



The  
**Abhayaratna Trust**  
Taking care of one another

Annual Review 2023



## The Abhayaratna Trust Annual Review 2023

Throughout 2023 the Abhayaratna Trust continued its work to facilitate the flow of generosity and care within the Order by giving grants and running appeals for Order members in hardship.

In 2023 we saw a significant increase both in the numbers and types of need in Order members, across all ages, that required support. The global economic environment continued to be very challenging to many, due to high interest rates, high rent costs, high inflation and rising fuel bills. In such times of challenge we need to be particularly vigilant to ensure that those most vulnerable are looked after and supported, in their everyday and Dharma lives.

The Trust also continued its longer term strategic work, to develop a more explicit culture of care in local sanghas (Local Care Networks) and infrastructure (e.g. housing) to respond to the evolving care and living needs of members of the Triratna Buddhist Order.

This Annual Review tells you more about our work and what we have been able to achieve with the generous support from Order members and others across the world.

## Foreword

by Dharmashura,  
Chair of the Abhayaratna Trust

Some time ago the Abhayaratna Trust was established to help the Triratna Buddhist Order realise the vision, entrusted to us by the founder, Sangharakshita, to look after one another, and particularly those in difficulty.

Over the years we have seen some of the serious challenges facing Order members, many of whom have given their adult lives to the service of the Dharma. Supporting them all may be a daunting prospect, but it is our hope that, by working together across the Triratna Community, we will be able to make a real difference.

The Abhayaratna Trust has helped financially (as is our remit) in many very difficult situations. And we will continue to do so. But we are now also working to draw attention to the wider range of issues that need to be addressed by us all. Hence, for example, our encouragement of the development of Local Care Networks.

To do all this we continue to depend on the hard work of our small but dedicated team, supported by trustees, local

representatives and other volunteers, and the generosity of our donors and legators. And we are really grateful. But there is now more than ever to do.

Please help if you can, by encouraging friends in the Order to ask for the help they may need, by including the Abhayaratna Trust in your will, or by making a donation today at

[www.abhayaratnatrust.org/donate](http://www.abhayaratnatrust.org/donate)

And, if you would like to get more involved, perhaps look into becoming one of our local representatives, or help to organise a Local Care Network within your own Triratna community.





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## Director's Report

by Mahasraddha

When anthropologist Margaret Mead was asked what she considered to be the first sign of civilization in a culture, she said it was a femur (thigh bone) that had been broken and then healed. Mead explained that, in the animal kingdom, if you break your leg, you won't survive long enough for the bone to heal.

A healed broken femur is evidence that someone has taken time to stay with the injured party, carried them to safety, bound up the wound, and tended them through recovery.

I would say this same empathy and connection is at the heart of the life of the Order and the training-for-ordination community. Facilitating this precious connection of Order members to other Order members and the wider sangha globally via generosity is, I would say, one of the key functions of the work of the Abhayaratna Trust.

I feel privileged, and often deeply moved, by the response of the sangha to Order members in need of support. For example, by giving to an appeal or giving to the Trust to enable us to give grants to Order members in hardship (see the reports from Taradakini and Jinavamsa). Both the number and scope of grants increased in 2023. There will be many possible reasons for this:

- A reflection of the difficult global economic circumstances and continuing high rates of inflation and interest rates;
- More Order members becoming aware of the help that Abhayaratna Trust can give;
- The consequences of the ageing demographic of the Order.



## Local care and housing needs

In 2023 we continued to look at broader needs in the Order, including care in local sanghas (Local Care Network project). As more sanghas take up the principles of the Local Care Network project, it is clear that the first step is to get local sanghas simply talking about care as a collective response, finding collective solutions by, for example, identifying what knowledge, skills, time and energy individual sangha members want to give to care in their sangha.

It may be, for example, a sangha member has knowledge and experience of how to navigate and access local authority services; someone else may have DIY skills to offer; another able to give transport to hospital appointments, and so on. I believe that engaging with LCNs will facilitate deeper enjoyment of sangha through looking out for each other as well as facilitating the development of the Brahma

Viharas on and off the cushion. And then there is the area of housing; in the many conversations I have with Order members, we often end up talking about housing, especially if those Order members have no immediate family. In a recent Abhayaratna Trust questionnaire, 78% of respondents said 'yes' or 'maybe' to the question 'are you interested in living with other Order members – e.g. in a co-housing type of situation – now or in the future?'

It's not just the Order's ageing demographic that has ripened the time for looking at housing; there are realistic ventures under active consideration, with people motivated to make them happen.

The Trust will build on work initiated in 2023 to facilitate concrete developments in this area, including feasibility studies and bringing together people with the right skills and experience.

## Building the Trust's resources

The Trust was very active in 2023 in producing various resources that we hope Order members (and beyond) will find useful. These new resources – which include video interviews with Order members who have specific degenerative neurological conditions - added to our existing resources, for example, how to prepare for death.

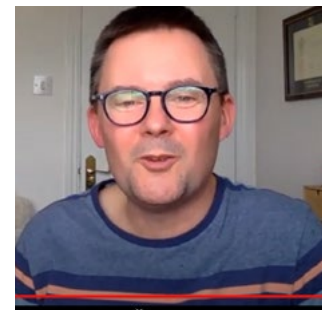
I am deeply grateful for the continued support of our Chair and Board of Trustees, and the small dedicated employed team, who work hard to ensure that the Abhayaratna Trust, based on solid foundations, responds effectively and efficiently to need in the Order.

Also thanks go to our Abhayaratna Trust reps in Centres dotted around the world who help the Trust in various ways, for example, translating our monthly Newsletter into their mother tongue.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our donors in 2023. Your gifts will have had a significant, in some cases even life-changing, impact on an Order member's life.



Dhammadinna lives in a community in East London and was interviewed in the year about co-housing and local care networks.



Our regular interviews with Order members and mitras living with health hardships included the October interview with Miles, a Worcester-based mitra training for ordination and living with motor neurone disease.

## Financial Report

by Visarada, Finance Officer

2023 initially saw a decrease in the money raised in regular donations, a trend which was then largely reversed by a generous response to Mahasraddha's appeal on the Combined Area Order Weekend in August. Other income sources have been a modest boost to the Trust's income, with efforts made to maximise income from interest on the charity's reserves.

Expenditure on general grants dropped slightly, remaining around £20,000. The Trust ran a variety of successful appeals for individuals in 2023, and new funds such as the International Health Fund came fully into play, meeting a variety of needs which would previously have been met by general grants.

The very generous response in previous years to the crisis caused by COVID in India meant that we still had significant resources to help with the ongoing effects of the crisis in 2023. We've made full use of this through the year to benefit Indian Order members, despite increasing restrictions on funds going into India from foreign charities.

Support costs, which are the lion's share of the Trust's running costs, increased by comparison with 2022. This was due to the



necessity to increase the working hours of the team, partly as a result of the operating environments of the Trust but also as a result of growth in the work of the Trust. Team members saw an increased workload created by a more demanding regulatory environment as banks and payment processors introduced tighter controls to deal with fraud and money laundering; we also created and implemented new policies and a stronger framework of financial planning to further improve the long-term fitness of the Trust. In addition, the team has seen a greater complexity and variety of grant applications, many requiring considerable time to find the best ways to help applicants.

Lastly 2023 saw a growing workload arising from the Trust's commitment to its more longer-term, strategic work to address areas of emerging need in the Order.

## Financial picture

	2023	2022
<b>Money received</b>		
General donations	£ 25,803	£31,227
Individual appeals and funds	£41,556	£53,476
Legacy gifts	£0	£73,940
Gift Aid	£5,396	£8,504
Other	£9,922	-£2,081
<b>Total</b>	<b>£82,677</b>	<b>£165,066</b>
<b>Money spent</b>		
General grants	£19,505	£23,723
COVID related grants	£45,850	£57,218
Appeals for individuals	£34,542	£51,777
Grants from other funds	£5,586	£5,358
Fundraising costs	£13,195	£10,063
Management of grants	£12,350	£10,592
Project development	£10,697	£10,095
General running costs	£26,230	£23,501
<b>Total</b>	<b>£167,953</b>	<b>£192,327</b>
<b>Surplus/deficit</b>	<b>-£85,276</b>	<b>£-27,261</b>

The Trust showed a substantial deficit for 2023, but this is part of normal operation and the picture over multiple years needs to be considered. The Trust raised over £200,000 in previous years for its COVID India Fund, and continued to disburse this money; over £40,000 was sent in 2023 which represented half of the deficit.

Similarly, legacies, which are a key part of the Trust's general funding, are by nature an intermittent funding stream. With no legacies received in 2023 the Trust continued to make use of generous legacies from previous years.

The response to Mahasraddha's appeal on the Combined Area Order Weekend demonstrates that the Order sees the value and potential of the Abhayaratna Trust. We have confidence that we can maintain or grow our base of regular donors and attract the legacies that the Trust requires to continue its important work well into the future.

## Grants Programme Report

by Taradakini, Grants  
& Care Co-ordinator



In 2023 our grants programme continued for Order members based anywhere in the world living with financial hardship.

The word 'grant' can be off-putting, implying a wordy process and perhaps a long wait to find out the result – this doesn't answer the needs of those with an urgent situation and it doesn't suit our values, so we continue to offer a friendly and personal approach to grant applications and awards.

Order members generally contact me by phone, text or email, outlining the need or checking if it's appropriate to apply. I ask them for the information we need to be sure the person matches our criteria for a grant - or appeal if this is requested - and put the request to the trustees who make the grant decisions. And the applicant has the answer usually within a few days, or less in an emergency.

Last year we received 136 requests for support and made grants in 126 cases. We have three main categories of grant: Retreats/solitarities/Order gatherings/travel to these; Living costs, such as utility bills, food, relocation costs; Health and Wellbeing grants, such as dentistry, operations where no

state care is possible; plus some miscellaneous grants for things like equipment or personal items.

In 2023 of the 126 grants we made, except in India, 38% were for retreats, etc., 50% were for living costs and 12% for health.

The increase in grants for health, including mental wellbeing, was supported by the Order Health Fund, which was launched in 2022, encouraging Order members to give a little each month to support those whose health needs cannot be met by the state or the applicant. In 2023 we made our first grants from this fund, distributed among Order members in Mexico and the UK.

Overall the grants programme work continues to be rewarding and much appreciated by the recipients - not only the financial support but the sense of support from the sangha through the Trust.

We also continue to offer non-financial support where we can – such as advice on the availability of grants beyond Abhayaratna Trust and housing support.



### Many of the grants we make each year go to support Order members in India.

In India our grants programme co-ordinator, Karmavajra (pictured), supplies details of those in need of grants. 2023 was a quieter year than last and 62 Order members in India were given grants to go on retreat or solitary; 10 were given health grants and 13 livelihood grants – the tail end of the post-COVID programme to enable Order members who lost their work during the pandemic to start or restart their own businesses.

### Here's what Karmavajra had to say about one of the health grants we made in 2023:

*'We extend our heartfelt thanks to Abhayaratna Trust for the generous support, which has enriched the lives of our fellow Order members. Your contributions have made a significant impact, allowing us to care, for example, for Dhammachari Akashabhadrā who is battling dementia.\**

*The members of the Agra Centre have come together to provide the care and support he needs. We feel that we have become a family, taking care of Order members who are in need. This beautifully exemplifies the unity of our international sangha and the values we cherish.*

*Let's continue to embrace compassion, reinforcing the strength of our sangha family.'*

*\*since the time of writing, Akashabhadrā died in January 2024*



When our grant limit doesn't cover the need, we usually run an appeal to our supporters and the Order to raise the amount needed. We ran five appeals for individual Order members in 2023. Here's what one of those who benefitted said afterwards:

*'Thank you so much to everyone who contributed to the Abhayaratna Trust appeal to help me cover my medical bills. Having this financial and emotional burden lifted is wonderful. It allows me to just get on with life and with teaching meditation and Buddhism - which is what I love doing more than anything. I really am touched that so many people rallied round to help. It's a beautiful thing.'*  
- Bodhipaksa





### **An innovative programme for women**

Having consulted the women's Regional Order Convenors in India, this year we began a programme of modest grants to support the health of women Order members there. The first grants, of around 20,000 rupees (approximately £200) each, enabled women to, for example, pay for doctor's appointments or buy prescription or traditional medicines.



## Donor Communications Report

by Jinavamsa,  
Donor Communications Officer

We are well aware that all the work we do is due to the generosity of our donors. In 2023 the flow of generosity to our appeals for individual Order members in financial need has continued, and we have seen an increase in the number of new regular donors.

We rely on our regular donors to fund our grants programme and contribute to running costs. Forty additional people began to donate monthly to us this year, meaning at the time of writing this we have 245, mostly Order-member, regular donors.

This year we ran five appeals for individuals with differing hardship needs; including one which was a 'private appeal', which means the money was raised from a list of people provided by the recipient and we did not publicise it in our newsletters or on social media. All of these appeals reached or overran their target, raising a total of £27,895.

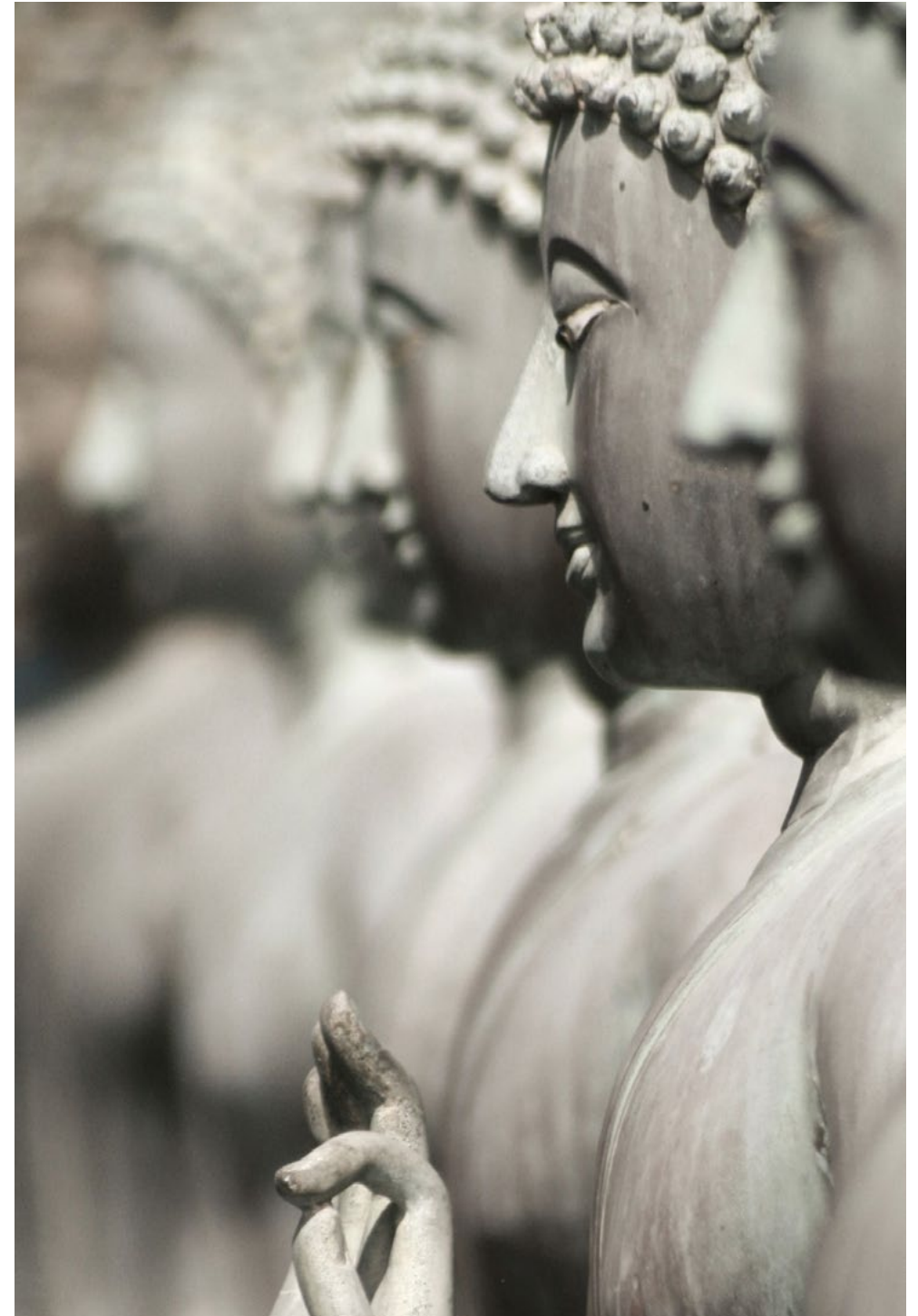
We raised money for Amoghavajra's wheelchair so that he can maintain his independence in Ipswich; USA health costs for Bodhipaksa; and living costs for Jutika and Sahaja in Ireland.



In each case the appeal made a significant difference to their lives, including feeling supported by the Triratna Community.

We have now made it easier to donate in different currencies via the Donate page on our website, and in 2023 will be working on making the site more mobile-friendly. At the same time, we still accept cheques for those who prefer to donate that way.

We began a successful experiment in 2022 of raising money for Order members in need of financial help by setting up galleries of their artwork on our website for people to donate for a specific piece of art. As well as raising necessary funds for them, this can help their work become better known and potentially help with their future finances.





## Let loving kindness be your lasting legacy

Whatever the reason, if there's a health or living-costs difficulty, or an inability to afford a retreat or Order gathering, the Abhayaratna Trust can respond. This is made possible, in part, because a handful of Order members have left us legacies, resourcing us to support a small team and expand our grants programme around the world.

The more resourced we are by legacies, the more we can respond, improving the lives of Order members in hardship which in turn supports their Dharma practice.

Leaving a legacy to the Abhayaratna Trust will help any Order members in hardship, including those on low incomes who have previously committed their working lives to directly serving our Order and Community through our institutions.

You can choose to include the Abhayaratna Trust in your will by leaving a specific sum or a proportion of your estate. Have a look at our website [www.abhayaratnatrust.org/legacies](http://www.abhayaratnatrust.org/legacies) for an example of the wording that could be used in your will. It's important to include our website address [www.abhayaratnatrust.org](http://www.abhayaratnatrust.org) as well, for our most up-to-date contact details. You can also add a codicil if your will is already made.

Get in touch with any of the team or trustees to discuss legacies and how a bequest would likely impact our work on behalf of the Order.



Support the work of the Trust in whatever way you can, so we can continue to serve the Order by facilitating the flow of care for the benefit of all:

Support our Worldwide Fund or Order Health Fund at [www.abhayaratnatrust.org/donate](http://www.abhayaratnatrust.org/donate)

Be a Trust rep for Order members around your Centre – find out more from [taradakini@abhayaratnatrust.org](mailto:taradakini@abhayaratnatrust.org)

Engage in discussion with others in your local sangha to develop a Local Care Network – see [www.abhayaratnatrust.org/local-care-network](http://www.abhayaratnatrust.org/local-care-network) and email [mahasraddha@abhayaratnatrust.org](mailto:mahasraddha@abhayaratnatrust.org)

Include us in your will – have a look at [www.abhayaratnatrust.org/legacies](http://www.abhayaratnatrust.org/legacies) or email [jinavamsa@abhayaratnatrust.org](mailto:jinavamsa@abhayaratnatrust.org) for more information



*'May someone always step forward in my life when I'm in trouble, when I haven't quite got enough money, when I'm a bit lost, maybe in a city that I don't know. May somebody always step forward and give me the support that I need in that moment. I think this is why I give money to the Abhayaratna Trust; because I see that it has become a mechanism for this very gesture in the world, specifically in the Order.'*

- Saddhanandi



*'I'm delighted the Trust exists. I'm delighted I'm able to contribute to it, and I really would encourage anybody so minded to make sure they do make a contribution to the Trust. It really is an investment, not only for those in need of assistance but in us as a community of brothers and sisters.'*

- Nagabodhi



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**Our Trustees**

The Abhayaratna Trust currently has eight Order member trustees, who give their time and skills voluntarily to maintain an overview of the Trust's work, make important policy and grant decisions and support the employed team.

During 2023 the Trust heartily thanked and said goodbye to Bodhaniya and Amoghavajra; and warmly welcomed Kavyamani, Padmajata and Akashamitra as new trustees to work alongside Dharmashura, Shraddhalocani, Shantisthana, Dayanutta and Dayasara.

**Keeping in touch**

We now keep our donors and supporters informed through regular video interviews within our monthly emailed newsletters. We also post regularly on social media such as Facebook, Instagram and the Buddhist Centre Online. Our YouTube channel now has 123 subscribers and there have been almost 1,000 views of our various videos over this year.



**Subscribe to our mailing list and receive our monthly newsletters**



**Access past newsletters**

The Abhayaratna Trust  
is a charity registered  
in England and Wales,  
registration number  
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