



Dear

## The pandemic in India

[Karunadeepa](#) and the Bahujan Hitay Women and Child Welfare Society, Pune, continue their heroic work in COVID-`19 affected Pune. The pandemic is devastating India at the moment, as is widely reported, with horrifying stories and scenes. India, officially, has had well over 300,000 new cases identified *in several single days this week*. This figure is likely to be a severe [underestimate](#). Corruption has led to a [black market](#) including of anti-viral medication.

The pandemic is deeply affecting our partners in India. For example, Karunadeepa wrote, in part (received April 22, 2021) (this is slightly edited)

"As you know, the covid situation in India and in Pune is getting bad to worst, and this second wave has turned to be fatal for many families, if one person becomes positive in a family then in few days the entire family become positive. The hospitals in Pune are all packed and on one bed they keep 2 patients and lot more patients on the floor, not enough staff, Doctor, medicine, oxygen, ventilator, so more and more people are dying because they are not treated on time and there is no stock of injection etc lot of people in sangha have died and every day we get news of more and more people dying.

A lot of people in my area where I live are in hospital.

\*\* (name removed) has taken too long to recover he was really serious, he is still recovering but his father became positive because of him and died 5 days ago. His elder brother is serious, all are praying for him.

[Aryaketu](#) writes (April 28) in part: "it's a very horrible situation in Nagpur, and other parts of India. The second wave of Corona more deadly than the previous one. Death rate are increasing day by day mainly because of not getting treatment at hospitals because of very poor health care system. There is a shortage of oxygen cylinders and ambulance services and medicines. We have lost many dear and near friends and relatives in Covid pandemic situation and some are in serious condition. We are helping people but it looks helpless situation still we are trying to do something. If you want to contribute let me know would love to send proposal."

## **The origin of the pandemic**

At present, COVID-19's origin remains disputed. The initial view that COVID-19 emerged from the intensive farming of species such as civet cats and raccoon dogs as SARS (Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome) did is increasingly challenged.

In early 2020 I (Colin) was commissioned by the United Nations Environment Programme to write a report on the emergence of COVID-19. While researching this report I became increasingly disturbed by the numerous inconsistencies in the Chinese story. Some of my concerns were published in an editorial (open access) in the [Journal of Human Security](#), in December 2020.

More recently, I have been involved with the "Paris group", an affiliation of over 20 scientists, mostly French. We have so far published two open letters in prominent US newspapers, including in the [New York Times](#). Our core argument is that the virus could have emerged from a laboratory, and that both China and the US (and no doubt many other countries) have been engaged in risky "gain of function" research. We argue that it is essential to understand the

pandemics' origin including to prevent future ones.

## **BODHI's response to the pandemic in India**

In 2020 BODHI directly funded COVID-19 relief in Nagpur, India via our partner the Aryaloka Education Society. This was during the original lockdown period, when excessively zealous social distancing led to lost work for many day labourers, and thus to a widespread incapacity to earn money to afford daily food. Our donation was solely used to buy food. We funded this from our advertising revenue, as well as a non-tax deductible gift from Ambedkar International Mission Australia, rather than from our tax deductible donations.

We did this because our understanding of Australian law is that donations, in order to qualify for tax deductibility, need to be used for "development" rather than "welfare". Examples of "welfare" include providing food for an orphanage; whereas providing education for orphans is "development". The difference has long been frustrating, and we have always taken a cautious approach.

At the moment, there are other difficulties, some due to the pandemic, which also affect our capacity to send funds, and for our partners to spend them. (For example, the Indian government has temporarily closed the bank account of one of our recipients.)

Philosophically, we at BODHI has always believed that development is vital; that more resilient societies in the global South will avoid some of the calamity and tragedy now so clearly evident in India. Welfare, however defined, should complement, rather than replace development. As BODHI approaches its 33rd year, we reflect (yet again) how progress is painfully slow, how both development and welfare are needed.

## **Explaining the crisis in India and the world**

There are many interlinked reasons for the crisis in India, and more broadly.

Among these, I (Colin) nominate corruption, bad governance and poor health as especially important. Vicious circles, with interacting causes are generated, from which escape is very difficult. Part of the health impact of Covid-19 in India is because underlying health is so poor. The still significant additional population in India, every year (at least 10 million), makes escape from poverty even harder. Too many of India's rich people exploit, rather than help their society. (There are [reports](#) of rich Indians using their private jets to try to escape COVID).

As some of our supporters know, I have long argued that as societies approach their limits, they become more authoritarian to survive. The world is now well into "ecological overshoot" and I believe that we are increasingly seeing the social cost of that.

Three leading climate scientists, including Robert Watson (who chaired the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, to which I contributed, almost 20 years ago), have recently broken ranks with the optimistic majority, [arguing in part](#): "we scientists decided to construct ever more elaborate fantasy worlds in which we would be safe."

The combined issues, globally, of too many people, not enough resources, too much inequality and excessive faith in technology will cause far more problems for us, unless we collectively wake up.

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Our **Annual General Meeting** for 2021 will be held by Zoom, starting 12.00 noon, Sunday May 30 (Eastern Australian Time). The agenda is below, also [here](https://www.bodhi-australia.com/2021.html) (https://www.bodhi-australia.com/2021.html)

1. Apologies

2. Ordinary business:

2.1 to confirm the [minutes](#) of the last preceding annual general meeting and of any general meeting held since that meeting;

2.2 to receive from the committee, auditor and servants of the Organisation reports\* on the operations and transactions of the Organisation during the last preceding financial year of the Organisation; (i.e. reports from the President,

Treasurer, Gender and Communications for calendar year 2020);

2.3 to elect the officers of the Organisation and the ordinary committee members;

2.4 to appoint the auditor and determine his or her remuneration;

2.5 to appoint a Public Officer;

2.6 to determine the remuneration of servants of the Organisation.

3. Business Arising (if any)

4. Special Business:

4.1 consider the president's proposal to simplify the running of BODHI. [See](#)

5. Date and place of 2022 A.G.M.

All members are welcome to attend. Please email [bodhiaus@gmail.com](mailto:bodhiaus@gmail.com) for an invitation to the Zoom meeting.

Maxine Ross, secretary BODHI Australia

\* Reports should be available [here](#) by May 30, 2021

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## **Thanking our donors; continuing our work.**

We are deeply appreciative for our donors, partners, advertisers ([Biodistributors](#), formerly Fortress Learning) and other supporters, past and present.

If you are reading this but have never made a donation, you may think that \$20 is not a lot .. but we assure you that it is. (It is also personally encouraging for us). If you are already a donor (THANK YOU!), please consider forwarding this newsletter to someone you know.

At its peak (1960s) the Australian government spent almost 60 cents in every \$100 of gross domestic product on foreign aid; this is now only about 20 cents. Some countries, including Britain, give approximately five times as much as a proportion. Private donations can help fill this gap.

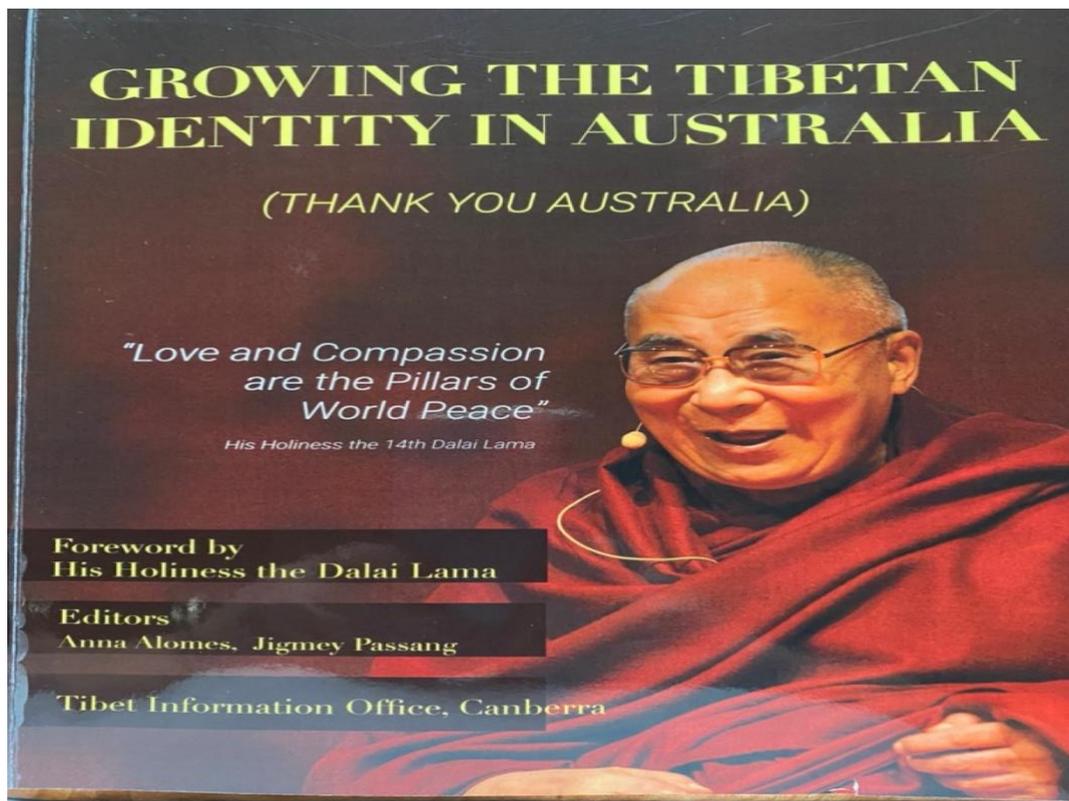
## **How to support our work**

To help us continue (and expand) our work, please consider making a donation which you can do safely by clicking [here](#). We can no longer accept credit card donations, but bank transfers, Paypal and cheques are fine. (Bank transfers are best, but please let us know about them so we can issue a receipt). Donations are tax deductible if you pay income tax in Australia. There is a fairly complete

list of the names of our supporters (past and present) [here](#). If you don't want your name listed please let us know by emailing [bodhiaus@gmail.com](mailto:bodhiaus@gmail.com).

## **Thank you Australia**

Thanks to Mr Lhakpa Tshoko (outgoing representative of the Tibetan Information Office in Canberra) we have received a copy of their book "[Growing the Tibetan Identity in Australia \(Thank you Australia\)](#)". Edited by Dr Alana Alomes and Jigme Pasang, the book documents, in both text and photos the Tibetan connection with Australians, especially via His Holiness XIVth Dalai Lama, who made 10 visits to Australia between 1982 and 2015.



The cover of the book "[Growing the Tibetan Identity in Australia \(Thank you Australia\)](#)".

**What is BODHI?**

Since 1989 BODHI (Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health and Insight) has supported more than 50 development projects mainly in India, Bangladesh, Thailand and the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. BODHI is (we think) the world's fourth oldest Buddhist influenced development (aid) organisation based in a high-income country. More on our history is [here](#).



Our patron, His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama, winner of the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize, seen here with [Vanya Kewley](#), a truly heroic journalist who exposed many tragedies in occupied Tibet.



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