

Activity Report of The Atisha Charitable Trust



THE ATISHA CHARITABLE TRUST, HEADQUARTERS

2021

Activity Report of The Atisha Charitable Trust for the year 2021

The year 2021 could well have been said to have been paradoxical for our experiences. While it did prove to be testing in some ways, it also had, on the other hand, brought about possibilities unexpected as many are well aware that it has been the second year of the pandemic. And those familiar with us know well that this Trust has been running on a charter and methodology independent and divergent from the prevailing Buddhist organisations.

The unconventional approach of our functions to adapt to the third millennium requires that we remain autonomous. There has never been a central authority of a Buddhist Papal like head but the approval of one's Spiritual Guide (Guru). And, as we do not toe the policies or follow diktats from any other leadership and their conformist's followings, we will have few friends from fellow Buddhists. Thus, the complications faced by us in the past could have magnified, particularly during the plague, but happily, for us, conditions seemed to be at bay!

Being quarantined from the masses and restricted in our movements was not a significant hindrance. Freed from the cacophonous hustle and bustle of our neighbourhood's urban and rural lifestyles, we have solitude which is crucial and desirable for a life of study and contemplation. We are neither strangers to being side-lined, segregated and ostracised. Our past experiences have given us the strength and assistance of a handful of dedicated few. Their contributions and faith have been vital to our survival and smooth sailing through turbulent times. We, as always, are grateful for the enduring support of the Atisha India/Tibet Funds in the Netherlands and other patrons and friends. Without their help, we could not have been where we stand today!

The Annual operations not undertaken



Figure 1: A group picture of visiting monks and KMC members, 1st January 2021

Drawbacks experienced in 2021 were as follows: Several activities related to the few social projects impacted were expected, from all the norms and restrictions imposed, due to the outbreak of the Covid-19. We have not conducted our quarterly Allopathic Medical Camps (in collaboration with the Sai Seva Trust) or the Chinese (Homeopathic Taiwanese) Medical Camps

for two years. Due to the restrictions on travel everywhere, our Taiwanese friends and teams of doctors would hence not make it to our headquarters here in Mysore.

Even the quarterly and monthly contributions that we have been making to the State Government funded Government Higher Primary Schools (GHPS) in three villages had been banned, as were other organisations. The additional provision of the blessed eatables and drinks (Prashadam), held as sacraments offered during our annual 'Ritual Feast' (Ghanachakra), served as an opportunity to distribute eatables to the village of Arasinakere and its GHPS School and Kindergarten (Anganwadi), since 2013. But, this too had to be discontinued. I was further obliged to cancel my teaching tour to European destinations, and this has been telling on the 'Project Hand-out' initiated by myself in 2012. There have been restrictions on gatherings of above ten and 'social distancing' imposed; public relations and hosting guests have been impossible.

The foreign funds that we receive as remittances every quarterly into our nominated bank account (for foreign funds only) are permissible under the legal denomination of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) regulation, granted by the Ministry of Home (MOH), India, as per the law. Under this regulation, there is currently no limitation on the amount received as a remittance. Nevertheless, those funds need to be used for the avowed aims of one's organisation, with almost zero balance to show every quarterly and by the end of the year. As a Trust under the said regulation, we cannot hoard the funds, except when designating it as 'Fixed Deposits', as permitted by law.



Figure 2: Felicitating guests visiting the ACT headquarters on the 14th February 2021

We do not, or rather, have rarely had the benefit of domestic funds from within the country. We neither have the distinction of being supported by zealous votaries, donors or voluntary assistance from within the vicinity. Our functions subsist solely on foreign funds. Hence, with limited space to fulfil our obligations, as stated above, we engaged in serving other goals as enshrined in our bylaws. Friends and benefactors of this Trust know that the upkeep of the Kundeling Monastic community (KMC) stands as the principal objective. In addition to this are the working team of the Atisha Charitable Trust (ACT), which are vital to the organisation's function.

What we could fulfil as per our objectives

In further highlighting the achievable, four different tasks undertaken were part of the ACT aims: the sponsorship scheme; hosting Buddhist teachers for boosting the theolo-

gical curriculum; augmentation of infrastructure and the Project Paricharya (an undertaking of ceremonial rites for the well-being of all). A brief description of each of these is as follows:

The Trust emphasises support for the sick, disabled, those needing assistance in education and scholarship pursuits, and struggling Buddhist scholars who need financial help. Providing help with medical bills and minor surgeries, providing school fees for those unable to afford and donating annual financial provisions to promising Buddhist scholars from other institutions have been an age-old practice of the ACT. This year, we made a second financial contribution to the State Chief Minister's Covid relief fund.



Figure 3: A Donation of 3 Lakhs (300,000 Rs) presented to Mysuru District In charge Minister for the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for Covid-19 on the 22nd May

Despite the travel ban, the year provided an opportunity to host Buddhist doctorates and scholars. All members of the KMC and visiting scholars were vaccinated and stranded in their locations, making it easy for them to visit Mysore during flexible hours. Visiting scholars have imparted classes on Tibetan Grammar and philosophy besides giving practical demonstrations on the practice and ritual engagements of the Ganden tradition of Mahayana

Vajrayana Buddhism. Philosophical education is crucial for Buddhist monastics, combined with practical application and pastoral duties involving ritual service and counselling. However, this training becomes relevant when complimented with a certain degree of modern-day education and general knowledge. The Venerable Geshes, Dakpa Loden and Losang Kelsang were special visiting teachers for the spiritual training. Our teacher for the secular education programme Mrs Geeta conducted classes whenever the lockdowns were relaxed.

Renovation and upgrading works are part of the responsibilities in running edifices and a landed property measuring nine acres and forty guntas (local measurement) belonging to the Trust. It further involves the administrative affairs, its staff, and the labour involved in the upkeep of a decent garden. Whatever the circumstances, matters related to those above must carry on, whether there be sunshine or a storm!

Two occasions had provided the possibility of inviting a team of expert Monks for commissioning the Project Paricharya. It happened during two separate events at the



Figure 4: Ritual demonstrative class in progress, by Geshe Dakpa Loden on the 16th June 2021

beginning of the year, when the lockdown had been briefly relaxed and at the end, when it was about to be abolished. We have made it a point to provide details of the Paricharya elsewhere, particularly to the contributing patrons and those interested in the ritual procedures. Some have mistakenly concluded that rituals as the main focus of our activities.

To summarise, there are hardly a few who do not cherish peace, physical well-being, prosperity, and harmony. Yet, few comprehend that it is for the individual to sow the causes and create its conditions. We have always dedicated Paricharyas to the good of all. And this is what it is about, and all one needs to know.



Figure 5: Ritual offerings for the prosperity Rite

A separate 'Financial Report for 2021' is available adjacent to this 'Annual Report.' We hope that it provides insight into the nature of expenses involved for the year.

From the President's desk, on Monday the 19th April 2022.



Figure 6: The Eatables and Drinks offered meant for Distribution to the poor

Subhamastu Sarvajagam !

May there be auspiciousness and well-being in the universe!