducive to a spiritual life within the FWBO. His teaching and his clear message about “ideal conditions” were often referred to as the ‘Three Cs’ (Centres, Communities and Co-operatives); and by linking this to the need for commitment as part of spiritual life within the FWBO this kind of perspective, which wasn’t necessarily “heavy”, was nonetheless a strong characteristic of FWBO culture – a clear aspect of the sea FWBO practitioners were swimming in, as it were. Given this encouragement for a particular lifestyle, those choosing not to follow that apparent ‘norm’ were likely to feel they were left needing to work things out for themselves, and even wondering whether there would be a place for them in the Order.

Questions about past culture

Questions posed today about life in the FWBO in the past can seem very simplistic to some of those who were around at the time and say they experienced a great diversity of views within the community. Contemporary views and assumptions, so different in some ways from those of the 1970s and ‘80s, might also themselves be legitimately debated within the framework of traditional Buddhist teaching.

Nonetheless, questions about the past should not be dismissed because they are not perfect questions. And it seems clear that more discussion will be needed in our community, with a clear willingness to meet any lingering sense of pain related to the experience of those living with their partners, and/or with children while training for ordination or as Mitras within the FWBO. This will form part of the work around Restorative Process in Triratna, which is ongoing.

One thing we might all learn is that it is hard to make generalised statements about areas like lifestyle, career, family, and relationships without careful qualification, and that any qualifications may simply not be heard. We can also acknowledge that we need to continue to develop greater awareness of power dynamics and acknowledge their effect throughout Triratna's history.

For a start we may simply need to acknowledge that we *have* a distinct culture! And that we certainly had one in the past too. Given the natural, human need to belong, people will inevitably be influenced by the ideas and attitudes current in a culture like Triratna's, good and bad, and may take them on without having really made them their own. We can only aim to create a culture that encourages questioning and real individual responsibility.

These days people practising in Triratna contexts of many sorts still talk about the relationship between the decisions they make in life and what it means to be a practising Buddhist, including deciding whether or not to practice as part of a new or established family. Hopefully they will continue to do so with kindness, openness and awareness.

10. I have read of ideas around “Fierce Friendship” in the FWBO being linked to abuse of power between individuals. What was that about?

In some of his earlier discourse around *kalyana mitrata* (spiritual friendship) Sangharakshita introduced the idea of “fierce friendship” to illustrate that, as well as more obvious kinds of encouragement, a Buddhist ideal of friendship might at times also involve skilful, kindly, yet direct, or even strong, challenge. This might particularly apply when it comes to matters of ethics, and around seeing through any commitments made in leading a life of Buddhist practice.

As with some other ideas explored in the early days of the community this notion was sometimes misapplied and misused by individuals, and sometimes within groups of people in the FWBO – with serious repercussions.

One well-documented example of the painful behaviours which some people encountered involved problems that developed at the Croydon Buddhist Centre in the UK. As background you may wish to read below ‘An Account of Croydon Buddhist Centre in the 1980s’, by Vishvapani.

It’s only fair to point out in this context that Croydon Buddhist Centre today is a very different place, and much work has taken place there over the years (and in other places) to heal and resolve any lingering pain from the period in question.

Read: An Account of Croydon Buddhist Centre in the 1980s
See this question about other aspects of the issues in Croydon

Triratna's Safeguarding Team are developing a model policy on bullying and harassment, to enable misuse of power and seniority to be identified more easily, and effectively addressed.

Read about Croydon Buddhist Centre's commitment to Safeguarding children and adults

Further questions about Sangharakshita

11. Why is Sangharakshita's picture on the Triratna Refuge Tree and sometimes placed on shrines?

Sangharakshita was asked about this and was happy for his reply to be made public:

"I do not see myself as being an object of refuge to anyone. So far as I am concerned, there are only three refuges, namely, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. If my picture is put on the shrine, I am there only as one of the Teachers of the Present. In any case I do not see the Teachers of the Present as being objects of Refuge... I think I have explained all this in some detail in 'What is the Western Buddhist Order'.

"Yes, a shrine is meant for worship, so that we should place on the shrine only those objects that symbolise what we worship, i.e. The Three Jewels. If the "Teachers of the Past and of the Present" [including Sangharakshita, ed.] are included they should, in my opinion, occupy a lower level so as to illustrate the difference between that to whom we go for refuge and that which we respect.

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

The events leading up to Sangharakshita's departure from India to found a new Buddhist movement in the West are fully documented in his volume of memoirs 'Moving Against the Stream', which is corroborated by extensive correspondence between himself and British Buddhists of the time, preserved in Sangharakshita's personal archive now held at Adhithana.

In conversation with Munisha, Triratna's overall Safeguarding officer in May 2017, Sangharakshita said any online rumours about his having had sex while a monk in India were entirely untrue. He referred Munisha to his 2017 article '[Living with Carter](#)' in which he had stated that his 1968-9 relationship with a man named Carter was the first time he had had sex.

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

[Read a new piece from Mahamati about the history around Sangharakshita's wearing of robes](#)

Further general questions

14. I hear that the NSPCC has investigated Triratna. Is this true?

This is not true and the blog on which this allegation was made has taken down the relevant post. The NSPCC have made it clear they never conduct investigations.

[Read more about Triratna's very limited and positive engagement with the NSPCC here](#)

General questions (2017)

1. Do you take seriously accounts of sexual misconduct in the past?

Yes. We take them very seriously indeed. As Buddhists we wish to act ethically and with awareness in all aspects of our lives. We are always open to dialogue about any misconduct in our past and the suffering people experience in relation to it. We hope the independently directed reconciliation process now being developed by senior members of our Order will help with that.

[Read an introduction to a Restorative reconciliation process for Triratna](#)

[Watch a conversation about potential reconciliation in Triratna](#)

[Read the October 2018 update on how our Restorative process is going](#)

[Read the Letter from the Chair of Triratna's College of Public Preceptors](#)

Sangharakshita has always openly acknowledged his sexual activity and relationships. His recent apology for any harm caused represents the latest of his own engagements with criticism of his behaviour. In general, this and many of the other issues arising from the past have been openly discussed in the Order and in our wider community over decades. Indeed, for over 10 years it has been agreed that difficult parts of our history should be actively drawn to the attention of anyone who is seeking to make a significant commitment to Buddhist practice within Triratna.

[Read questions and answers around Sangharakshita's sexual activity](#)

[Read Sangharakshita's personal statement](#)

[Read The Triratna Story \(free eBook\)](#)

As you'll see from other answers in this document, we recognise that we still need to do better at making sure we have fully integrated awareness of the past into our sense of our community – and that we have done as much as we can to meet the pain some people still feel.

2. **Is this sexual misconduct still going on?**

Although celibacy is not required in our Order or community, we have for many years strongly discouraged sexual relationships between members of the Order and those they teach, based in part on lessons learned from our own early days.

We recognise that people in teaching roles or similar have a particular responsibility in this area, especially to those new to Triratna. We propose that they do not start a sexual relationship while they are the other person's main connection with Buddhism and Triratna, even when there is clear mutual attraction and a shared wish to enter into a relationship. Rather, we would ask them to wait until the less experienced person has established other effective friendships within our community.

We suggest that any prospective sexual relationship between someone in a teaching role and a less experienced person, even if they are not the person's main connection, is discussed openly with other Order members to make sure there is sufficient awareness and personal accountability on the part of those concerned.

Sex is clearly a very strong area for craving and attachment to play out – with potential for hurt as well as for pleasure. When people are practising the Buddha's teachings together it is natural that close relationships should develop between us; and in a context where celibacy is not insisted upon it is also to be expected that some of these may become sexual relationships, with the same potential for joy and sorrow attached. We encourage all members of our community to conduct their sexual relationships ethically, with awareness and kindness. And we recognise fully the need for safeguards to ensure that awareness of this area is very clearly a part of our culture and our institutions.

3. **Why did it take over 30 years for these things to be sorted out?**

Introduction

This is a question with many answers, only some of which we will even attempt here. Clearly we have not done well enough in the past, and this is why these matters have come back again and again. That said, many people have tried in good faith to address them, both privately and publicly. Our websites have always carried public sections with

detailed discussion of the issues (much of it critical). You can read many hours' worth of material from the public archive of responses past and present here:

[Public archive of historical resources around controversy](#)

We are very definitely addressing them now, as can be seen from the work of the [Adhithana kula](#), the Ethics kula ([see question 7](#)) and our [Safeguarding officer](#) – all happening in the context of the new Restorative reconciliation process.

[Read an introduction to a Restorative reconciliation process for Triratna](#)

[Read the October 2018 update on how our Restorative process is going](#)

Safeguarding in the context of Triratna's formation and development

Safeguarding* is a relatively new idea. Britain's Independent Safeguarding Authority (now the Disclosure and Barring Service) came into existence in 2004. Some Triratna centres and retreat centres already had their own Safeguarding policies but centralised Safeguarding work began in 2013.

To be clear, unlike in the major Christian churches who have instituted safeguarding measures following major scandals, in Triratna there has been no history of large-scale, long-term sex abuse scandals.

Another point of difference is that Triratna may now be a relatively large Buddhist organisation but is still much smaller and more decentralised than worldwide churches. In fact, each Triratna centre is legally, financially, and organisationally autonomous. This presents challenges to having a centralised approach to anything: a lot of co-operation is required to create and maintain a shared culture and shared structures that support an adequate overview of our community worldwide.

Nowadays, meeting those challenges in ever more effective ways is one of the ongoing projects widely recognised throughout Triratna, with the [Triratna International Council](#) taking a lead and, in doing so, standing very clearly behind all our Safeguarding initiatives.

Triratna also has rather informal origins in a community of radical young people in the 1970s. Things we would now consider normal, such as

proper health and safety measures, seem to have been considered boring and unspiritual for quite a long time. It's a matter of cultural change and growing awareness: today every Triratna centre in Britain has a Safeguarding officer and 30 or more of them have attended each of our two Safeguarding training days in 2016 and 2017, led by an external Safeguarding specialist.

[*See this question for an explanation of Safeguarding](#)

During 2018, Triratna's Ethics Kula (including the Safeguarding team) has developed a Panel Process to support the independent, objective and consistent determination of facts where there are serious allegations against a member of the Triratna Buddhist Order.

[Read a summary description of the Triratna Panel process](#)

On the recent resurgence of controversy in relation to the past

With reference to the [September 2016 BBC report](#) and subsequent discussions around whether Triratna has done enough to face its past, it's not always been easy to answer such questions definitively. Clearly, as we say above, it would seem we have not done well enough in the past, and this is why these matters have come back again. At the same time, while recognising the definite pain being expressed, some people felt that a number of the allegations in the BBC programme were simply unfair. (This has been true of previous periods of controversy around the same issues.)

In particular, though his suffering was evident and affecting, people who knew the main complainant in the BBC report say they remember him and his relationship with Sangharakshita (which lasted at least two years, including living together some of the time) and they simply do not recognise the picture he creates. Sangharakshita himself also disputes central aspects of that picture.

This has meant anyone coming into relationship with what seem to be complex and very painful matters (whether for the first time or not) often has to hold in awareness seemingly opposed views of them. There are, too, very personal aspects, and there are aspects more to do with issues of principle (for example, the relationship between teachers and those they teach in a non-celibate Order). It's often been a hard set of considerations to hold all at once.

Sometimes, for a variety of reasons, knowledge of particular issues has been less clear than one might imagine or hope it would have been. In this, it should be borne in mind that the Order has doubled in size since 2003. Then, there were 999 Order members worldwide. In 2017 there were over 2000. This means that around half the Order has been ordained since the last big discussion of these controversial matters. Many of us were not sufficiently aware that there were issues needing further attention. This involved assumptions which are now being properly questioned, and we hope the Restorative reconciliation process will allow due attention to be given to people's suffering and any issues that are still live within our community.

The future

None of these perspectives on the past is raised as any kind of excuse for why these issues are coming up so strongly again after 30 years. In a way, they each occasion a sense of humility, and of determination to do better and repair any remaining faults, in the spirit of Buddhist confession and practice. Yet they do add some sense of context and we hope the work of the Adhithana kula, the Ethics kula, and the Safeguarding officer – in conjunction with a Restorative reconciliation process – will come to define the next stage of this history. And, most importantly, bring meaningful resolution to anyone still suffering on account of their past in relation to Triratna.

4. **Triratna's response to people's pain and suffering seems to be lacking in compassion. You often refer to "allegations", as if you don't believe people when they tell you about what's happened to them. Why is this?**

Triratna's statement in response to the BBC report of September 2016, starts with a paragraph including the words: "...we naturally feel sadness and concern on witnessing the pain of those who took part in interviews for the programme."

Triratna Communications Team Response to the BBC

In their letter endorsing Sangharakshita's Statement, Triratna's College of Public Preceptors wrote "...we have been very concerned by what we have heard and the evident pain and suffering in some accounts..."

Describing their vision, the Adhithana kula have said "We are... concerned that there are people whose painful experience as a result of

these issues has not been sufficiently heard or responded to...”

See: [Adhithana kula – Our Vision](#)

Regarding the word “allegation(s)”, there have been many varied things written about both Sangharakshita and FWBO/Triratna online over the years. Some of these might best be called “accounts”; some are clearly people’s personal “stories” or “testimonies”; some are more like “witnessings” of pain or suffering in others, either simple or complex.

In some cases these involve details that are largely agreed upon, yet in others they involve details that are contested, sometimes strongly, by one or more of the people involved.

Where we use the word “allegation(s)”, it is referring only to it being an article of law in Britain and many other countries that where details of painful history are disputed, a person is innocent until it is proven that they are guilty. It is not intended to signify belief or disbelief. The word “allegation” simply indicates that in some instances a version of events has not yet been proven, or that because it is a matter of one person’s word against another’s it may be no one will ever be able to determine whether either is telling the truth. It is also not meant to refer to every case involving criticism of Sangharakshita and/or FWBO/Triratna as, clearly, not all the details of every case are disputed.

This said, we can also see that where trust has broken down, the use of the word “allegation” can tend to inflame feelings. Where possible we can, and often do, use terms such as “account” or “story” instead, as in “We have heard X’s account or story of what happened” rather than “We have heard X’s allegations.”

The challenging process of moving towards resolution and reconciliation includes the process of finding words that convey genuinely imaginative and compassionate concern, while distinguishing between descriptions of fact and personal or professional opinions. Whatever the cause may be, we can clearly see where a person is suffering and extend compassionate concern and a desire to do whatever we can to alleviate their pain.

Questions on Safeguarding in Triratna (2017)

5. **It is claimed online that Triratna's Safeguarding policies were put in place only after Triratna learned the BBC were investigating them.**

Formal Safeguarding* work in Triratna began in 2013, though some Centres already had their own policies. The first model policies were published in 2015, updated 2016 and adopted at the meetings of Triratna's International Council (IC) and European Chairs' Assembly (ECA) in July and September respectively (as recorded in their minutes and internal online posts).

In addition the ECA and IC adopted more general Ethical guidelines for those running Triratna Centres. Work also began on a draft protocol for dealing with serious breaches of the law and/or precepts on the part of Order members. All these policies will be regularly reviewed and updated.

The Safeguarding officer had only just returned home from the ECA meeting the day before she received an email from the BBC, so had not yet had time to post the newly adopted 2016 documents online. She did this immediately and it therefore appeared to some that the documents were produced after the BBC got in touch. However, given that it takes months to draft such documents and get them approved and adopted, this would have been impossible.

[*See question 7 for an explanation of Safeguarding](#)

[See the history of Triratna safeguarding on The Buddhist Centre Online](#)

6. **Why are your Safeguarding policies only models? I've read online people saying this means you aren't really serious about Safeguarding.**

They are models in two senses:

1) they have been created for the use of all Triratna Centres and enterprises, which means they have blank spaces where any centre can insert its own name, saving its leaders the work of creating their own policies from scratch. The fact that we have created these models for all Centres to use shows how serious we are about Safeguarding.

2) The model documents can be adapted to the varying needs of

Centres in different countries; for example, the rules for reporting an alleged offence vary from country to country. They can also be translated into other languages.

7. So how do you manage Safeguarding in Triratna?

Ensuring the safety from emotional, physical, sexual and psychological harm of anyone involved in the activities of Triratna Buddhist Centres and other enterprises is an expression of the First Precept: the principle of non-harming, or love.

Though half the Order worldwide lives in Britain, Triratna is an international Buddhist movement, operating in many varied cultures and legislative contexts. What is understood in Britain as “Safeguarding” refers to the duty of all British institutions to protect children and “adults who may be at risk” (previously known as “vulnerable adults”) from sexual, physical, emotional and psychological harm according to nationally agreed criteria. Though it has parallels in some other countries it is as yet unknown in many others.

Despite this, we are gradually encouraging Triratna institutions worldwide abroad to adopt the same or similar policies. Triratna’s European Chairs’ Assembly employs an overall Safeguarding officer who works with another Order member who is very senior Safeguarding in the criminal justice system in Britain.

They work as part of an Ethics kula composed of the Chair of the College of Public Preceptors and other senior Order members.

They are advised by outside organisations including Thirtyone:eight (previously known as the Churches’ Child Protection Advisory Service), which provides external guidance and checks for all faith groups in Britain.

Questions arising from recent media coverage (2017)

8. I read the Observer article and was worried by the title’s reference to “the scale” of the issues.

The journalist did not ask the interviewee, Munisha, if she had any fears over the possible scale of sexual misconduct in Triratna, and she did

not express any such fear. We do not know why this reference was inserted into the headline.

As mentioned above, in Triratna there has been no history of large-scale, long-term sex abuse scandals of the kind often discussed in connection with some larger Christian churches.

You can see Munisha's full article about the interview (and a link to the interview itself) here:

["The Observer article: what I really said". by Munisha](#)

9. **I understand a video on the Clear Vision website recommending sex between teachers and students was only taken down after the BBC contacted Triratna.**

This is not accurate. A video was indeed taken down from the Clear vision archive after the BBC drew our attention to it. They broadcast an extract of it, asking whether Triratna had learned from past controversy. However the video did not mention anything at all about sex between teachers and students.

Please see [Munisha's explanation of the contents of the video here](#), and also point 13 in [our statement to the BBC](#) for details of why we decided to remove it (simply to avoid potential confusion between Triratna archival material and Buddhist teaching materials for Religious Education in schools).

Questions around specific online rumours about Triratna (2017)

10. **I have heard that men have been persuaded to have vasectomies. Is this true?**

Allegations were made on Facebook in early 2017 that Mitras in Triratna's Mexico sangha had been persuaded to have vasectomies. As the Public Preceptor for Mexico, Moksananda investigated these allegations immediately but found no basis for them. However, he has raised local awareness and put in place measures to make it easy for people to report any concerns in future should they arise.

[Read Moksananda's report here](#)

It was also alleged that Windhorse Trading (a Triratna business in Cambridge UK, now closed down) paid for and encouraged young men to have vasectomies. This was looked into. While it was found the business had responded to individual requests for extra financial support from a few individual Order members to have this operation, it was clear that there was no policy to encourage or promote vasectomies among men working in the business.

[Read the report from Windhorse's former director here](#)

11. I've read online that Triratna advises the UK's NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children). Can you give more details?

This is not true and the blog on which this allegation has now taken down the relevant post. Triratna's sole link with the NSPCC is that the NSPCC asked to film at the after-school club run by Triratna's London Buddhist Centre (LBC), for an NSPCC-run web space on how faith groups can Safeguard children. The video explains the LBC's commitment to child protection.

[Watch the 5-minute video here](#)

12. I've been reading online about a court case in 2016 involving a former member of the Order charged with sexual offences. They're saying that he was part of a paedophile ring and that the court case failed because Triratna obstructed the course of justice in some way.

There was a Crown Court hearing in March 2016 involving an ex-Order member charged with offences in the 1970s and 1990-91 against two men who had then been under 16.

In the lead-up to the hearing, Triratna's Order convenors Parami and Lokeshvara wrote to the whole Order assuring everyone that members of the Order would assist the police with enquiries where asked to do so. However, as far as we know, nobody in Triratna was ever approached by the police and there was no obstruction or collusion of any kind.

Neither of the complainants came to court to press his case. After 45 minutes and without the appointment of a jury the judge declared the

defendant not guilty on all counts. This was partly at the recommendation of the prosecuting counsel: the defence counsel had shown him letters from one of the complainants to the defendant which strongly indicated that they had had a consenting adult relationship and that they were on very friendly terms with one another.

The defendant was one of a list of men who were alleged to have been a paedophile ring responsible collectively for the abuse of many more children. All the others pleaded guilty; he pleaded not guilty.

The ex-Order member's only link with the other men was that one of the men who had made allegations against some of the others had also named him. Telephoned from the court, this complainant said he had no wish to pursue the case. The defence counsel said it was a mystery as to why he had named him.

Considering Triratna responses and other online writing about us (2017)

13. **I'm worried and confused. How can there be such a huge difference between your answers and what I am reading in various places online?**

We recognise it can be both confusing and worrying to read some of what appears on Facebook and on the web about Triratna now and in the past. That's partly why we wrote this FAQ. What's online is a complex mixture of painful truths we need to face and are facing; reasonable differences of view between Buddhists and Buddhist traditions; rumour, misunderstanding and confusion; and, finally, simple lies.

Much of what is online has been posted anonymously. Some of those voicing criticism have honorable intentions in bringing to light things which need addressing. Some are people who disagree so strongly with Triratna's general approach to Buddhism they wish to discredit it by any means possible. Some seem to be "internet trolls": people who may not even know much about Triratna but deliberately use the anonymity of the internet to create disharmony and fear.

It's hard to avoid the conclusion that anonymity has allowed some people the freedom to express – over many years – an implacable and strong dislike of Sangharakshita, and an attendant desire to undermine

Triratna as a valid Buddhist community, rather than to help us face our history more fully and move towards lasting reconciliation.

We are committed to facing anything problematic in our past with humility; to learning lessons and carrying those with us as we continue to grow and develop as a community; and to responding well to people who still experience pain in relation to their involvement with our community.

We also know that Triratna's work over 50 years has had real, deep value for many people – and we don't see a contradiction in holding that as important while also recognising our shortcomings as a community and as individual human beings. That is, after all, what spiritual practice and a spiritual life usually entails! We are not perfect, but we are genuinely inspired by and working for the good and the welfare of all. We welcome any genuine input to ongoing discussions about our community from anyone who shares our wish to see the Dharma flourish in the modern world.

[Read the Letter from Triratna's College of Public Preceptors](#) laying out ways forward in the wake of the recent renewal of interest in these issues.

Questions about Sangharakshita's personal statement (2017)

14. Why did Sangharakshita wait until he thought he might be dying to make his confessional statement?

[Read Sangharakshita's statement \(with updates\) here](#)

Sangharakshita did not say as much over the years as some people would have liked about controversy around his sexual activity. In a 2009 interview with Subhuti and Mahamati, published as '[Conversations with Bhante](#)', he did talk about his sexual relations, including indicating some regret in some cases. Again, some people felt this did not go far enough.

With the more recent discussions of his sexual past (November 2016), Sangharakshita was initially too unwell to be told about the BBC programme. By the beginning of December 2016, however, he had recovered sufficiently to be told about what had been said in the

programme and in the ensuing discussion; including details of the questions being raised and of the upset within the Order and wider community.

Although he did not think he was dying, he decided that he needed to say something new in response and was already actively thinking about what this might be. Whilst ill in hospital it became clear to him exactly what he wanted to say and how he wanted to say it.

15. In his statement Sangharakshita says “my 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.” What exactly was he referring to?

He later made it clear that his Statement included some of his sexual activity, but also that it was not limited to that. It was a public recognition by him that some of his actions, particularly in the last 50 years since the founding of Triratna, had “hurt, harmed or upset fellow Buddhists”. He was acknowledging and regretting this, and asking for forgiveness from anyone affected, including those who were not Buddhist.

[Read Sangharakshita’s full statement, and the clarifying updates to it, here](#)

16. Did Sangharakshita want to engage in a process of reconciliation with those who were unhappy about their sexual relations with him?

The Adhithana kula took a lead in engaging with a Restorative reconciliation process and employed an expert from outside Triratna to help with this. The Kula felt that given Sangharakshita’s age and poor state of health, any Restorative process involving him needed at least to start with others acting on his behalf. They looked actively at how they might offer an opportunity to take part in this process to anyone with whom Sangharakshita had sexual relations and who wanted to engage with it. This was to be determined with the help of the independent person directing the Restorative process itself.

[Updated, October 2018: Read more about how this process has begun](#)

Questions around online rumours about Sangharakshita and sex (2017)

17. I'm concerned to read on the internet that Sangharakshita may have had sex with hundreds of men.

Through the work done by the Adhithana Kula, we have identified up to 25 men who are known to have had (or may have had) sexual relations with Sangharakshita in an 18-year period from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s. In consultation with older members of the Order, it was relatively easy to compile such a list as the early Order was extremely small and Sangharakshita and his partners were well known to their friends.

The youngest of these men was 17; most if not all of the rest were in their 20s. Some were quite happy with their sexual relations with him and are still in Triratna today; some were less happy, either at the time or later on, and are still with Triratna; as far as we know at least 5 were very unhappy – at least in retrospect – and 4 of these subsequently resigned from the Order. In the cases of several of the men, sex was a part of a longer-term companionship or relationship, but in the others there was a sexual encounter just once or twice.

See [question 16](#) for details about how a Restorative reconciliation process was designed to work with those connected with Sangharakshita's sexual activity.

[Updated, October 2018: Read more about how this process has begun](#)

18. I've heard there are allegations of sex with 16 year-olds. Was this Sangharakshita or others?

None of the men with whom Sangharakshita had sexual relations has claimed to have been under 17 at the time. See question 17 above.

One man has given an account of sex with an ex-Order member at Croydon Buddhist Centre between approximately 1986 and 1988, when he was approximately 16-19 years old. In regard to this, both Croydon's Safeguarding officer and Triratna's overall Safeguarding officer have followed Safeguarding procedures, with his agreement.

[Read a personal account of what happened in Croydon here](#)

See also [related specific chapters of The Triratna Story](#) in the public archive.

Two other men have given accounts of sex with a different ex-Order member: one was aged 17 at the time, the other 16 or 17. Our Safeguarding officer has implemented Safeguarding procedures as appropriate in each case, by agreement with each of them.

19. I've heard that there have been suicides among those who had sex with Sangharakshita or the former Chair of Croydon Buddhist Centre. Is this true?

None of Sangharakshita's partners is known to have died by suicide.

Terry Delamare, a close friend of Sangharakshita in the mid-1960s, did die by suicide. There is no evidence they were ever partners: Terry never said this and Sangharakshita always denied it. He wrote extensively about Terry and about their friendship, including the circumstances surrounding Terry's suicide, in his volume of memoirs, [Moving Against the Stream](#). As explained in the memoirs, Terry suffered with depression and it was this that caused him to take his own life.

A young man who spent three years at the Croydon Centre in the mid-1980s when aged 16-19 (during the years associated with sexual unskilfulness and abuse of power at that Centre) sadly took his own life seven years later. His family and friends later made a connection between diary accounts and letters about his unhappiness during his time in Croydon and his eventual death. This painful story was used as the basis for a critical newspaper article about the FWBO (the former name for Triratna) in 1997, and has been regularly re-posted by Triratna critics online.

[Read a personal account of what happened in Croydon here](#)

See also [related specific chapters of The Triratna Story](#) in the public archive.

Sangharakshita and celibacy (2017)

20. Triratna statements since the BBC programme in September 2016 make out that any unskillfulness was long ago, and that Sangharakshita had been celibate since the late 1980s. I read otherwise online! Is this true?

One person alleged sex with Sangharakshita in the 29 years from 1988 to 2017: a former Mitra who knew Sangharakshita in 2002-3. It is a complex story – and one that we are very reluctant to tell, out of consideration for the man who made the allegation as much as for Sangharakshita. However, the man requested public acknowledgment of his claims and, given how much confusion, doubt and dismay the matter has caused, we feel bound to address it here, by way of clarification.

The man posted a lengthy account publicly on Facebook shortly after the September 2016 BBC report. He had given other, different accounts in personal emails, letters and on Facebook many times previously, and had been in dialogue with Sangharakshita and his secretary, Mahamati, since 2012. Sangharakshita always insisted that he had maintained his celibacy and denied ever having had sexual relations with the man.

In 2002-3, Sangharakshita was 77/78 years old and going through a period of extreme vulnerability, suffering in various ways including chronic insomnia and the recent onset of macular degeneration causing ever-increasing blindness. At the time, a number of Order members and other friends took turns caring for him, and in that context the man involved in this matter (who was 27/28 years old) sometimes spent time with Sangharakshita as a companion, occasionally sleeping over at his flat in Birmingham, in separate beds.

The man wrote that on one or more occasions – uninvited and on his own initiative – he got into Sangharakshita's bed and masturbated. We understand that at the time he then expressed to his friends his disappointment that he received no response from Sangharakshita, but later said in online accounts that Sangharakshita did respond sexually. One of the man's concerns in writing about this over the years was that Sangharakshita did not acknowledge that they had a sexual relationship during this time and that Sangharakshita was lying in maintaining he has been celibate since the late 1980s.

Sangharakshita, as mentioned, denied ever having had sexual relations

with him and was clear that he had therefore maintained his celibacy.

According to the man's own accounts, in letters, emails and on Facebook, he always took the initiative sexually and did not regard himself as abused. He did not allege that Sangharakshita had done anything illegal.

[For more detail, read Mahamati's fuller account here](#) (It also links to earlier responses to the man's previous accounts.)

N.B. The document linked to above is an account by Mahamati from his perspective as Sangharakshita's secretary, having also been in dialogue with the man over some years. It reflects the position of Sangharakshita regarding this matter and was shared publicly online with the man's knowledge.

Updated October 2018: The man involved, sadly, died as a result of a brain tumour in 2018.

[See the note here](#) on changes made to this section.

More information

You can get much more, regularly updated information here:

[Adhithana kula](#)

[Mitra Support group](#)

[Our Development and Values](#)

[Public archive of historical resources around controversy](#)

[Safeguarding in Triratna](#)

[The Triratna Story](#)

Change log

Version 1.0, published April 14th 2017

Version 1.1, published April 17th 2017

- Clarified information added to [this question](#), regarding Windhorse Trading.
- A biographical detail about Terry Delamare and depression [added here](#).
- Two broken web links fixed.

Version 1.2, published July 1st 2017

In [the question](#) around allegations that Sangharakshita's celibacy was compromised since he adopted the practice in 1988, we've removed all identifying references to the other man involved from the text of this document. The man offered no objection to being named (he has been public about his allegations and asked for public response to them) but we think it is better nonetheless to be cautious about naming people in such sensitive matters, especially where long-term online search records are concerned. We are aware that the linked letters (in PDF format) detailing his case *do* name him – our primary concern here is for this standard web searchable document not to associate his name with this controversy even as it gives the details of his case. We have also marked the PDF letters linked to as “non-searchable” for web search engines indexing our site content.

Version 2.0, published October 2018

- Added 14 new questions – [see index of categories here](#).
- General minor textual changes to the introduction and text as part of incorporating the new questions.
- Correcting small details in older questions based on new information.
- Added [a new section](#) about the Triratna Panel Process work as part of Triratna Safeguarding.
- Updated the text to take account of Sangharakshita's death in October 2018.

Appendix: a note from the authors of this document

One of the ongoing challenges in responding to controversy in any community is that, on the one hand, it's clear that no one can speak for everyone who feels involved; and on the other it is sometimes necessary nonetheless to respond on behalf of the community, at least in terms of its institutions. Such responses become necessary both on specific occasions (e.g. in responding to a media story), and also in more general terms when a basic need for information becomes apparent over time.

So far during the current round of controversy, those of us with formal, institutional roles in Triratna have mainly focussed on supporting (and sometimes creating) spaces for private and public personal responses. We have only made public institutional responses on a few specific occasions, as described in questions 1-3 above. The public Letter from the Chair of the College to the Order in April 2017 was the first major exception to that pattern in that it was not occasioned by one specific situation but rather the whole area of controversy around Triratna's past. This collection of questions and answers is the second.

We've noticed in the course of our work for Triratna that a lot of the discourse online around issues arising from our community's history inevitably features a degree of speculation. We see several contributing factors here: one is the sheer distance in time from many of the events concerned; another is their intrinsically personal and subjective nature. Also, quite naturally, feelings run high. (We are certainly not immune to this!)

We've also noticed that, although the personal views and bits of information exchanged on Facebook and other social network spaces can be useful in helping process complex matters in a conversation, the fast pace of back-and-forward debate presents a challenge when trying to assess and reflect on what is now an awful lot of information about Triratna's past. In this context, it can feel increasingly difficult to separate out what is personal opinion, rumour or evidence-based fact (to the extent the latter can be ascertained).

We recognise then that it assumes a basic level of your trust in our good faith for us to present what we, with our formal roles in Triratna, think we know as we attempt to give answers to the important questions raised in this document. We also know that our position inevitably brings its own biases and that we

can only assure readers that we have tried to be aware of these, in order to ensure they are reflected as little as possible in the way we present the information contained here.

Finally, we are also strongly aware that the most important issues causing upset in Triratna and beyond are mainly the province of the Restorative reconciliation process now being taken forward by the Adhithana kula.

So in this document we've focused primarily on providing what we believe to be accurate information, which we've clarified (to the extent we can) over many years in the course of our own work. Our efforts to establish clarity have been undertaken faithfully as a way of fulfilling our formal responsibilities within the community. These have involved discussion and active inquiry, not only amongst ourselves but also with many others in Triratna, past and present, whenever the issues raised have touched our different spheres of activity. We've individually and collectively tried to find out as much as we can about the facts of any given matter. We have explored other important aspects too; for example, how people feel about things, and whether what happened is even clearly discernible with any objectivity.

Knowing how sensitive the matters discussed here are for many people, we would claim no further qualification for offering this information than our body of shared experience. At the same time, we think our collective experience, knowledge and goodwill is sufficient to stand behind the answers given; and that these answers represent a useful reference for anyone who is prepared to engage with them, trusting our intention to be fair and truthful in what we say. Our answers are all born of personal engagement with the very people who have asked such important questions; questions that are about what matters most to them in assessing the past. We hope we have honoured them too in our responses.

There have been similar attempts to do this kind of work in the past, to which we are indebted. We think the time for a new attempt has come. We hope what you read here is useful in some measure and supports you in forming your own sense of the issues. We'd like to thank those Mitras and Order members behind the scenes who have given helpful critical feedback and greatly improved this document as a result. The Adhithana kula would be happy to hear from anyone who has other questions or further details they wish to suggest for inclusion in future revisions: kula@adhithana.org

With metta,

Candradasa (Director of The Buddhist Centre Online)
Dhammarati (Convenor of Triratna's International Council)
Lokeshvara and Parami (International Convenors to the Triratna Buddhist Order)
Mahamati and Ratnadharini (Triratna's College of Public Preceptors)
Munisha (Triratna's Safeguarding officer)

April 2017 – October 2018
