



Triratna Development ECA

# Racial Diversity Project

## Why Diversity Matters in Triratna



by Aryarakshita

Following a session with European Chairs, during an ECA day on Racial Diversity, part of the session included a section on why it's important for Centres to welcome, attract and engage People of Colour. Here are the several reasons highlighted during the day on why diversity matters in the Triratna Buddhist Community:

### 1. Reflecting the Universality of the Dharma

The Dharma, or the Buddha's teachings, is universal, addressing the fundamental human condition and the path to enlightenment. It transcends cultural, racial, and social boundaries. A diverse community embodies this universality, demonstrating that the Dharma is relevant and accessible to people from all walks of life. This inclusivity affirms that the teachings are not confined to any particular group but are open to everyone seeking spiritual growth.

Depending on our local demographics, the people who walk through our doors, engage with us online or choose to deepen their spiritual journey within Triratna, can represent the local situations we serve.

### 2. Enriching Spiritual Practice

Diversity brings a wealth of perspectives, experiences, and practices that can significantly enrich spiritual life. Members from different cultural backgrounds contribute unique insights and methods of practice, fostering a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the Dharma. This variety can inspire creative approaches to meditation, ritual, and community activities, making our expression and practice more dynamic and inclusive.

### 3. Promoting Compassion and Understanding

Interacting with people from diverse backgrounds fosters greater compassion and understanding. It challenges individuals to move beyond their preconceptions and biases, cultivating an open-hearted acceptance of others. This practice of compassion



and empathy is at the heart of the Buddhist path and is essential for personal and community growth.

#### **4. Encouraging Non-harm and Ethical Sensitivity**

By embracing diversity, the Triratna Buddhist Community actively engages in addressing suffering with kindness and compassion. Recognising the historical and ongoing marginalisation of certain groups, our community can take steps to ensure inclusivity. This can involve creating safe and welcoming spaces for people of colour thereby reflecting the Buddhist principles of non-harm and ethical sensitivity.

#### **5. Enhancing Community Resilience**

A diverse community is more resilient and adaptable. It can draw on a wider range of experiences and resources to navigate challenges and changes. In a multicultural world, the ability to understand and integrate diverse perspectives is crucial for the sustainability and growth of any community. This resilience is particularly important for the Triratna Buddhist Community as it seeks to remain relevant and impactful in a rapidly changing world.

#### **6. Deepening Global Connection**

A commitment to diversity facilitates global outreach and connections. As the Triratna Buddhist Community expands internationally, a diverse membership base can bridge cultural gaps and foster greater solidarity, especially in parts of the world where Triratna isn't currently present. This global perspective

enriches the community's collective wisdom and allows for a more comprehensive application of the Dharma across different cultures and societies.

#### **7. Fulfilling the Bodhisattva Ideal**

Sangharakshita taught and encouraged us as practitioners to awaken the Bodhisattva ideal along with encouraging a more authentic expression of what it means to be a true individual. The ideal of the Bodhisattva involves aspiring to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. Embracing diversity is a practical expression of this ideal, as it involves working towards the liberation and well-being of all individuals, regardless of their background. By fostering an inclusive and diverse community, Triratna members express the Bodhisattva's commitment to universal compassion and wisdom.

### **Conclusion**

Diversity is not merely a desirable attribute but a necessity for Triratna, if we want to deepen and develop both as individuals in our practice, and as a global movement, in community with one another. It reflects the universal nature of the Dharma, enriches spiritual practice, promotes compassion, encourages non-harm and ethical sensitivity, enhances community resilience, facilitates global connections, and goes towards fulfilling the Bodhisattva ideal.

As the community continues to grow and evolve, its commitment to diversity will be crucial in nurturing a vibrant, relevant, and compassionate Sangha.

