

Model ethical guidelines

for Triratna Buddhist centres and enterprises

2016

These guidelines are offered as a suggestion for those in Triratna who are running and supporting activities for the general public, such as classes in meditation or Buddhism, study groups, yoga classes or therapeutic interventions such as mindfulness classes.

Each centre, group or enterprise is free to adapt or adopt these documents (or replace them with others) in accordance with local conditions recognising that each is legally separate and responsible for deciding upon and implementing its own policies.

The guidelines follow the framework of the Buddha's five ethical precepts - widely known throughout the Buddhist world - offering a general principle for each and one or two specific applications.

The precepts can be applied to all areas of human behaviour. These guidelines are mainly intended to offer guidance in one key area: where Order members, or other experienced members of the Triratna community, are presenting and communicating Buddhist principles to those who are new or less experienced, especially in public situations, where a particular duty of care is owed.

1.

I undertake to abstain from harming living beings.

With deeds of loving-kindness I purify my body.

In principle all Triratna activities aim to support the awakening of the individual. In all our dealings with one another we aspire to behave in a spirit of kindness, expressing kalyanamitrata, which we translate as 'spiritual friendship'.

Our spiritual community has been defined by its founder, Sangharakshita, as a 'free association of individuals'. While respecting this principle, it is important that individuals in positions of trust and authority as members of Triratna do not misuse their trusted position or authority for their own benefit or to influence others inappropriately.

Wishing to minimise the harm we do to living beings, we affirm that physical violence and strong expressions of anger have no place among us.

We will work within our community, and with other like-minded groups, to reduce and minimise our impact on the environmental, locally and internationally.

2.

I undertake to abstain from taking the not given.

With open-handed generosity, I purify my body.

We wish to offer the Buddha's teachings in a spirit of generosity, making them accessible to all.

We aspire to express generosity by caring for our community and those who work and practise within it, finding ways to support those who undertake particular responsibilities in teaching and administration or serving as trustees or council members.

Those who handle money or property for a Triratna Buddhist centre or enterprise will take care of them and avoid their deliberate misuse or misappropriation. If misuse is suspected, we will investigate and take action promptly.

3

I undertake to abstain from sexual misconduct.

With stillness, simplicity and contentment I purify my body.

Triratna is a community of people practising the Buddha's teachings together. As such it is natural that close relationships should develop between us, and that some of these may be sexual relationships.

We encourage all members of our community to conduct their sexual relationships ethically, with awareness and kindness.

People in teaching roles or similar have a particular responsibility in this area, particularly to those new to Triratna. We propose that they do not start a relationship while they are the other person's main connection with Buddhism and Triratna, even when there is clear mutual attraction and 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 proposed relationship between someone in a teaching role and a less experienced person is discussed openly in an Order context. Usually this will mean their chapter and/or their preceptor and kalyana mitras.

4

I undertake to abstain from false speech.

With truthful communication, I purify my speech.

At ordination, members of the Triratna Buddhist Order undertake ten training precepts, of which four concern ethical communication. In all our dealings with those we teach we are committed to truthful, meaningful, helpful and harmonious communication, written or spoken.

We wish to create an atmosphere of friendliness, co-operation and trust. We will share information carefully, motivated by desire for the wellbeing and spiritual progress of those we discuss.

We encourage ethical reflection and disclosure in our community, but are careful to emphasise that this happens in its own time and at its own pace.

We note that confession may offer no protection from the law, though this may differ from country to country. Illegal activity disclosed in the context of confession may have to be reported to the relevant authorities.

5

I undertake to abstain from intoxication.

With mindfulness clear and radiant I purify my mind.

The Triratna Buddhist Community aims to provide support for the development of wisdom and compassion through deepening awareness.

We aspire to engage with our practice and with each other with as much mindfulness as possible.

We aim to provide supportive environments for those wishing to live without intoxicants.

We will not serve alcohol or other intoxicants at Triratna Buddhist centres or events.

Sabbe satta sukhi hontu

May all beings be well and happy