

BODHI TIMES

June, 2000 No. 18

Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight (BODHI)

Updates: Sheep Bank, Volunteers and Bangladesh



Some **BODHI U.S. donors**

*Clockwise fr. u. left:
John Litaker, Victoria
Scott, Mamie McGee,
Marilyn & Clay
Whitney & editor
Susan Woldenberg
Butler*

REVOLVING SHEEP BANK gets underway

Professor Melvyn C Goldstein is planning a trip to Tibet in July, 2000, to start the sheep bank. He writes, "Thanks for the funds. It will be wonderful to be able to help some of these people. I don't know when the first transfer will occur but it definitely will not be while we are there. The local people will have to organize to buy the sheep and then

collect them (it may be three from one household, two from another, etc.), so I do not think anything will happen until later in the year. Yonden, a retired nomad school principal, has agreed to help by monitoring the sheep bank."

BODHI needs to raise up to US\$62,790/ A\$104,370 for this economic self-

sufficiency project for nomads in western Tibet. This is our most ambitious project so far.

Mr Julian Green is advising us on strategy. Julian has been a consultant adviser on constitutional law to various Tasmanian governments and, until January, 2000, chairman of the Tasmanian Poppy Board, for which he has travelled extensively negotiating contracts for Tasmanian opium poppy production. Our initial strategy is to focus on the top end of the market, to look for a few large donors rather than many small ones. This strategy is partly determined by the size of our fundraising committee. We will rethink this strategy if it is not successful.

We've produced a glossy brochure as part of our fundraising package and have approached various animal health companies and environmental groups. The ever-loyal Australian Tibetan Society has pledged a contribution.

Meanwhile, BODHI is lending the Revolving Sheep Bank US\$7250/ A\$11,000 to get it off the ground in an abbreviated manner. The loaned funds, a bequest from Ruth Grant, are earmarked for three remote libraries in rural Tibet.

Dr. Wright on BANGLADESHI possibilities

Denis writes: "There are two possible projects but these need direct investigation. I was forced to postpone my trip to Bangladesh in January so have not been able to pursue the matter on the ground. At the moment, Bangladesh is experiencing political problems which have affected NGOs, and the climate for overseas organisations working in Bangladesh even without religious affiliations is not very good.

"When I return to Bangladesh next January I will follow this up more directly. I've recently re-established contact with Tahsinah Ahmed, whose work is in the field and whose good advice can be expected."

VOLUNTEERS

Drs Rikleen and Lobo continue in Mundgod. We look forward to hearing from them. Intermittent email connections have faltered, but we remain hopeful that Dr Rikleen can help to evaluate BODHI's Mundgod projects to aid with Australian tax deductibility.

Kevin Gobeske is on his way to D.T.R. Hospital at Mundgod.

Climate change: seven reasons for you to be concerned

Ecosystem effects

1 Polar bears are going hungry as Arctic ice becomes thinner and scantier. They're having trouble finding enough seals to eat as the ice melts earlier, according to scientists with the Canadian Wildlife Service. Weight of both male and female polar bears is declining and female bears are having fewer cubs.

In Tasmania, summer used to finish abruptly at the end of February, with no more warm weather until September. This year, after a cold spell with a few frosts in early April (pretty normal for us), the weather warmed markedly for several days, with temperatures up to eight degrees Celsius (14 deg F) above average. One consequence has been that part of our garden thinks it's spring: the blood-red rhododendrons started to flower in April. Milder winters are likely to allow increased survival of tree-boring insects; though spring is occurring earlier, the overall effect is not necessarily beneficial.

The distribution of mosquitoes and other insects that transmit diseases such as malaria is changing, moving to higher latitudes and up mountains to higher altitudes. Insects colonise new areas and the parasites they carry colonise new human populations, formerly protected by a cooler or drier climate. Humans living in normally disease-free areas are at special risk because they lack immunity.

Infrastructure & economy

2 Extreme weather events may be increasing (including prolongation and possible intensification of the El Niño Southern Oscillation cycle), as are stronger winds, more intense rainfall, more intense low pressure cells, longer cyclone and hurricane seasons and changes in storm pathways, including to higher latitudes.

There are concerns that melting alpine permafrost will damage building foundations, including in the Swiss Alps. Harmful flow-on effects to the economy include damage to the travel and insurance industries.

Food & water security

3 Computerised simulations of future climate predict major changes to rainfall and temperature patterns in the next century. Canada may benefit as the US wheat belt moves north (provided Canadian soils are sufficiently fertile to take advantage of warmer weather), but Sub-Saharan Africa—already the most food-insecure and war-affected continent—is likely to become more infertile.

Risk of conflict

4 Further food insecurity in the Horn and sub-Saharan Africa is likely to exacerbate conflict, leading to countless more deaths. This is likely to contribute indirectly to even more suffering through a vicious cycle of weakening government and deteriorating school and health services, accelerating “demographic entrapment.”

South Asia is predicted by some models to lose agriculturally because of climate change. By 2050, the combined population of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan will approach 2 billion. India and Pakistan have already fought several wars. Now both are nuclear armed. How can increasing food insecurity in this volatile region lead to a reduced risk of conflict? Even a limited nuclear war on the subcontinent will have devastating local and international consequences.

Access to wealthier nations for environmental refugees, including from increasingly flood-prone island states and coastal regions such as Mozambique, will be limited. Illegal immigration and attempted “people smuggling” is likely to increase.

Catastrophic global environmental change

5 Substantial sea level rise may yet occur from the melting of the Greenland and even the Western Antarctic iceshelves. Disruption of the “global conveyor belt” that drives the Gulf Stream and warms Northwestern Europe may lead to paradoxical cooling of high-latitude European nations.

Positive warming feedbacks

6 Presently less than one-third of the additional carbon dioxide (approximately 6 gigatonnes) that humans add annually to the atmosphere remains airborne. The rest is absorbed by a poorly understood “carbon sink,” which involves both landmasses and the ocean.

Loss of the Amazonian and central African rainforests following the logging of Indonesian and Southeast Asian forests and increased fires—partly resulting from more prolonged climate change associated droughts—may impair this sink, leading to an accelerated rate of atmospheric carbon dioxide accumulation, with a positive feedback effect.

Melting of the tundra from ongoing climate change may liberate additional quantities of the greenhouse gas methane, with further warming and methane release.

Unpredicted events

7 Most of the above possibilities are mentioned in the existing scientific literature, but hardly any were forecast a generation ago. What predictions are likely to unfold in the next generation as theory, data and computer models improve? Climate change is not our only environmental, economic and social problem. The World Scientists' Warning to Humanity, signed by more than 100 Nobel laureates in science soon after the Earth Summit in 1992, is almost unknown by the general public. A rump of contrarian climate scientists—rarely if ever published in the peer-reviewed literature—receives disproportionate coverage and weight. Public relations tactics are used to sow doubt in the mind of the general public about these concerns. The favoured strategy has been to emphasise uncertainty, rather than totally deny risk. But “business as usual” and “waiting for certainty” are not neutral responses. They are based on the conclusion that the risk of climate change is negligible.

References available on website

A road well travelled

Richard Patterson writes from Vatrak, India. He has been involved in the provision of emergency medical care as a paramedic, instructor and critical-care nurse in the U.S. for 17 years.

“I came to Vatrak to try to help the hospital here to develop some minimal emergency and critical care services, i.e., to establish a small intensive care unit (ICU) and emergency patient evaluation area, and to offer the nursing personnel supplemental training in various aspects of cardiac care.

Pulling together

“The Shrimant Fatehsinhrao Gaekwar General Hospital was built in the early 1960s, by the late Shri K.K. Shah, ex-governor of Tamil Nadu and a close associate and follower of Gandhi’s, on land donated by the king of Baroda, in whose honor the hospital was named. It was built in an isolated part of eastern Gujarat on the banks of the River Vatrak.

“The 150-bed hospital offers full-time medical, surgical, gynecologic, orthopedic and ophthalmic services, which see about 175 patients per day, as well as part-time dental, dermatologic, radiologic and pediatric services. The anesthesiologist is on call from nearby Bayad. A dozen nurses and as many ancillary staff work in the wards and the operating theater. Usually there are about 80 in-patients. Most pay Rps. 20 per day (\$A\$0.80/US\$0.60) for their cot and meals—about one-fifth the cost of comparable accommodations in larger cities.

Deterioration reversed

“Mr Prakash (Peter) Shah, an accountant in Salinas, California and the son of K.K. Shah and Dr. Ashok Kumar have reversed the hospital’s serious deterioration. Only a fraction of the hospital’s floor space is utilized. The second floor is vacant except for pigeons, wasps, a few squirrels and grey monkeys, two offices, my classroom and the room next to it, where the Hospital’s recently donated computer sits unused.

They go by camel

“When patients are transferred from the nearest tertiary medical services in Ahmedabad, about 100 kms away, they usually

travel not by the hospital’s ambulance, which is a white step-van with two bench-seats; rather, their families bring them in hired cars and auto-rickshaws, on tractor beds or by camel-drawn cart. The laboratory has to send out even an electrolyte panel, not to mention things like cardiac enzymes, coagulation studies or arterial blood gases. There is no blood bank and only a very limited pharmacy.

Pesticides and noncompliance

“Anemia, exacerbations of chronic lung disease, gastroenteritis, an almost total lack of prenatal care and TB are the most common health challenges, other than the seasonal occurrences of organophosphate poisonings [Ed: pesticides], typhoid and snake bites. Our average clinic patient’s hemoglobin is 8.0-9.0. Generally, at least 20% of our in-patients have been hospitalized due to complications of their tuberculosis, which is usually of the multidrug resistant variety. The physicians attribute this to almost universal non-compliance with medication, despite district and central governmental education programs, active case-finding and follow-up efforts, and free medication. The incidence of TB has increased disproportionately during the last decade.”

BUSINESS

Credit Card Payments

We are investigating using a credit card payment facility to make donating easier, especially via the internet.

Tax-Deductible Status

We’re still working on TDS for Australia.

Annual General Meeting

Armidale, 2000: The minutes are on our website, which has been expanded due to increasing online interest in BODHI’s activities.

Letter to the Editor

Prof. Maria Teresa Julianello writes from Buenos Aires, Argentina:

“Thank you for the newsletter always with interesting items I use with my students for our Global Issues unit. I’m glad to see you’re growing and have now a bigger advisory board that’s really international. Among us there’s ever so much need spreading everyday to basic items like food and housing—not to speak of sanitation, birth control and education—just as some countries expand and develop into the cybernetic age.

“I travelled in Bolivia, Peru and the Amazon recently and seemed to be transported to a primeval time that wasn’t real. I really appreciate and commend the work you people do; that’s why I use your material with the young, also to foster the charity work we do as a college.”

THANK YOU

James Culnan, USA
Drs Claudia Kuehni, and Andre Witschi, Switzerland
Richard Patterson and friend Madonna, USA
Drs Chris Luttrell, Philip Jeffery & John Foster, Australia
Dr Martin Rubin, USA
Scott Trimmingham, USA
Buddhist Peace Fellowship, USA
Julian Green, Henry Foster & Peter Grey for Revolving Sheep Bank advice, Australia
Honourable Dick Adams, Damien Mantach & Dee Alty for help with Australian tax deductibility, Australia
As ever, special thanks to you and our other loyal supporters worldwide, who have been with us for so long.

Goals

Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight (BODHI) aims to find sustainable ways to improve health, education and the environment, particularly in developing countries. We achieve this by providing a hook, not a fish; by, for example:

- * Continuing education for remote health workers, lay and professional
- * Ongoing health and environmental competitions such as Healthy Baby and Village Sanitation
- * Matching volunteers and communities
- * Sustainable environmental projects
- * Promoting economic self sufficiency, for instance with the Revolving Sheep Bank in Tibet

BODHI is neither religious nor political. We have supporters and advisers from many faiths. We ask only for a kind heart and practical assistance.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

Thanks to your generosity, BODHI has been begun exciting and innovative projects. We need your donations to continue.

Please send your donation, payable in U.S. or Australian dollars, to an address below.

U.S. donations tax-deductible

BODHI Times is the biennial newsletter of Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight (BODHI).

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Printed on recycled paper

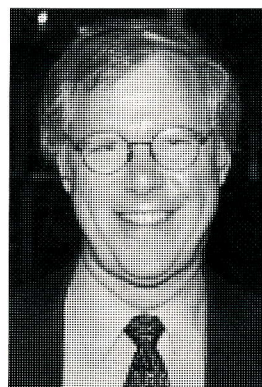
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Adviser Series

The middle path to activism

Professor Christopher S. Queen is dean of students for continuing education and lecturer on the study of religion in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University. Prof. Queen has edited a book just out called Engaged Buddhism in the West. He writes about his current activities:

"I am writing a chapter for a new collection of scholarly essays on Buddhism and globalization in which I argue that engaged Buddhists manifest some of the features of globalized citizens that sociologists have begun to write about—people who are highly educated, very connected to the world through information technology and travel, and at the same time strongly disaffected or alienated from the materialistic and political values that drive much of what we call global culture. These people are active in social and political ways that address the plight of the forgotten people—those who are not well educated and connected. This work is the next step in my research on the shape of the new Buddhism.



Prof. C.S. Queen
Courtesy Publicity Dept.
Harvard University

"I am collecting notes and ideas for a monograph on the rise of socially engaged Buddhism, which I would address to a general reading audience next year. I am struck by the fact that the dramatic changes that are taking place in the practice of a very ancient religion are largely unknown to the general reading public. I doubt that the phrase

This excerpt of Prof. Queen's article, "India's Broken People: The Untouchables Still Struggle for Survival" appeared in Turning Wheel, Spring, 2000.

"Few people in the West seem to realize that the caste system, India's religiously based social hierarchy, is still in place and still oppressing tens of millions of citizens. According to Human Rights Watch, more than one-sixth of India's population, some 160 million people, are still treated as 'Untouchables' or Dalits, 'broken people,'

and denied access to economic and educational opportunities. In a report on caste violence against Untouchables, the humanitarian organization found that "Dalits are discriminated against, denied access to land, forced to work in degrading conditions, and routinely abused or killed at the hands of the police and higher-caste groups that enjoy the state's protection. National legislation and constitutional protections

serve only to mask the social realities of discrimination and violence faced by those living below the 'pollution line'" (Human Rights Watch, Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's "Untouchables," 350 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10118-3299; www.hrw.org).

"Dalit women are frequent victims of sexual assault. In what has been called India's 'hidden apartheid,' entire villages in many Indian states remain completely segregated by caste."

'engaged Buddhism' has ever appeared in the New York Times Book Review or the New York Review of Books. Perhaps you or your readers can offer suggestions about what kind of a book is needed to raise consciousness and support for the work of engaged Buddhism.

"Finally, I am meeting with Indian-American Buddhist leaders to launch a fundraising campaign for a Cultural-Educational Center in Bombay that has been started by the Bhikkhu Sangha's United Buddhist Mission (see www.buddhaindia.com). This will be a very great resource for the million low-caste Buddhists in Bombay and a tribute to the late Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who inspired the Buddhist revival among the Untouchables and who made Bombay his home for a half-century. I would encourage readers of BODHI Times to consider sending their contributions to this important cause."

"... We must remember that in the face of such great and long-standing suffering, we cannot do much. But we can, and we must, attempt to do something. A good place to start is to log onto the website maintained by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, an Indian organization (www.dalits.org). There you may read more about the history and conditions of Untouchables today, and take part in a petition directed at Indian Government officials and member states of the United Nations.

"The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights may also be contacted by e-mail (info@dalits.org); post: National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, First Floor, Premier Residency, Plot No. 165, 1-8-142/B, 3rd Cross, Prenderghast Road, Secundarabad 500 003 India; phone: +91-40-78 44 613; or fax: +91-40-78 96 871."