

## ***Triratna: How are We Doing Now?***

**A Triratna Interkula survey to assess how the Triratna Community feels now about allegations of past misconduct.**

### **Survey results and report.**

#### **Preface**

The members of the Interkula have been aware when writing this report that it is likely to be read by a wide range of people who have different experiences and perspectives on the report's content. For some it may be challenging to something they hold dear, while for others it may not seem to go far enough. And for many, it may contain information about Triratna that they may not have been previously aware. We hope that those reading it will read mindfully and with care for both themselves and those affected by the contents of the report. We also wish readers to know that all the stages involved in this process, from creating the survey to compiling and sharing the results, has been done from a place of deep metta and concern for all those touched by Triratna and a wish for the Triratna Community to be the best it can be.

#### **Executive Summary**

##### **Aim**

To ascertain where people in the Triratna community or those associated with it currently stand in relation to allegations of past sexual misconduct.

##### **Objectives**

To establish:

- 1) If people felt allegations had been sufficiently addressed.
- 2) If not, what else could be done to address them.
- 3) To make recommendations to the Sangha based on findings from the survey.

##### **Findings**

423 people responded, 68% of whom were Order Members & 25% Mitras. 68% of respondents had been involved for more than 15 years.

Most felt Triratna had learned something and moved on from the past, but there was further to go. With regards to the Restorative Process, 53% said they did not have enough information to judge how beneficial it had been to the community. The free text responses indicate first more communication from the Adhithana Kula on how the process is going would be welcome; second, that this process may benefit individuals but is insufficient to address the hurt people feel who were not directly

affected and that it is insufficient to address the structural problems that enabled the misconduct; and third that its benefit and people's trust in the process is limited as the degree of participation of Sangharkashita and other alleged perpetrators is unclear.

16% reported they or people they knew directly who had experienced sexual misconduct by an Order Member or Sangharakshita had not yet been invited to participate in the Restorative Process.

13% felt Triratna had learned from the past and no more intervention was required. Of suggested ways forward for people who felt more intervention was required, the top three were teacher training in sexual misconduct (57%), to continue the Restorative Process (54%), and to hire an independent investigator (53%).

Comments indicated that recent sexual misconduct was an issue, but people did not know who to report it to, feared they would not be listened to or were concerned about negative repercussions. The in-house nature of the reporting system was noted to be a hindrance as essentially one may need to report that issue to a friend of the alleged perpetrator.

### **Conclusion**

Most feel some good progress has been made, especially in introducing Safeguarding to centres and use of the Restorative Process. The majority feel more needs to be done to adequately respond to allegations and prevent future misconduct. It is evident from the comments that people having experienced misconduct or knowing a friend who has continue to be a considerable source of pain for many in the community.

### **Recommendations**

1. Consult organizational communications professions to help restructure method and systems for information communication to the Sangha, so that people feel more informed and involved.
2. Establish teacher training in prevention of sexual harassment and misconduct.
3. Establish a robust system of reporting concerns as they arise that the Sangha feel able to use without any conflict of interest. As part of this, a Committee independent of Triratna or an Ombudsman to handle misconduct reports is suggested.
4. Hire an external party trained in investigating misconduct in religious organizations to conduct an inquiry into past misconduct, and implement that party's recommendations.

## Part 1: Survey background and design

### **Purpose of the survey**

Several times in the past 20 years, allegations of sexual misconduct in the Triratna Buddhist Community have surfaced, sometimes very publicly. This survey is an attempt to ascertain where people in the Triratna Community – Order members, Mitras, and Friends – currently stand in relation to the allegations of past sexual misconduct. Do people feel that these allegations have now been sufficiently addressed? In not, what else could be done to effectively address these allegations and resolve the conflicts that have arisen as a result?

### **History of public allegations and Triratna's response**

- A 1997 article in the UK-based newspaper *The Guardian*, "The Dark Side of Enlightenment," which described alleged sexual misconduct by Sangharakshita with younger men and by a then-Order member (now resigned) at the Croydon Buddhist Center in Croydon, England.
- A 2003 letter by an Order member in *Shabda*, the journal for Triratna Order members, questioning the ethics of Sangharakshita's sexual contact with his younger disciples. This letter eventually became distributed outside the Order and known colloquially as "Yashomitra's letter."
- A September 2016 BBC documentary "Inside Out," which described alleged sexual misconduct by Sangharakshita with younger students.

In the aftermath of each of these was discussion within the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community about the nature of the allegations and how Triratna is addressing them. Since the BBC documentary was released in September 2016, there has also been discussion in official and unofficial Triratna contexts and several initiatives were developed to help address the issues raised in the documentary.

- The Adhithana kula, consisting of six Order members "with responsibilities across Triratna", was established to "encourage the sharing of actual experience, and to help provide clear information." (Source: *Welcome to the Adhithana Kula*, on The Buddhist Center/Centre Online, <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhithana-kula>).
- In collaboration and consultation with Jnanasiddhi, an Order member trained in the Restorative Process, the Adhithana Kula hired an accredited Restorative Process facilitator to "to work directly with any individuals who feel harmed as a result of their past sexual involvement with Sangharakshita." (Source: "The Adhithana Kula- an Update on Our Work, *The Buddhist Centre Online*, September 23, 2017)
- A Restorative Working Group has recently been established to explore whether the Restorative Process could be used to help resolve conflicts in Triratna more widely. Please note that the information about the Restorative Process Working Group was not

widely distributed until *after* this survey was written. Therefore, it is not referenced in the survey.

- When this report was in its final draft stage the Adhithana kula released an update of their work. The Adhithana kula's update mentions that they are dissolving and names three teams that will be taking their work further: the Restorative Working Group, Ethics kula, and College Chairs Council. The survey was administered and this report drafted while the Adhithana kula was still operational, so the Adhithana kula is referenced in the survey and its results. However, any mention of future work references the three recently formed teams.

## About the Interkula

The Inter Kula is a group of nine Triratna Order members who wish to facilitate discussion and change within the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community. We are based in the UK and US. The Interkula works independently of any other Triratna group or organization such as the Adhithana kula, although some members do hold organizational responsibilities within Triratna and several of the UK-based Order members are in regular communication with members of the Adhithana Kula. You can read more about the Interkula at [www.interkula.net](http://www.interkula.net).

This survey is part of a wider effort by the Triratna Interkula to promote dialogue about various issues, starting with the four areas addressed in a statement made by the Adhithana Kula in February 2018:

“We would like to take this opportunity to make it clear that **the following ideas form no part of Triratna teaching today:**

- that sex is an aid to kalyana mitrata (spiritual friendship)
- that men are spiritually superior to women
- that any sexual orientation is spiritually superior to another
- that single people are spiritually superior to those in relationships or with families

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

A previous survey and subsequent report addressed parenting in Triratna. Future survey will address the other areas.

## Survey Design

The survey was created on Survey Monkey, both for ease of data reporting and for compliance with European Union General Data Protection Regulation. It was advertised in several Triratna Facebook Groups, three groups on the Buddhist Center Online (two Order-only groups and one Mitra group), and a poster was distributed to the UK-based centers. It was open for responses from September 15 to October 15, 2018.

Questions included both multiple choice and binary responses for ease of data analysis, and open-ended responses for eliciting a wide range of viewpoints and experiences. In our reporting of the results, open-ended responses were themed, with themes and individual comments being reported that represent the range of responses. 27% did not give permission for their comments to be used in this report; their responses have been included in thematic analysis, but their comments have not been reported. All potentially identifying details have been removed from comments that are included in this report.

## **Limitations**

Due to Data Protection concerns, no email lists were used. The survey was open for one month, mainly via social media and to some extent, posters at centres. Thus, people on retreat, those not accessing these methods or sight-impaired people may not have known of the survey. However, the range of responses in the results indicate that a large range of views has been captured.

## **Part 2: Survey questions and responses**

### **Questions 1 – 3: Demographics**

423 people answered the survey. Many respondents skipped one or more questions so numbers do not add up to 423 for each question. When percentages are given, they indicate the percentages of people responding to that question.

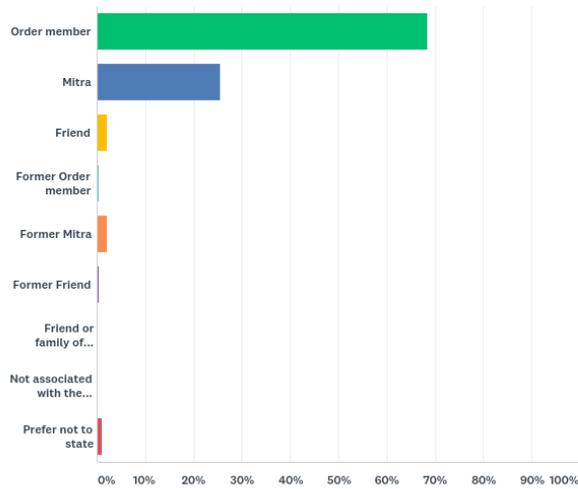
Survey respondents tended to be longstanding, committed members of the Triratna Community.

287, 68%, were Order members

107, 25% were Mitras.

The rest were Friends, former Mitras, former Order members, or declined to state their affiliation with Triratna.

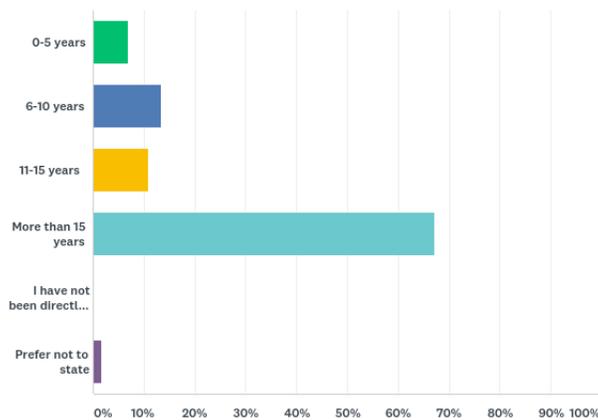
### Q1 Are you a



283 respondents, 68% have been involved with Triratna for more than 15 years.

Only 29, 7%, have been involved with Triratna less than 5 years.

### Q3 How long have you been associated with the Triratna Community?



51% of the respondents identified as female

41% as male

4 % as non-binary.

An additional 4 % declined to state their gender identity.

**Question 4: On a scale of 1 – 5, 1 being none and 5 being a lot, how much do you feel the Triratna Community has learned from and moved on from allegations of past sexual misconduct by Sangharakshita and other Order members?**

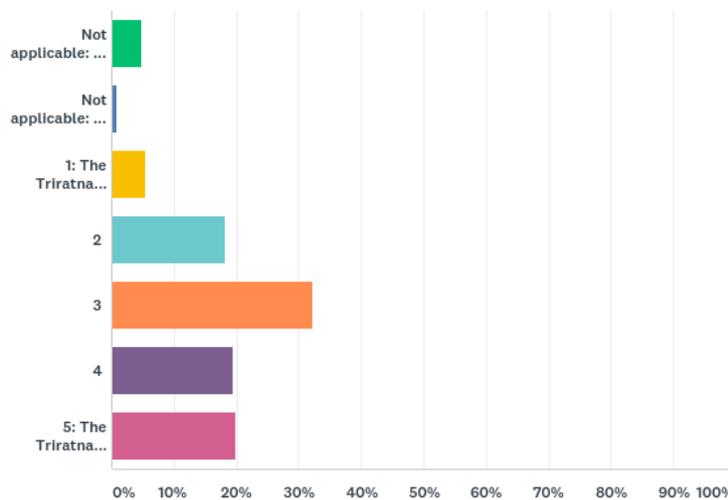
There were few respondents answering on the extreme ends of the scale and many answering in the middle.

Only 20 respondents, 6%, felt that Triratna had learned everything it needed to before 2016.

19 respondents, 5% felt that Triratna has learned nothing.

Most respondents felt that Triratna had learned some since 2016 but that there was still more to be learned.

Q4 On a scale of 1 – 5, 1 being none and 5 being a lot, how much do you feel the Triratna Community has learned from and moved on from allegations of past sexual misconduct by Sangharakshita and other Order members?



Highlighted as positive developments in the comments:

- The introduction of safeguarding at UK Centres
- The introduction of the Restorative Process as a conflict resolution method
- The increased awareness of power dynamics within relationships
- The willingness to discuss openly issues within Triratna, which many stated was greater now than in the past.

Highlighted as concerns in the comments:

- The lack of whole-hearted, public apologies by perpetrators,
- The exclusively in-house handling of the response to allegations of misconduct

- The unclarity of the extent of misconduct
- Alleged perpetrators currently in positions of responsibility.

Many people also stated that the question couldn't be answered of Triratna as a whole since Triratna is so large and widespread.

Examples of comments:

"The level of openness and honesty that is shared now is far greater than when I got involved 30 years ago. I feel I can say my views freely and without censure. At our local centre there is a real awareness of the dangers of power imbalance in teacher student relationships." Order member, involved 15 + years

"It seems that the issue of Safe guarding is being taken seriously within centre's. There has been training and Munisha [Triratna's Safeguarding Officer] is doing a good job. It is such a wide thing it is hard to know what is happening in other countries." Order member, involved 15+ years.

"I am pleased to belong to a community that listens and is willing to have open conversations around controversial topics and be prepared to change." Mitra, involved 11-15 years.

"Mostly, I think we've faced up to things, painfully so, and honestly. I worry, however, that there may some people, especially some Order members, who might never have reflected all that deeply on this because it could have caused them to question their view of Bhante. Also, quite honestly, there are some Order members writing on Facebook who are clearly very upset by this but who seem to me to show little sign of inner reflection and examining their own reactivity. I really don't know what would help these people - lots of empathy, I suspect." Order member, involved 15+ years

" I have stepped back largely from Triratna because of these issues and others. From this perspective, being less involved and having less contact with the order than I did, it can appear as if many order members are continuing as if nothing has happened, or as if everything is fine now, when I feel that is not the case. Perhaps more has happened than I think, but there has been very little that has been made public, and for me that is not nearly enough." Order member, involved 15+ years.

"There are still OMs who were around at that time that haven't said anything about their experience. If they were some of the perpetrators isn't it about time they came clean and confessed? I still think there are OMs who don't think Sangharakshita has done anything unskillful and they are still trying to protect his image." Order member, more than 15 years.

"I feel that the community no longer condones or supports sex under exploitative and manipulative circumstances. However, I feel there's still much impatience for people to just

get over it, stop complaining, etc.. which tells me there's much more understanding that is needed." Order member, involved 15+ years.

"Many people within the community have learned a lot, but as an organisation Triratna is still an incredibly long way from properly acknowledging the deep harm caused by Sangharakshita." Mitra, involved 6-10 years.

"From my distant perspective, all seemed blown out of proportion. Checks have been put in place. Let's leave it at that." Friend, involved less than 5 years.

"As someone who runs a charity, I'd say there are still basic safeguarding problems: for instance dealing with accusations or concerns wholly in house is against basic SG good practice." Mitra, involved 6-10 years

**Question 5: Last year, the Adhithana kula set up a Restorative process with an accredited Restorative facilitator to listen to and support former sexual partners of Sangharakshita. On a scale of 1 – 5, how beneficial do you believe the Restorative process will be in helping the Triratna Community move on from allegations of past sexual misconduct?**

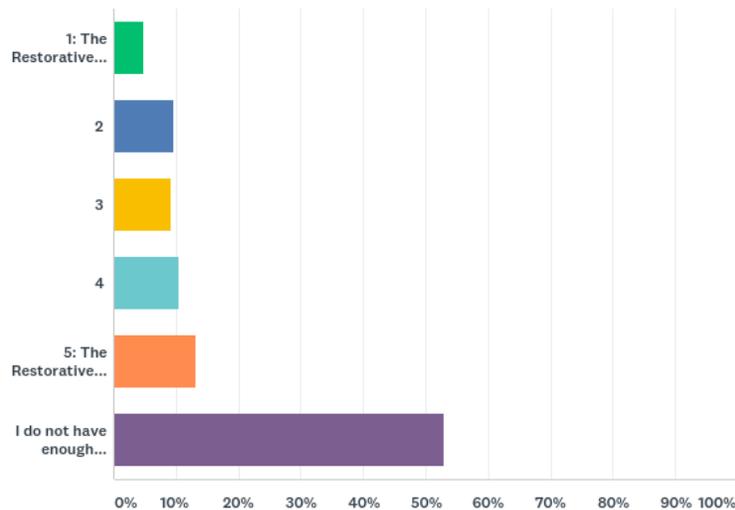
(As mentioned in Part I of this report, the survey was designed before the Restorative Working Group and the Adhithana kula published an update of their work, so this question does not address these new developments, only the Restorative Process as described in the Adhithana kula's update of September 23, 2017 on *The Buddhist Centre Online*.)

5% felt it the Restorative Process is of no benefit.

53% of respondents indicated they did not have enough information to judge.

The rest of the responses ranged between somewhat and very beneficial.

Q5 Last year, the Adhithana kula set up a Restorative process with an accredited Restorative facilitator to listen to and support former sexual partners of Sangharakshita. On a scale of 1 – 5, how beneficial do you believe the Restorative process will be in helping the Triratna Community move on from allegations of past sexual misconduct?



Comments to this question indicated that while people generally felt positive about the Restorative Process, there were three issues regarding the Process.

- 1) More communication from the Adhithana kula is desired, both about how the process is going so far and how people could ask to participate in it.
- 2) The Restorative Process, while potentially very beneficial to individuals, is insufficient to address the **hurt** that people carry within the community due to past sexual misconduct and to **remedy the structural issues** that enabled the misconduct.
- 3) The degree of participation in the Restorative Process by Sangharakshita and other Order members who are alleged to have committed sexual misconduct is unclear, which potentially limits the benefit of the process and the trust people can have in it.

Examples of comments:

“Not only is it beneficial to those directly involved, the fact that we have set this up has given many who were in doubt about Triratna fresh confidence that we are open to addressing our past, and to setting up systems to protect the vulnerable. Further, that we will investigate any future alleged misconduct.” Order member, involved 15+ years.

“I believe the Restorative Process is very beneficial for those who are participating in it. It is a huge step forward in trying to heal harm that was done. It should not be all that we are doing, however.” Order member, involved 15+ years.

"I think we need to feel confident that the ideas that lead to a lot of sexual misconduct have been recognised and dealt with in Triratna. This goes beyond the scope of the restorative process, which seems to me a more suitable process for after an investigation. It seems we have gone straight into a final stage of something that should be still working on gathering all the information and establishing as far as possible how many people were involved." Order member, involved 15+ years

"It may be of help to the individuals concerned but given that it's all done in private it's hard to see it being of much benefit to the community more broadly." Order member, involved 15+ years

"An external investigator is required to assess what actually happened in the past, including those actions and papers that led to females leaving Triratna not just the sexual misconduct. As a precursor to the restorative process, a real apology needs to be given, i.e. "I/we did this, it was wrong and I/we apologise" - not the excuse for an apology that S has given. As I understand, the restorative process, all those involved (offenders and those offended against) need to be involved-I am led to understand that it's only the latter that have been involved so far but my opinion is based on scant detail issued by the Kula, so I might be wrong in this". Mitra, involved 0-5 years

"There's been a lack of communication about the process and the impact that it has had." Mitra, involved 6-10 years

"I think it's hard to know, without hearing from the former sexual partners. I am assuming Bhante has not been involved in the process, and I think that reduces the healing potential of the process." Order member, involved 15 + years

"It appears that some people still haven't had the opportunity to find restorative justice in relationship to some order members." Order member, involved 15+ years

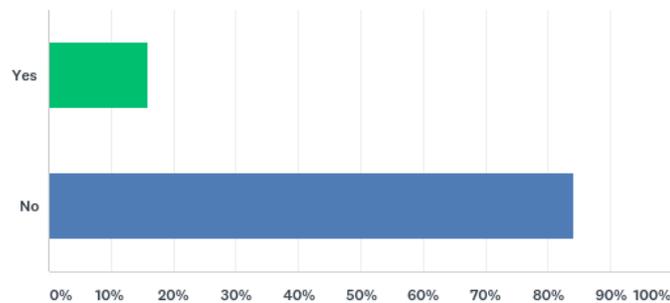
A comment not related to the Restorative Process, but to the survey itself: A few people questioned the use of the term "sexual partners" in the question as it implied mutuality and a balance of power. The more neutral term "people who Sangharakshita had sex with" was suggested. This is noted; the Interkula agrees with this assessment of terminology and will now use the more neutral term.

**Q6: Do you know anyone, either yourself or someone you know personally, who experienced sexual misconduct by Sangharakshita or another Order member, but who has not yet been invited to participate in the Restorative Process?**

The intent of this question was to obtain a rough measure of whether or not the Restorative Process has included all the people who would benefit by it. The Interkula does not have the resources to launch a full fact-finding mission about the scope of misconduct in Triratna; however, this rough gauge could indicate whether there is a need for further outreach by the people running the Restorative

Process and/or an investigation into the scope of misconduct in Triratna history. The wording of “either yourself or someone you know personally” was designed to reduce the repetition of rumors of misconduct reported on internet forums.

Q6 Do you know anyone, either yourself or someone you know personally, who experienced sexual misconduct by Sangharakshita or another Order member, but who has not yet been invited to participate in the Restorative Process? (Answers to this and all questions are anonymous. We are trying to ascertain the scope of past sexual misconduct; no identifying information is being collected.)



55 people, 16% of the question’s respondents, answered yes: they themselves or someone they knew personally had experienced misconduct by an Order member and had not yet been invited to participate in the Restorative Process. The difference in the descriptions of the misconduct in the comments to this question indicates that many or most of these 55 respondents are referring to different individuals. Several people mentioned in their comments knowing multiple people who had experienced misconduct but were not involved in the Restorative Process.

While many respondents described misconduct between a more experienced male OM and less experienced male Mitra, as has been described many times in the past, other types of misconduct were also reported, including male Order members becoming sexually involved with very vulnerable women new to a Center/Centre, and inappropriate behavior by a female Order member.

Examples of comments:

“I know of several cases and the details are awful. They include alleged intervention on the part of one of the most high profile OM’s to try and encourage a victim (*identifying details withheld*) not to testify to the police if he (victim) were questioned. I’m pretty sure that is obstruction of justice.” Order member, involved 15+ years.

“Yes I know three OMs personally who experienced sexual misconduct by other OMs and have not been invited to participate in the Restorative Process.” Respondent did not provide demographic information.

"I have not reported my own experience, since I feel it did not cause lasting damage ("just" annoyance and other emotional disturbance for some time after), plus the relevant oms are both now dead." Order member, involved 15+ years.

"A few years ago I heard from a female order member that male Order members were having sexual relations with one particular woman (Friend) at *location withheld*. It seemed to be a series of one night stands. Her reputation became knowledgeable and acted upon. I was horrified at the story. The female OM wouldn't report it as she was worried about the repercussions. I don't know if it was true. If it was - individual OMs need to take a look at their behaviour." Order member, involved 15+ years

"I was sexually abused by Older Order members." Order member, involved 15+ years

"Hard to comment, as we don't know who has been invited to participate, and publicly listing people might be yet a further invasion of their privacy and dignity. Can people invite themselves if they have not been asked? If so where/ how do they hear about the process?" Order member, involved 15+ years.

"When I was a mitra, an order member seduced me but I have never regarded it as sexual misconduct. It was simply a Kalyanataramitra relationship with a sexual element introduced into it. It did no harm at all." Order member, involved 15+ years.

"Yes/no border.... I know of a couple of women 'friends of the movement' who were pursued by male order members..... both very vulnerable women - one ex prison pursued and one severe mental health problems - entered into sexual relationship with. I was bothered by the fact that the men in their chapters did not appear to question or challenge the wisdom of pursuit/involvement of such vulnerable women. Obviously we cannot be "sex police"! but power mode I think should be questioned in cases like this." Order member, involved 15+ years.

"I have friends who were sexually assaulted by senior OMs in recent times. They reported it to other senior OMs. Nothing happened. So they are not interested in this restorative process- more of the same- the process is instigated by senior OMs. The same ones who have done nothing until now about previous misconduct. No trust those in power care about taking this seriously- if they did, they could have acted before now." Order member, involved 11-15 years.

"Many men. They don't want to come forward- they do not trust the process as it is in house and commissioned by people in the college who cannot publically apologise for SR's behaviour, so they believe this is just a cover up job to be seen to be doing something but really the college people want it to go away as really, they don't see a problem. That is what they think. I am inclined to agree somewhat- I think there is a large denial factor and avoiding paying out victims so they don't have to sell assets. I'm up for selling assets and making amends as part of us moving on and acknowledging our ignorance of the abuse. We all paid for adhithana despite the college now putting it in their name so feel free to sell it and pay people for some damages and therapy please." Order member, involved 15+ years

“A couple of people, sadly one is now deceased.” Order member, involved 15+ years

“Not physically, but several Mitras have felt that sexual information disclosed by two Order members has been far from appropriate.” Order member, involved 15+ years.

“I know of 4 people who this describes. Only one of these was in the UK. I worry that this type of behavior was much more widespread than generally believed.” Order member, involved 15+ years

“A female order member rubbed her foot onto my crutch [sic] during a mixed mitra study group under the table (the two of us were exploring the idea of 'seeing each other'). Didn't seem an appropriate time or place for that to happen.” Mitra, involved 11-15 years.

**Q7: If you do not feel confident that Triratna has fully addressed and learned from allegations of past sexual misconduct, what would need to happen for you to have this confidence? Check all that apply.**

13% of respondents felt confident that Triratna has fully addressed and learned from allegations of past sexual misconduct.

The rest of the respondents selected various actions that they would like to see happen, which are listed here from most selected, to least selected (respondents could select more than one option):

- 57% Implement training for teachers and retreat leaders in the prevention of sexual misconduct.
- 54% Continue the Restorative Process for as long as needed.
- 53% Hire an independent investigator/evaluator such as Olive Branch to evaluate our history and make recommendations.
- 47% Provide funds for counseling for people who experienced sexual misconduct by Triratna teachers and retreat leaders.
- 44% Establish an independent (not in-house) Triratna-wide grievance reporting process for reporting sexual misconduct.
- 42% Remove Order members who have committed sexual misconduct from positions of responsibility within Triratna.
- 27% Implement other consequences for Order members who have committed sexual misconduct, such as suspension or expulsion.
- 25% Continue the work of the Adhithana kula, but with Triratna Community members who do not hold other positions of responsibility within the Triratna Community
- 16% Financially support the Adhithana Kula so they can focus more on this work.
- 7% Don't know/not sure

This question included an “other” option for respondents to list other actions they would like to see happen:

“I request that the Adhithana kula make some statistics public - for e.g. how many people have come forward asking to take part in the restorative process, how many have completed it, how far it has been satisfactory for them and some statements about whether there is anything particular we can learn about what happened in the past, from those involved in the current process.” Order member, involved 15+ years

“I firmly believe that there needs to be an objective third party investigation in to all of this. Members of the College, and anyone who relies on the Movement's institutions for their room and board should not be the ones conducting these investigations. There are possible financial liabilities that could result from any investigation, and those whose livelihoods may be threatened cannot be expected to be objective. This is such an obvious conflict of interest.” Order member, involved 15+ years

“I have ticked an independent (not in house) Triratna wide grievance procedure not particularly because I think we couldn't run a good in house process because I think we have the integrity to do that well but because at the point the complaint is brought, we (as a community) have lost the trust of that complainant. I don't know how this reporting process could be resourced though. It would be interesting to hear about a more worked out proposal.” Order member, involved 15+ years

“I don't think this issue needs any more resources thrown at it. We would be much better served now by putting all our efforts and resources into teaching the dharma for the good of the world.” Order member, involved 15+ years

“I think there needs to be an opportunity for all in the sangha to 1) participate in a ritual of expressing regret for the past; compassion for all those affected; and resolve to ensure nothing similar happens again. 2) participate in a written public apology, for example by being a signatory to a statement published say in the Guardian and in Tricycle Magazine.” Order member, involved 15+ years

“Ensure that information is more easily and publicly available to people who may have been affected as to what services are available should they need those processes, given that many of those affected may have now resigned from the Order, or left the TBC in previous years.” Order member, involved 15+ years

“Anyone who was involved in the tragic mistakes of the past or those who knew of the mistakes (S and others) and did nothing should be removed from any position where they have any influence on the process or on Triratna as a whole.” Mitra, involved 0-5 years

“bring more democracy to Triratna decision making to break down the hierarchy structure. Work more at transparency and spreading information. Create a handbook for new mitras explaining the structure of the order, and who does what.” Mitra, involved 11-15 years

“Education and training education and training...” Order member, involved 15+ years

"I'm not sure it's actually repairable. It starts at the top really: a long time ago (maybe 1998) Sangharakshita should have been suspended from the Order, and a process of investigation and reporting initiated, leading to some kind of fresh start for the whole Movement based on (a) the most positive aspects of Sangharakshita's teachings being clarified and agreed on, (b) the acknowledgment of his own past mistakes in sexual behaviours by Sangharakshita, and (c) the considerable spiritual experience and maturity of some Order Members acting in harmony and leading us forward. That was never likely to happen and in many ways we are a "broken" Movement ... But - who knows? - perhaps some kind of healing will occur over time ..." Order member, involved 15+ years

"I like Shantigarbha's Restorative Circles approach, and would support training OMs who are interested/capable in that work in each region (international efforts are often so under-resourced as to make them not widely effective). There will always, I suspect, be a vocal minority who want much wider/deeper solutions, and it is very hard for me to evaluate from the distance, how much this is needed. Hence this survey, I think!" Order member, involved 15+ years

"I think it would be good to establish what we believe sexual misconduct to be. To have clear systems for reporting and investigating and consequences. It would be good to have someone write an article about this and also to put it in the context of other sangha's and religious groups." Order member, 15+ years

"It all sounds far too rigid. Too many rules and the Movement will end up dead! Freedom of expression is important to the individual." Order member, involved 15+ years

**Question 8: If you have further comments on the topic of allegations of past sexual misconduct in Triratna, please enter them here:**

"I remain puzzled and perplexed that Bhante hasn't felt able to give a full and specific apology. I think that this more than anything else would help us to move on. I wonder if Bhante realises how many people feel this." Order member, involved 15+ years

"I am only too aware of how easy it would be to get this wrong either way - to fail to address misconduct on the one hand or to let false or misguided allegations get out of control. To be honest, it scares me, both ways." Order member, involved 15+ years

"I have left Triratna because of this issue and the level of silence and denial I have experienced around it. This has been a painful process for me." Mitra, involved 11-15 years

"I was involved in same-sex sexual relations with OMs since I was a mitra in my teens. At the time I welcomed the attention from older men and found it affirming -- but looking back it was affection and friendship that I wanted and the sex added nothing to this and even got in the way. It seems odd to me now in my 50s that casual sex between men was affirmed as contributing to spiritual friendship and that this view persisted for decades. I now have a much

better understanding of spiritual friendship and have come to think that the sex that was practised in the past was mostly self-serving and I don't recognise it as anything to do with the dharma. I don't feel I personally was harmed in any way -- but I know other young men who were. I played some role as a cheerleader for this kind of sexualised KM at the time and for that I am sorry." Order member, involved 15+ years

"There's probably more to say about the effect it had on women being seen as spiritually inferior and the vaguely abusive/utilitarian way women were treated by men in the 80's and 90's" Order member, involved 15+ years

"Stop wasting your time. Take on the Dharmajit and personal responsibility now to build friendship with your brethren in the order and to foster any friendships that may open the Dharma up to other people." Order member, involved 6-10 years

"Is there a way for person to report the systemic and subtle exclusion from various processes subtle or otherwise for actually being upset by this situation and environment of Blinkeredness and then not be outgrouped and again subtly punished for this..." Mitra, involved 15+ years

"From what I have heard, a lot of very positive work has gone into addressing these issues 'behind the scenes'. I believe that if this work was communicated more broadly (though obviously appropriately) many of the continuing issues that people have around past sexual misconduct in Triratna would subside." Order member, involved 15+ years

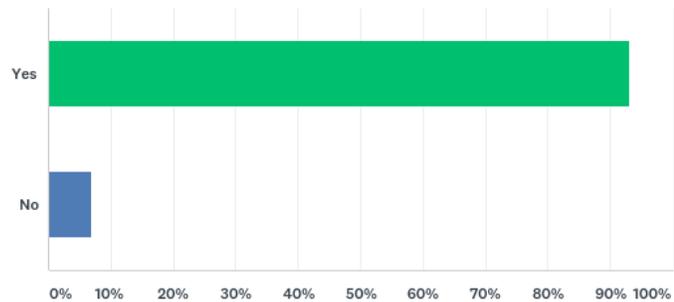
"It worries me sometimes that I am basing my spiritual journey around a movement that seems to have tried to ignore what was going on in the past and not address it, previously as is happening now. However Bhante is human like us all and I have not come across any abuse of position since being involved in Triratna or know anyone who has. I choose to continue based on my direct experience, with gratitude to Bhante for the order and with gratitude to the order to all it offers including offering help to those who have and are suffering as a result of choosing Triratna. I think what you most need is the opinion of those who feel abused by order members. There is obviously still pain out there which needs much metta, there may be other issues too but attempts should be made to help as long as they are needed. I feel sad that a community with such lovely ideals and capable of such great conditions has also created some harmful ones. Keep up the good work please to reduce the risk of it happening again" Mitra, involved 6 – 10 years

"One should remain in dialogue about sexual activities. However, as long as those are no illegal acts committed by adults there is little need to enter into lengthy discussions." Order member, involved 15+ years

"We do have to find a way to let the past be in the past, communally. The focus at some point (soon I hope!) has to become dealing with the issues of now and the prevention of harm in the future." Order member, involved 15+ years

**Question 9: Do you give your consent to use your anonymized statements in our published report?**

Q9 Do you give your consent to use your anonymized statements in our published report:



As stated in earlier in this report, all comments were used in our thematic analysis of open-ended responses, but only comments from people who answered “yes” to this question were quoted in this report.

### **Part 3: Conclusion and recommendations**

This survey aimed to measure and report how people in the Triratna Community feel about allegations of sexual misconduct in Triratna and the response to those allegations. The majority of respondents felt that some good progress has been made, particularly with the introduction of safeguarding officers and guidelines at many Centres/Centers, and the introduction of the Restorative Process to support people who Sangharakshita had sex with. However, the majority of respondents felt more needs to be done both to adequately respond to the allegations and to prevent future misconduct. The comments of many respondents also made it clear that the events giving rise to the allegations are still a considerable source of pain for many individuals, either as people who experienced misconduct or are aware of it happening to others.

Based on the survey results, the Interkula is making four recommendations. These recommendations are for the entire Triratna Community to consider. Their implementation could involve several other Triratna teams in addition to the Restorative Working Group, Ethics kula, and College Chairs Council, and would need broad support in the Triratna Community:

#### **Recommendation 1: Restructure Order and Community-wide communication structures and processes to allow for better flow of information.**

Many people indicated they wanted more status updates about the Restorative Process and other responses to the allegations. Several Mitras commented that they didn’t have access to information. However, Order members also reported feeling “in the dark” about it all. Even people who expressed the most confidence about Triratna’s response to misconduct allegations stated that they felt communication about it could be improved.

In any organization, lack of information can give rise to rumors, speculation, and inaccurate assumptions. Access to accurate and timely information can allay rumors, increase morale, and foster stronger relationships. Therefore, our first recommendation is to greatly improve the flow of information.

We are not referring to small fixes such as more frequent blog updates or additional emails, which have been tried in the past and generally mean more work for already overworked people. Instead, we are advocating for consulting with organizational communications professionals to restructure the methods and systems of information-sharing. Triratna is a very large, complex, and continually growing Community and needs a well-designed communication framework. We feel that improved organizational communication would have benefits far beyond this immediate issue and would be worth the expense of professional consultations.

**Recommendation 2: Establish training for teachers and retreat leaders in prevention of sexual harassment and misconduct.**

Close to 60% of respondents stated that this is something they would like to see happen. Implementing prevention training would indicate that the harm of harassment and abuse is taken seriously, and that active steps are being taken to prevent it. Prevention training can cover many areas, from establishing standards of appropriate behavior to bystander intervention to reporting procedures, which often differ from one region to another.

**Recommendation 3: Establish a robust system for reporting and responding to allegations of misconduct as they arise and make information about this system easily available.**

We set up this survey to assess how people feel about allegations of past misconduct. However, numerous comments revealed many instances relatively recent misconduct. Many people describing recent misconduct also stated that they did not know who to report it to, feared that it wouldn't be taken seriously, or that reporting would have negative repercussions. The in-house nature of reporting was mentioned as issue hindering reporting, as essentially one would be reporting misconduct to the alleged offender's friends. Studies on bias indicate these concerns are well-founded: people are likely to judge actions more favorably when committed by a friend, and more likely to excuse unfair behavior by a someone in the same group as themselves. (Source: "Should Churches Handle Sexual Abuse Allegations Internally," by Jen Zamzow in *Christianity Today*, Feb 2018)

Many large religious organizations have Ombudsmen or completely independent committees for handing misconduct reports and we recommend Triratna establish something similar.

**Recommendation 4: Hire an external party trained in investigating misconduct in religious organizations (such as Olive Branch) to conduct an inquiry into past misconduct and implement that party's recommendations.**

More than half (54%) of the respondents stated that an independent inquiry, such as the ones commissioned by Shambhala and Rigpa would be beneficial, even necessary. Many comments throughout the survey reiterated the need for someone external to Triratna to look into these allegations. Particularly compelling reasons stated for an independent inquiry are:

- 1) Many people reported they believed alleged perpetrators are currently in positions of responsibility, and even among the people directing Triratna's response to the allegations.
- 2) Misinformation about details of misconduct, including in official responses in the past, has eroded trust among many Order members and Mitras.
- 3) Many Centres/Centers were mentioned as alleged locations of misconduct. Had just one or two Centres/Centers been mentioned we would have limited our recommendation to just those locations.
- 4) There are potentially dozens of people harmed by misconduct who have not yet been offered support or involved in the Restorative Process.

The survey did not uncover the precise details and full extent of misconduct in Triratna, but it did make painfully clear that individually, people have been harmed and collectively, harmony in the sangha and trust in Triratna's leaders have been damaged.

The first step of an inquiry would be to determine who has been affected by misconduct and how. Once the scope of past misconduct has been determined, next steps could include

- offering support to people affected
- uncovering and remedying structural issues that enabled misconduct to occur and persist unaddressed
- any other actions recommended by the auditor(s)

We don't make this recommendation lightly. The members of the Interkula had many lengthy discussions about this, considering several factors: respecting the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents, the costs of an external inquiry, supporting the needs of the people who have experienced misconduct, and prevention of future misconduct. We are also aware of the people who feel enough has been done and wish that Triratna not spend any more resources on this, and those who worry Triratna has fallen prey to external social factors with which they disagree. They comprised a minority of survey respondents, but their wishes and perspectives were still heard by us. It is our hope that the resources and time spent on a full external inquiry now will enable us to move forward as a Community, so that we are not continually encumbered by allegations left unaddressed and individuals unsupported.

In conclusion, we wish to thank everyone who contributed to the survey and providing such open, thoughtful, responses.

The Interkula is committed to ensuring that the contents of the report are fully understood, discussed and integrated into any efforts moving forward based on our recommendations. Towards that end we will be hosting webinars for concerned Triratna community members who want to explore our

recommendations further. We will post the details about these webinars on the Interkula website, The Buddhist Center Online, and Triratna Facebook Groups once they are scheduled.

We have also set up a temporary Facebook Group for discussing this report and recommendations for moving forward. This Facebook group will be open for six weeks and will be moderated by members of the Interkula. Interested people can request to join here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/380981595975256/>