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Depression and trauma as drawbacks of identification processes within Buddhist groups

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depression and trauma from abuse, indoctrination, manipulation and group pressure

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research in progress: qualitative and quantitative methods

stereotypes

method of *pure view* interpreted to be positive thinking by all means and used for reframing any experience
stereotypical behavior patterns e.g. seemingly compassionate counteract inner process despite training (6)

doublebind

ignoring facts of individual and group reality with the employment of thought and speech patterns disguising the truth (6)

effects:

- 1) mental and emotional confusion
- 2) mental and emotional stress
- 3) inability to take action and make decisions (6)

neologistic concepts and etic perspectives

- 1) *karma-purification* allowing for harm without any restrictions
- 2) *crazy wisdom* rationalizing any unacceptable behavior (6)

dangers in identification

- 1) with any (uneducated/ unrealized) meditation master through methods like *guru yoga* and the implicit hierarchical structures in messages
- 2) and collective goals through naive obedience in passing orders and working for hidden agendas

„Rigpa-therapy“

“As more students verged close to emotional breakdowns because of your “trainings”, you introduced “Rigpa Therapy” for your closest students.

Trained, practising therapists (who are also your students) were given the task of dealing with the pain that was being stirred up in the minds of those who you were abusing physically, emotionally and psychologically. During one-to-one sessions, the therapist heard from the student of your “crazy wisdom” methods and the trauma that it caused the individual. One such “Rigpa Therapy” method for processing the trauma was to negate the validity of seeing you, the teacher and instigator, as the source of the trauma. Instead, we were instructed to see old family relationship histories as the issue. In effect, our very tangible and clear discernment of seeing you as an abuser was blocked and instead we were blamed and made to feel inadequate. On the occasions when the “therapy” did not result in a student changing their view of you, you shamed the therapist into feeling that they weren’t doing their job properly and were not skilled.” (1)

responsibility

“Most of us have been subjected to his abuse. At times we have also been inadvertent enablers of Mr. Mukpo’s behavior. We have each struggled to understand our blind spots. It is a bitter pill to swallow that we were enablers of this man.” (2, pg. 2)

results

Missing friendships due to subtle playing off group members against each other

“[...] that no real friendships were possible there, always mistrust, competition - [...] played us all off against each other, very subtly.“ “The action always originated from the Master [...], who could very subtly drop comments or force a wedge between people. One doesn’t actually notice it because it often happens in the context of a relationship or a process / work with another person - I have reconstructed this afterwards.” (6)

levels of manipulation:

by the example of the organization Pagode Phat Hue/ Frankfurt am Main:

“Unfortunately, I often didn’t know the truth. For example, when I wrote the speech to remove his robes and the entire presentation on the outside, I was called to Frankfurt to write everything, and nobody, not even anyone from the Sangha, who had been friends and had visited me [...] privately, told me that the reason Thay had given me (I want to take a new spiritual direction, adapted to Western society) [was incorrect]. For the actual reason, as I understood 1.5 years later, was that a legal investigation had been initiated against him.“ (6)

by the example of the organization Rigpa Germany:

“Typical public methods at Rigpa: public humiliation, abuse, exposure, exaggerated false praise, promoting or degrading people in the “Rigpa Ranking”. Promoting and exploiting intrigues, power games and denunciation among students. Encouraging a sense of value within the collective and for the individual by cleverly presenting the Lama and his organisation as unique, exceptional, significant, superior to others, more advanced, etc. and then reducing the pupils to pocket size by public speech. I have called this attracting and domesticizing. Secrecy as a measure to create unofficial, subtle, non-formal structures within the so-called “sangha”. Ideologically, this is justified by the selective use of specific parts of texts from the canon of Tibetan Buddhist texts, partly in a quite subtle and manipulative ways. Encouraging unhealthy ambitiousness and worldly interest by publicly displaying students’ diligence, dedication, working enthusiasm, readiness to donate, etc. by setting up a gold standard in devotion. Great “devotion” = greater progress on the path, thus also greater appreciation by the collective, thus higher ranking. The longing for alternatives for family and social belonging is being exploited to a very great extent.“ (6)

“Very often utterly incompetent individuals were employed, I got the impression the permanent chaos associated with that allows for better manipulation.” (6)

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terms and phrases employed:
enlightenment and allknowingness
wisdom, compassion and bodhicitta

“A number of the witnesses that I spoke to gave evidence of the serious impact of their involvement with Sogyal Lakar on their health. In addition to numerous examples of witnesses working very long hours, with little sleep, for long periods of time, the following specific examples of long-term harm being caused were given to me [...] I was informed that there are a number of other students who suffered breakdowns as a result of their involvement with Rigpa.” (3, pg. 31)

“In that moment something inside me died – my fight and my anger. Now, all I felt was sadness” (2, pg. 2)

“After my tour I fell into a serious crisis that lasted around two years. Hardly anyone from Shambhala talked to me during that period.” (2, pg. 14)

“kidnapping and sexual assaults on children’s [...] 11 charges of sexual abuses/ rape of girls minors of age [...] physical torture on children’s” (4, slide 7)

„Sexual Misconduct by Shambhala Teachers and Staff • Child Abuse • Physical Violence • Emotional Abuse • Racial Harm • Abuse of Power • Rumors/Slander” (5, pg. 19)

“I lacked social support to recover and heal from the trauma of exiting a cult after 10 years. I had a small social circle already because of my 10 years in a cult, and those family and friends do not understand the significance of being brainwashed in a cult for 10 years and then exiting it.” (6) “Psychologically, I feel anger,

depression and a sense of injustice. Professionally, I have not been in a stable job for 6-7 years because PY has discouraged his students to detach from mainstream society.” (6)

“I sob, shake, something like a muffled scream wants to come out. Or I simply freeze. I am told that is the nature of trauma. Although I have been actively engaged in trauma resolution and integration [...], when I hear the word trauma, I still believe that must be about someone else.”

(2, pg. 26)

the method of slandering and stigmatising

“Failure of ethics and publicly presenting individuals as “psychologically peculiar“ (6): “My person [...] was ridiculed accordingly, portrayed as psychologically “strange”. Generally, this happened with most “dissidents”, this was one of the reasons to leave, any form of ethics was missing completely. True was what was in the master’s mind or what was considered so. One could call it a “general refusal to dialogue”.“ (6)

hoping for cure in speaking the truth

“While we cannot undo the damage, hopefully we can speak to the truth of how his behavior has hurt many of his students. We seek to further validate those who have bravely named this pattern and who likely were subjected to gaslighting or minimization. We hope our personal statements will encourage others to speak and keep speaking.“ (2, pg. 2)

cultures of abuse

“The joke is that a man who claims to be the ultimate protector abuses a woman under his protection.” (2, pg. 23)
“Abuse occurs at every level of the mandala and Mr. Mukpo is the reference point that both implicitly and explicitly fosters it“ (2, pg. 21)

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