

BODHI TIMES

Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight
Founding Patron: His Holiness XIV Dalai Lama

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Our goal is to improve health, education and the environment in developing countries by providing a hook, not a fish. BODHI was founded in 1989 on the principle of skillful, compassionate action and is neither religious nor political. We have supporters and advisers from many faiths. We encourage your ideas and acts of kindness. Realising the interdependence of all beings is in our enlightened self-interest. Now more than ever, if we don't work together to reduce the world's much-discussed problems, then who will?

In the slums

While communication with the Dapodi Clinic in Pune, India is being improved, BODHI's funds (A\$3,000/US\$2,492) will be used for a six-month project in the Ramnagar and Ghosavi slums of Hadapsar (East Pune). Included are vaccination of 0-5 year olds, provision of daily nutrition supplements for 50 malnourished children 1½-5-year-olds and monthly weighing and health checks for 0-5-year-olds. This project has the advantage of using an existing infrastructure, the jeep, the doctor, the administration, and of a more direct line of communication.

'We have been working in the area with a mobile clinic doing vaccinations for over a year, and so are familiar with the area and its problems,' Dh Lokamitra says. 'A proper hut will give us the opportunity not only to do what we are doing more effectively but also to do much more, as well as to assess whether we should work in the area on a long-term basis. Our health workers are women are from the local slums so they know the situation and can follow up. They have good basic education, and the doctor gives them basic training.'

In these slums live approximately 30,000 people, almost half of whom are children. While dwellers include Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Muslims, most are originally Dalits (Hindus formerly known as Untouchables). Most have migrated from eastern Maharashtra in time of drought or from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar due to poverty. 'Most, if employed, are drivers, sellers of scrap, masons, painters, blacksmiths, washer women and men, housecleaners etc,' Dh Lokamitra says. 'There are severe educational and health problems. In terms of health basically they are very poor, ignorant, living in extremely unhygienic conditions with little or no help from the government or NGOs. In terms of education, adult literacy will be minimal especially for women; there is little in the way of kindergarten education available, which means they get a very poor start.'

'Thirty per cent of the houses are mud, 25% tin sheds and 25% brick and cement. Only 10% have solid roofs. Ninety per cent have no running water and use common taps outside. Most have no toilets, but use government-built common toilets.'

Budget for 6 months:	Total IRs/-90,000
Rent	9,000
2 health workers	12,000
Cook	6,000
Nurse	18,000
Food supplements for 50 children	40,000
Fuel & travelling costs	5,000

BODHI would like to add health education, including in health awareness camps. 'These work with local mothers on matters such as family planning, breast feeding, anaemia, cleanliness and treatment of diarrhoea,' Dh Lokamitra says. 'These also differ according to season. In the monsoon they talk more about water.'



Images from the Ramnagar slums

Children playing on rubbish heap, wild pigs scavenging (yes, they bite) and women making quilts for their homes out of old cloth rags.

Courtesy Milind Shakya



New Revolving Sheep Bank

Expanding Sheep ... Again ... and Again

Thanks to three grants, BODHI is expanding the Revolving Sheep Bank in a *third* nomad area in Tibet. **Phase 3** is about to begin in an area adjacent to the first two, when Prof Melvyn C Goldstein returns to Tibet this year. The trial sheep bank (2000-2005) is now self-sufficient. **Phase 2** was implemented in 2006 in an area adjacent to the trial, and is now fully funded by the Bridge Fund.

Funding to begin Phase 3 comes from three U.S. grants: Dharma Gaia Trust and Rainforest Information Network, which donated US\$1,000 and US\$500 respectively, and an anonymous donor who gave US\$3,450. Donations from supporters enable us to fund Years 2 and 3 and part of Year 4, at US\$4,950 per annum. Once again, your generosity has made a big difference.

Special thanks to an anonymous donor for A\$5,000 for the Revolving Sheep Bank (mostly).

The right to be fully human

The following is adapted from an essay Colin wrote for a global competition on population policy and human rights. Selected essayists were invited to a workshop in Berlin in February, 2007, which was organised by the Irmgard Coninx Stiftung Foundation (<http://www.irmgard-coninx-stiftung.de>). The human rights activists and junior academics who attended came from all inhabited continents, though none were from Russia, a country with a very serious decline in population, health and human rights. See website for full text and references.

TWO COMMUNITIES AND PROPOSITIONS

This essay pleads for greater co-operation and dialogue between two mutually suspicious communities. On one side are human rights advocates, anti-globalisation activists and feminists. On the other are a small number of academics, activists and development workers who argue that fertility and population growth rates are crucial determinants of progress towards greater prosperity, freedom and human rights.

My argument rests on two main propositions. **First**, the social, economic and developmental benefits of slower population growth rates have been substantially underestimated in recent decades. Because of the sustained effort of a handful of activists, the importance of this principle is being belatedly rediscovered. For example, an enquiry into this question by the British Parliament (whose report was released in January, 2007, www.appg-popdevrh.org.uk) emphatically agreed with this point. [Ed: Colin provided a written submission to this enquiry on behalf of BODHI]. Summarising this evidence, Dr Martha Campbell, Professor John Cleland and two co-authors published a paper in the prestigious journal *Science*, called 'Return of the Population Growth Factor,' in March, 2007.

In the post-WWII period, there was widespread economic and political understanding of this

principle. The Green Revolution, which started in the late 1960s, won a temporary reprieve in the ancient race between the stork and the plough. Within fifteen years of Norman Borlaug's warning that the Green Revolution should be regarded as a precious opportunity to slow population growth, the view that high population growth is harmful for human development came under vigorous attack from a coalition of forces led by the government of US President Ronald Reagan. Representing vested interests such as the oil industry, and intensely threatened by the implications of the 'Limits to Growth' arguments the Reagan administration called for free markets, including for population size. Gullible supporters claimed that since no limits to growth actually exist, and since the invisible hand of the market would maximise public goods, any attempt to regulate population growth would not only be pointless but also would harm human rights.

My **second** major proposition is that it is more likely that inclusive economic growth will generate improved human rights than the converse. (Leave aside, for the time being, the vexed definition of what economic growth measures and constitutes.) That is, while the relationship between economic growth and freedom is far from straightforward, in the main freedom is more likely to flourish in a rich society than in a poor society. This is likely even if existing wealth is distributed fairly evenly in both societies.

(The following argument also ignores the fact that much wealth in rich societies is stolen, appropriated or otherwise kept from the poor so that their comparatively high freedom is likely to have a narrow scope.) For a start, people in rich societies are more likely to be educated and have the tools to develop their human potential than are people in poor societies. Though people in Singapore are neither democratic nor free, I would much rather be born there than in a terribly poor

country like Burundi. Poverty is no guarantor of human rights, as the current situation in Zimbabwe clearly shows.

CONTESTING FREEDOMS AND RIGHTS

Obviously, choosing one's family size is a human freedom. In calling for a lower population growth rate in order to accelerate development (in countries such as Pakistan, Uganda or East Timor where the total fertility rate is much greater than replacement levels), I am not arguing for an **enforced** reduction in family size, nor even for explicit economic or social penalties (such as restricted promotion) tied to family size. Instead, I am calling for a greater recognition of the role of high population growth in undermining development, including by academic and political leadership. I am also calling for the implementation of social policies which will accelerate the demographic transition. The most important of these factors are well known. They include universal primary school education, the lifting of taboos concerning discussion of this topic, and the availability of cheap contraceptives, especially condoms.

Feminists, human rights activists and the many development workers who remain ignorant about or silent on this issue need to engage in this debate. One response from this community is to argue that the open discussion of this topic will inevitably lead to abuses, such as the compulsory sterilisation of minorities. In fact, denying the role of smaller families in economic take-off helps to perversely maintain poverty and inequality.

Of course, slowing human population growth is not enough to solve our human predicament (illustrated, for example, by the increasingly dire predictions concerning climate change). The tension between the right to reproduce and the struggle to develop is hardly unique. All acts of co-operation necessarily entail a trade-off between competing freedoms and responsibilities. As a society, we choose to restrict the freedom to drive on both sides of the road (except in Delhi on the way to the airport!)

Nor are human restrictions on fertility a recent invention. While a few demographers might still claim otherwise, there is increasing recognition that contraception is ancient, by methods including prolonged lactation, herbs, taboos and possibly other means.

SKewed AGE DISTRIBUTIONS

One reason to lower fertility is to reduce 'youth bulges'. These refer to concentrations of young men who are poorly educated, under-employed, (rationally) resentful, comparatively easy to manipulate and potentially violent. Such men are vulnerable to recruitment into activities which can damage society, such as gangs, rebel groups and terrorists. A youth bulge was pivotal in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, when land scarcity forced many young unmarried men to unsuccessfully seek work in the city.



The harmful effects of distorted age structures have also been observed in elephant populations, many of which have been traumatised by human and elephant population pressure. Older elephants are sometimes killed in the presence of their young. Charles Siebert writes in the *New York Times* that such elephants exhibit behavior typically associated with post-traumatic stress disorder, including 'asocial behavior, inattentive mothering and hyperaggression.'

Deafness in Nepal



Dr Sonal Singh writes from the U.S.: 'Among over 28 million people in Nepal, nearly 16% have some degree of hearing loss. Only a very few schools provide education for deaf children in Nepal. According to the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, there are only 30 Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) physicians in the entire country, or one ENT physician for every 600,000 people. Ear surgeries are only done in Kathmandu (the capital) and Pokhara (about 125 miles from Kathmandu). More than 55% of the otitis media cases are seen in school-going children. Every second case of hearing impairment in children between 5-15 years is caused by otitis media. About 1.7% of the population (360,000 people) has severe to profound hearing loss. More than 35% of the hearing impairment is preventable.'

'Data show that children with severe to profound hearing loss who do not receive early identification suffer from substantial deficits in reading comprehension. By 8 years of age, these children are already almost 1.5 years behind their peers. That gap continues to widen over time, with the average deaf child or youth never exceeding a fourth-grade reading level. To overcome some of these challenges, BODHI launched the Train the Trainer Project in Nepal to support educational efforts for these children. One of the students, Sangeetha Basnet, is well into the second year of BODHI's Train the Trainer Project at the School for the Deaf in Naxal in Kathmandu, Nepal. According to Ms Kiran Sinha, BODHI's local contact person who also teaches at the school, Sangeetha is doing quite well in class and has just been promoted to her next year after finishing her finals. Sangeetha is thankful to BODHI and its supporters for their continued support.'

Funding for this year is in the memory of Simon Brown. Will you help next year, for only US\$600/A\$720?

Thank you

Drs Kym & Richard Boughton, NSW, Australia
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 Jeffrey Whitman, California, USA

Special thanks to the Australian Jumma community.

Please visit our website for detailed information and photos of all our current projects

We need your help

Thanks to your generosity, BODHI has supported many exciting and innovative projects. To continue, we need your help. Please send your donation, in U.S. or Australian dollars, to an address below. Contact us for details of direct-debit facilities.

Donations by U.S. and Australian taxpayers are tax-deductible

Australian cheques must be made out to 'BODHI Australia Overseas Relief Fund' to be tax-deductible

Udana Special Children's Centre, Sri Lanka

Meet some of the students



Mr Jaya Dharmasiri, one of the founders and the Australian representative of the Udana Special Children's Centre, a school for children with special needs in Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital, says, 'Udana's students include two autistic children, two with Downs Syndrome, two with cerebral palsy, two with learning and hearing difficulties and two with learning and walking difficulties.'

The parents of the children and the care providers run the school. There are three teachers, one specially trained, and two trainees. The teachers are paid half of what they are worth. The school rents a hall in a Buddhist temple for a reasonable fee. The temple premises were not designed for children with special needs. Certain security changes, for example fences and lockable gates, have to be installed.'

Udana needs a van as well as funds for a teacher's salary (A\$1,800/US\$1,500 per annum); school fees (A\$660/US\$552 p/a); books, manuals and guides (A\$500/US\$417 p/a); and skills development aids, such as videos and DVDs (A\$1,000/US\$833 p/a).

Donations may be made to BODHI for the Udana Special Children's Centre

New gift available

Susan's new cookbook, *Heritage Highway Cookery, Favourite Recipes From Along Tasmania's Midlands Highway (Mostly)*, is now available. Again, she is donating part of the profits to BODHI. Please contact BODHI to purchase this unique gift at the cost of \$20 + \$5 postage and handling.

Susan's earlier book, *Midlands Morsels, Favourite Recipes from the Heart of Tasmania (Mostly)* is available for \$15 + \$5 postage and handling.

**Founding Patron
His Holiness XIV Dalai Lama
1989 Nobel Laureate for Peace**

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Bulletin Board

Human rights

Miss Emilia Della Torre (see below) is assisting BODHI Community Adviser Kabita Chakma to prepare a portfolio on the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh for the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), in Geneva. The Hon Justice John Dowd has requested this portfolio in the hope it will lead to an ICJ committee being sent to investigate the human rights situation in the CHT and also, possibly the placement of UN monitors.



Courtesy Chris Queen

Dr. Christopher Queen with (clockwise) Dr. Namdeo Nimgade, his wife Hira and son, Dr. Ashok Nimgade, in their Nagpur home on October 3, 2006. Namdeo Nimgade was the second Dalit to earn a PhD in the United States, following his mentor, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (pictured behind). The Nimgades are holding a photo taken on their wedding day in 1954. Ashok Nimgade, a graduate of Harvard University, practices medicine in Boston. The family met in Nagpur to celebrate the Golden Jubilee (50th anniversary) of the Buddhist conversions initiated by Dr. Ambedkar in Nagpur in 1956. An autobiography by the senior Dr. Nimgade is being prepared for publication in English.

From the literature ... and more

EXTREME TB. XDR (extremely drug-resistant) TB is a new and frightening strain of tuberculosis, first discovered in 2006. 'We are now on the threshold of the appearance of a strain of TB that is resistant to every medicine known to science,' said Paul Nunn, coordinator of the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s drug-resistance unit. Among the areas affected by XDR-TB are South Africa and Russia. Regular TB drugs cost around US\$100, whereas MDR (multiple drug-resistant) TB drugs cost about US\$35,000 and need 18 months of treatment.

A recent editorial in *Tropical Medicine and International Health* laments that both private and public health practitioners fail to take TB control seriously enough. The authors advocate engaging all care providers (including informal health practitioners) as a major component in WHO's new Stop TB Strategy. Other recent studies are uncovering new ways to detect active TB, even in cases which are sputum negative.

LEADING AIDS SCIENTIST MURDERED.

Kenya's leading AIDS researcher Professor Job Bwayo (famous for identifying the Nairobi prostitutes apparently naturally resistant to HIV) was shot by carjackers in Nairobi in March. 'Kenya's well-earned prominence in the global HIV vac-

cine research arena is a great testimony to Prof. Bwayo's scientific leadership and determination,' said Geoffrey Lamb, Chairman of the Board, International AIDS Vaccine Initiative. 'What a great achievement, and what a bitter loss.'

BODHI HAS MATCHED FUNDS FROM THE

Australian Jumma community to donate A\$1,000/US\$ 830 to Shishu Koruna Sangha (SKS) in Kolkata (Calcutta), India. Mr S.K. Chakma writes, 'At present we are running a senior secondary school (Nursery to XII), 5 student hostels, a health care centre, a technical institute, a centre for study and development of traditional tribal crafts and arts; and Bodhicariya Vihar (Temple). The school is co-educational and located in the midst of sylvan setting.'

This tragedy exemplifies a downward spiral typical of many developing countries. One loss of 'human capital' promotes another. An example is the brain drain.

Meanwhile, in April, 15-year-old Isaiah Gakuyo, born HIV positive, is reported to have been killed because of his disease by his uncle and guardian in Nyeri, central Kenya.

COLIN ON POPULATION, CLIMATE CHANGE AND SECURITY.

In recent months, Colin has given five invited lectures on population policy, human carrying capacity, globalisation and the security implications of climate change to audiences in Canada and Australia. In Ottawa, he spoke at the invitation of a research group affiliated with the Canadian government on population and the environment. (http://policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?redir=on&pagenm=ev_pas_index&etime=past#event20851.) He also spoke to a futures group at the Canadian Defense Department.

LANCET PUBLISHER PROMOTES THE ARMS TRADE.

Colin and colleagues recently submitted letters calling for scientific publishers (including the *Lancet* and *New Scientist* publisher Reed Elsevier) to declare their conflicts of interest.

WANTED

GRAPHIC ARTIST/DESIGNER
PUBLISHER

Susan has begun working on a book to celebrate BODHI's 20th anniversary in 2009. We would like it to be a thing of beauty.

New volunteer

Miss Emilia Della Torre is our latest BODHI volunteer. She is a human rights lawyer with over fifteen years experience in the field. Over the years, Emilia has worked with the United Nations, government and non-government organisations on many human rights issues. These include the rights of indigenous peoples, women, refugees, religious minorities and others. Her publications in the field include a manual, *How to Make a Complaint to the United Nations Human Rights Committee* (White Possum Press). This is used by government and non-government organisations in over thirteen nations. She divides her time between *pro bono* legal work, consultant activities and travel. 'I am really looking forward to working with the Jumma people in



Courtesy Emilia Della Torre

Asia and in Australia,' Emilia says. 'I hope I can make a contribution in this area. I am certain that my life is about to become enriched through this new and exciting experience.'

Passings

Mr John Bell of Devonport, Tasmania died on 7 November, 2006. 'He was a honourable and generous man,' says his son, Dr Scott Bell. We at BODHI concur.

John's support was a major factor in our decision to expand the Revolving Sheep Bank. Scott will maintain John's donations in his father's name, which will help the sheep banks and which we greatly appreciate.

