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Mental health in Tibetan medicine

Analysing concepts of diagnosis and treatment of mental diseases and the challenge of updating medical knowledge according to WHO standards for its preservation

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World Health Organization (2018). *Nepal–WHO Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS) 2018–2022*.

in http://www.searo.who.int/nepal/documents/ccs_2018_2022/en/ date of retrieval: 30.7.2019

Nepal Health Research Council. *National Mental Health Survey, Nepal* (collaboration of Ministry of Health and population (MoHP) and World Health Organisation (WHO))

in <http://nhrc.gov.np/projects/nepal-mental-health-survey-2017-2018/> date of retrieval: 30.7.2019



Lack of treatment of around 80% of people with severe mental diseases in low and middle income countries:

“Around 76% and 85% of people with severe mental disorders in low and middle-income countries receive no treatment for their mental health conditions [...] First epidemiological field survey conducted in the Kathmandu Valley in 1984 estimated the prevalence of mental illness around 14 percent. [...] **General objective:** To assess the prevalence of mental disorders in Nepal, and find out the help seeking behavior and the barriers to accessing care among people with mental disorders in Nepal. [...] The project will deliver a complete analytical report with a clear national picture of the prevalence of mental disorder and unmet need for services.”

in <http://nhrc.gov.np/projects/nepal-mental-health-survey-2017-2018/> date of retrieval: 25.8.2019



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Core text: *Four Medical Tantras (in Wylie Transkript: rgyud bzhi)*
by *Yuthog Yonten Gonpo (the Elder, 708-833)*

1. Root Tantra (*rtsa rgyud*)
2. Explanatory Tantra (*bshad rgyud*)
3. Oral Instruction Tantra (*man rgyud*)
4. Last Tantra (*phyi rgyud*)

see Drungtso T. T., Drungtso T. D. (2005: 97). *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Tibetan Medicine and Astrology*. Archana: Drungtso Publications.

and commentaries on them in the sense of interpretations and
comments



Yuthog Yonten Gompo I (708-833):

„traveled to Nepal, Persia, China and India during which time, he met many eminent scholars and physicians and received great deal of invaluable medical knowledge and instructions of other medical systems. *Yuthog* represented Tibet at the ‘First International Conference on Tibetan Medicine’ held at *Samye* during the reign of King *Trisong Deutsen*. Many eminent scholars and physicians of then known medical systems participated in the historic conference. [...] After that conference, *Yuthog* wrote a book called ‘*Gyud Shi*’ which was primarily based on the indigenous medical system and synthesis of various Asian medical system.“

see Thokmay, P., Passang, W. and Sonam, D. (transl.) (2008, S. iv). *The Basic Tantra and The Explanatory Tantra from the Secret Quintessential Instructions on the Eight Branches of the Ambrosia Essence Tantra* by Yuthog Yonten Gonpo. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.



Current challenges for Tibetan medicine impacted by:

- 1) missing differentiated translations of Tibetan texts and their commentaries from Tibetan language
- 2) attitude of commercialising Tibetan medicine
- 4) failure in updating concepts on diagnosis and treatment of mental diseases
- 5) lack of WHO (World Health Organisation) diagnostic standards for a common basis of communicating with other medical systems, professionals in psychology and psychotherapy as well as for conducting any treatment surveys
- 6) lacking surveys on treatment outcome (for e.g. herbal medicine)
- 7) very little university affiliation for education and research



Looking back to the eighth century:

„Tibetan medicine was taken to a new level of development due to the sharing of knowledge by eminent physicians from neighboring countries, the translation of many ancient Asian medical texts into Tibetan, and the integration of this knowledge into the already existing wisdom of the *Bon* medical tradition. Tibetan medicine is therefore a product of a creative combination of indigenous medical practices and knowledge from other traditions developed by many eminent scholars and physicians over many centuries. The reason why Tibetan medicine is revered over many other systems of healing lies in the fact that it is enriched with the essences of knowledge and practices of many other Asian medical traditions“

see Thokmay, P., Passang, W. and Sonam, D. (transl.) (2008: IV). *The Basic Tantra and The Explanatory Tantra from the Secret Quintessential Instructions on the Eight Branches of the Ambrosia Essence Tantra* by Yuthog Yonten Gonpo. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.

Currently, key issue consists in sharing medical knowledge with professionals and scientists and updating it instead of the attitude of commercialising ideology or religious myths



- 1) literature analysis on mental health in Tibetan medicine

- 2) expert interviews with doctors (amchis) of Tibetan medicine on mental health issues (diagnosis and treatment, esp. of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder)
and comparison to *ICD-10/ ICD-11* (WHO diagnostic standards)
and with female doctors

- 3) online questionnaire for the experts on mental health, diagnosis and treatment of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder, WHO standards and their interest in updating knowledge and advanced training



Three factors (humours):

"humours are biological manifestations of the five elements and are responsible for all the psychological and physiological functions of the body"

see Drungtso T. T. und Drungtso T. D. (2005: 157). *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Tibetan Medicine and Astrology*. Archana: Drungtso Publications.

The three factors are said to be closely associated to the three basic emotional complexes that are:

attachment (*'dod chags*, Skt. *rāga*),

aversion (*zhe sdang*, Skt. *dveṣa*) and

ignorance (*gti mug*, Skt. *moha*).



The connection between the three (damaging) factors and the three emotional complexes is established as follows:

wind (*rlung*, Skt. *vāyu*) - attachment (*'dod chags*, Skt. *rāga*)

bile (*mkhris pa*, Skt. *pitta*) - aversion (*zhe sdang*, Skt. *dveṣa*)

phlegm (*bad kan*, Skt. *kapha*) - ignorance (*gti mug*, Skt. *moha*)

In this way, the concepts underlying Tibetan medicine are closely interconnected with the concepts of Buddhist philosophy.



„As Buddhism has had a great influence on Tibetan culture, so has it strongly affected Tibetan medicine. The impact of Buddhism is clearly evident in Tibetan medical concepts such as the mention of subtle consciousness during the formation of human body, the role of the three mental poisons in the development of disorders“

Thokmay, P., Passang, W. and Sonam, D. (transl.) (2008: IV). *The Basic Tantra and The Explanatory Tantra from the Secret Quintessential Instructions on the Eight Branches of the Ambrosia Essence Tantra by Yuthog Yonten Gonpo*. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.

Currently impacting factors on the commercialisation of Tibetan medicine (see interviews):

- simplified concepts (Buddhist philosophy and training and Tibetan medical concepts)
- commercialisation of Buddhism and Tibetan medicine



"*nad* illness, sickness, diseases, disorders; according to the theory of Tibetan medicine "the disease" is viewed as the result of improper proportion of the three humours - *rlung* (wind), *mkhris pa* (bile), and *bad kan* (phlegm) both in qualitative and quantitative aspects."

see Drungtso, T. T., Drungtso, T. D. (2005: 227). *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Tibetan Medicine and Astrology*. Archana: Drungtso Publications.



Conceptualisation of all mental diseases:

to be *rlung* disorders (diseases of the *rlung* system, which is one of the three factors). That is, the factor *rlung* is assumed to be in the foreground, just as in many other diseases.

Commercialisation of remedies for *rlung* disorders:

Tibetan medicine is said to have effective herbal medicine for *rlung* disorders, that is, directly addressing mental diseases

Lack of scientific survey of clinical treatment outcome:

Nevertheless, there is lack of scientific approach and survey of treatment outcome



- Categories of *rlung* disorders:
1. general are
 - 1.1 20 types
 - 1.2 7 locations
 2. specific are 5 imbalanced states

"The classifications of disorders on the basis of *nyepa* are *loong*, *tripa* and *baekan*. [...] *Loong* disorders are classified into two main categories: general and specific. The general category is further classified into two subcategories: type and location. There are twenty different *loong* disorders according to type. The classification according to location includes each of the six entrances of disorders [6] and one classification associated with the five sense organs, totalling seven. The specific category is comprised of the five imbalanced states of the five subtypes of *loong* disorders and ten disorders that are combinations of each of the five types of *tripa* and *baekan* disorders. These forty-two categories are *loong* disorders."

see Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2015: 120, 121). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las rtsa ba'i rgyud dang bshad pa'irgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so The root tantra and the explanatory tantra from the Four Tantras of Tibetan medicine.*

Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.

[6 "The six entrance of disorders are the skin, muscle tissue, blood vessels and nerves, bone, vital organs and vessel organs."]



"In order to impart accurate diagnosis and to prescribe correct remedies, the diagnostic principle that reveal the actual manifesting *nyepa* should be employed. In order to earn public admiration and popularity, diagnostic techniques based on indirect skillful means should be employed. In order to determine whether to accept or to refuse a patient during the course of treatment, four diagnostic criteria of a patient's condition should be employed."

see Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2015: 241). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las rtsa ba'i rgyud dang bshad pa 'i rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so The root tantra and the explanatory tantra from the Four Tantras of Tibetan medicine*. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.



In interviews with doctors of Tibetan medicine in Nepal (2018):
all mental diseases were related to the five types of *rlung* disorders

Wording of the respective symptoms in the *Oral Instruction Tantra*:

"mental instability", "hallucinations", "loss of sleep", in terms of *ascending rlung* symptoms of "giddiness, mental instability" as well as "excessive crying or laughing" that are said to be caused by "forcing out the natural urges", in terms of *pervasive rlung* symptoms such as "fear, depression [...] and talkativeness, restlessness, fear and panic" are mentioned, besides the "general symptoms" of *rlung* disorders in case of general infiltration of the whole body by *rlung*: "Infiltration into the heart causes exertion of pressure in the upper back, sighing, and **mental instability** [highlighted by Anders] [...] Infiltration into the whole body shows general symptoms of all *loong* disorders [...] *Loong* disorders of the heart cause body tremor, pressure on the upper body, **hallucinations** [highlighted by Anders], indulgence in inconsequential talking, giddiness loss of sleep, and sighing. *Loong* disorders of the lungs cause loss of sleep."

see Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2017: 16, 17, 18). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las man ngag rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so The oral instruction tantra from the secret quintessential instructions on the eight branches of the ambrosia essence tantra*. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.



Response to „mental stress“ being defined as a confirming factor:
affirming the diagnosis or *rlung* disorder when mental stress is the factor
which is worsening the condition.

see Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2017: 18). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las man ngag rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so*
The oral instruction tantra from the secret quintessential instructions on the eight branches of the ambrosia essence
tantra. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.



“The signs and symptoms of *loong* disorders based on location are as follows: Dispersion of *loong* disorder in the skin causes roughness, irritation, and a sensation that the skin is cracked. Infiltration of *loong* disorder into the muscle tissues causes swelling, roughness, discoloration, and pimples. Infiltration into the fat tissues leads to anorexia, swelling of the body, and nodular growth. Infiltration into the channels makes them empty and dilated. Infiltration into the blood causes excessive sleep, reddening of the blood vessels, and an unpleasant appearance. Infiltration into the ligaments causes lameness, stiffness, and limping. Infiltration into the bones causes severe pain, weight loss, and weakening of the body strength. Infiltration into the joints causes a sense of hollowness and inflated swelling of the joints, and leads to abnormal curvature of the spine. Infiltration into the bone marrow causes insomnia and a tethering sensation, with relief when pressure is applied. Infiltration into the reproductive fluid causes depletion, color changes, and excessive discharge. Infiltration into the heart causes exertion of pressure in the upper back, sighing, and mental instability. Infiltration into the lungs causes facial swelling, difficult expectoration, and drooling of frothy sputum. Infiltration into the liver causes excessive yawning when hungry and pain as if the liver were sagging.”



“Infiltration into the spleen causes swelling of the body, abdominal distension and rumbling, and pain in the spleen. Infiltration into the kidneys causes pain in the kidney and waist region, and deafness. Infiltration into food in the stomach causes pain after food intake. Infiltration into the undigested site causes eructation, vomiting, anorexia, abdominal distension and rumbling, extreme thirst, and breathing difficulties. Infiltration into the digested site causes sharp pain, abdominal distension and rumbling, constipation, scanty urination, and pain at the waist and coccyx. Infiltration into the gallbladder causes abdominal distension, sharp pain, weak digestion, and yellow sclera. Infiltration into the feces causes whirling of *loong*, and constipation or noisy diarrhea. Infiltration into the urine causes a cold and bloated bladder, and scanty or frequent urination, Infiltration into the uterus causes menstrual blood clots, and amenorrhea or menorrhagia. Infiltration into the head causes dizziness, vertigo, and loss of balance. Infiltration into the eyes causes bloodshot eyes, sensation of the eyeballs protruding, and exacerbation on exposure to breeze. Infiltration into the ears causes tinnitus, a sensation of emptiness and earache.”



“Infiltration into the nose causes nasal congestion, runny nose, and loss of the sense of smell. Infiltration into the teeth causes numbness, pain, and swelling. Infiltration into the whole body shows general symptoms of all *loong* disorders.”

in Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2017: 16, 17). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las man ngag rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so The oral instruction tantra from the secret quintessential instructions on the eight branches of the ambrosia essence tantra*. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.



"Briefly, *loong* disorders of the head cause dizziness, tinnitus, vomiting, fainting, and experiencing vertigo while standing up. *Loong* disorders of the heart cause body tremor, pressure on the upper body, hallucinations, indulgence in inconsequential talking, giddiness loss of sleep, and sighing. *Loong* disorders of the lungs cause loss of sleep, difficult expectoration, drooling of foamy sputum, exertion of pressure on the upper body, nausea, puffy eyes, and frequent coughing at night. *Loong* disorders of the livers cause eructation, sharp pain in the upper back and *shulsha*, loss of appetite, blurred vision, and the sensation of sagging of the liver at dawn and dusk. *Loong* disorders of the stomach cause breathlessness, distension, empty eructation, a pricking sensation, and relief after food intake. *Loong* disorders of the large intestine cause abdominal distension and rumbling, diarrhea, and excessive flatulence. *Loong* disorders of the kidneys cause pain at the kidneys and waist, and tinnitus."

see Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2017: 17). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las man ngag rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so* *The oral instruction tantra from the secret quintessential instructions on the eight branches of the ambrosia essence tantra*. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.



Five types of *rlung* disorders:

1. Life-sustaining *rlung*
2. Ascending *rlung*
3. Pervasive *rlung*
4. Fire-accompanying *rlung*
5. Descending *rlung*



"Life-sustaining *loong*, which is disturbed by a diet having a rough potency, fasting, strenuous activities, and suppressing or forcing out the natural urges, shows symptoms such as giddiness, mental instability, and difficult inhalation and swallowing. [...] Ascending *loong*, which is disturbed by suppressing eructation and vomiting, excessive crying or laughing, and lifting heavy loads, shows symptoms such as stuttering, dumbness, difficulty speaking, a weak body, facial paralysis, and a weak memory. [...] Pervasive *loong*, which is disturbed by excessive walking or sitting, strenuous sports activities, fear, depression, and a diet having a rough potency, shows symptoms such as a sensation of the heart being twisted, fainting, talkativeness, restlessness, fear and panic, and is exacerbated upon hearing unpleasant words [...] Fire-accompanying *loong*, which is disturbed by intake of indigestible food and daytime sleep, shows symptoms such as a cold stomach, loss of appetite, vomiting, indigestion, and a amalgamation of blood and food particles in the stomach due to blockage of the gastric channels [...]"



“Descending *loong*, which is disturbed by forceful suppression or expelling of fecal matter, urine, flatus, and reproductive substances, shows symptoms such as unlocalized pain in the joints of the lower body, loos joints lameness, and obstruction of the flatus, feces, and urine. [...] Any of these *loong* disorders, when combined with *tripa*, increase the body heat and cause yellowing of the eyes and urine, and when combined with *baekan*, cause a heavy, cool body and mental dullness. [...] The diagnosis based on assessing the beneficial and harmful effects of diet or lifestyle confirms *loong* disorder when there is a feeling of well-being on taking warm and nutritious foods such as meat, *chhang*, jaggery, and butter, administering oil massage, keeping warm with a fire or the sun, and on a full stomach; or when there is worsening of the condition on taking cold water, cow buttermilk, stale leafy vegetables, guinea pepper, teach, and in the state of hunger, thirst, cold, excessive talking and sexual intercourse, lack of sleep, and mental stress.”

in Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2017: 18, 19). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las man ngag rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so The oral instruction tantra from the secret quintessential instructions on the eight branches of the ambrosia essence tantra*. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.



"In wind (disorders) the tongue will be red, dry and rough, (whilst) in a bile disorder the tongue will be covered by a thick, pale yellow coating of phlegm. In a phlegm disorder the tongue will have a pale, thick coating of phlegm and be dull, smooth and moist. Urine in wind disorders looks like water and has large bubbles. In a bile disorder the urine is reddish yellow and malodourous, with much steam. Urine (reflecting a) phlegm disorder is whitish with little odor or steam. The wind pulse is floating, empty and halting, the bile pulse has a rapid, prominent taut beat, whilst the phlegm pulse is sunken, weak and ponderous."

in Clark, B. (transl.) (1995). *The Quintessence Tantras of Tibetan Medicine*. Ithaca: Snow Lion.

[from the Root Tantra: *The Quintessence Tantra: The Secret Oral Tradition of the Eight Branches of the Science of Healing bdud rtsi snying po yan lag brgyad pa gsang ba man ngag gi rguyd*]



diagnosing depression:

in the context of *pervasive rlung* in the *Oral Instruction Tantra*
symptoms such as

"fear, depression [...] and talkativeness, restlessness, fear and
panic" are mentioned

see Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2017: 18). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las man ngag rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so*
The oral instruction tantra from the secret quintessential instructions on the eight branches of the ambrosia essence
tantra. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.



Issues of medical ethics: recommendation of refusing treatment of patients with severe depression (in the translation of the *Explanatory Tantra*, dated 2015)

„Patient to be refused is of two types: curable and incurable conditions [...] Patients who detest one’s leader, spiritual masters and human beings; who are ungrateful to the physicians for their kindness and even despise them; who are devoid of time and **money** [highlighted by Anders]; who are disobedient and whose lifespans have been exhausted; who are **intensely depressed** [highlighted by Anders] and those who are actively engaged in religious subversion should be refused to be treated although the problem is curable as they will bring defamation.“

see Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2015: 252, 253). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las rtsa ba'i rgyud dang bshad pa'i rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so The root tantra and the explanatory tantra from the Four Tantras of Tibetan medicine*. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.



Traumatic hot disorder

„The *nyepa* and bodily constituents are the causes of traumatic hot disorder. [...] The conditions that result in physical traumas are strenuous activities such as running, jumping, wrestling, lifting rocks, carrying heavy loads, pulling back a tight bowstring, digging in hard ground, falling off a horse or height, getting trapped under debris, and being beaten with stones and sticks. These conditions injure the bodily constituents and cause disturbance in blood, which subsequently aggravates the hot-nature *tripa*.“

in Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2017: 308). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las man ngag rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so* *The oral instruction tantra from the secret quintessential instructions on the eight branches of the ambrosia essence tantra*. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.



interpretation of the chapter by Gyatso and Hakim (2010):

1. causes for *rlung* disorder:

„Since wind is rough and light by nature, similar conditions exacerbate it: excessive intake of bitter, light, or rough foods or of nonnutritious foods; drinking cold water in excess; excessive sexual intercourse; irregular eating or sleeping; persistent hunger or undernourishment; excessive physical, mental, or verbal activity, especially on an empty stomach, severe diarrhea or vomiting; blood loss; exposure to cold wind; excessive grief, melancholy, or depression; forced retention or expulsion of stool, sperm, or urine; etc. When these causes meet with other factors such as the season or bodily constitution, which are also causative of wind conditions, wind conditions are sure to arise.“

see Gyatso, T., Hakim, C. (2010: 21). *Essentials of Tibetan Traditional Medicine*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books
[continuation next slide]



interpreting current life as a cause for *rlung* disorders (with neither cultural not individual differentiation) and overgeneralisation that everyone would be „familiar“ with patterns of depression and so on:

„The contemporary reader will not fail to recognize those causative factors as typical of the modern lifestyle: having a lot of different activities throughout the day, time pressures, fast food instead of an adequate diet, lack of sleep, not enough time to relax, etc. We are all familiar with patterns of boundless ambition, mental agitation, hypertension, insomnia, rapid emotional changes, depression, and so forth. Wind also often manifests as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as is often seen in displaced populations and other patients who have gone through great upheavals“

see Gyatso, T., Hakim, C. (2010: 21). *Essentials of Tibetan Traditional Medicine*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books



1. concerning the argument on cause and effect

1.1 one factor being argued to be the cause of a lot of quite diverse aspects without explanation on how this could ever come about (one factor, *rlung*, being argued to be the cause of all) 1.2 “Being familiar” with something does not at all explain the causes of symptoms / disease 1.3 mere correlation of aspects (any general symptoms) does not explain anything about their cause

2. overgeneralisation

2.1 lack of differentiation between symptoms vs. unhealthy behavior 2.2 overgeneralisation that everyone would be “familiar with patterns of depression and so on” in a list of unhealthy behavior factors as if symptoms of depression or insomnia would merely be bad lifestyle or bad behavior.

3. one factor (*rlung*) being the cause of all (in this case, for *PTSD*): stating (the diagnosis) *PTSD* to be a manifestation of the factor *rlung* without explanation how this would come about and although the symptoms of the diagnosis *PTSD* diagnosis rarely correspond with the enumerated *rlung* symptoms.



1. concepts on diagnosis in the past interviews
 - 1.1 ghosts as the cause of mental diseases
 - 1.2 studying too much as a cause of mental diseases
 - 1.3 insisting on blind obedience towards any (unexamined) *Vajrayāna* master when actually talking about diagnosing trauma
 - 1.4 telling people in Nepal just “not having these kinds of diseases”, because of having other problems (like income, water and food)
2. concepts on treatment in the past interviews
 - 2.1 prescribing *rlung* medicine (herbal mixtures)
 - 2.2 sending the person to a „meditation master/ Rinpoche “ (although him being uneducated in the field of mental health) to ask for his prayers
 - 2.3 the family being said to be responsible to care for the diseased
 - 2.4 obviously lacking specific treatment methods for diseases with high prevalence like depression and posttraumatic stress disorder



3. from texts:

"Regular oil massage, specially on the head, feet and ears, helps to overcome aging, fatigue and *loong* disorders. [...] The elderly, children, and those suffering from *loong* and *tripa* disorders should avoid excess physical exercises."

see Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2015: 141). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las rtsa ba'i rgyud dang bshad pa'irgyud tses bya ba bzugs so The root tantra and the explanatory tantra from the Four Tantras of Tibetan medicine. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.*



4.1 commercialising Buddhist terms and selling massage to be Tibetan medicine

4.2 current commercialisation of Tibetan medicine, just as Buddhist meditation, based on a „myth Tibet“ (Kollmar-Paulenz, 2006)

4.3 quickly increasing amount of courses for nonmedicals (-psychologists and -psychotherapists)

4.4 decrease in knowledge, because of a lack of translations and therefore using very simplified concepts in English not covering the complexity nor even the traditional definitions

4.5. increasing warnings regarding charlatans who pretend to be Amchis of Tibetan medicine in Western countries and diagnose and treat people (interviews since 2006)

4.6 misuse of titles: Amchis of Tibetan medicine advertising themselves to be “doctors” at Buddhist centers in the West although not having studied at university and also western doctors who decorate themselves with Tibetan false titles



5. Current international issues in Buddhist groups:

5.1 arguing *‘mental instability’* to be the same as mental disease and prescribing unspecific (Buddhist) meditation (one remedy) for all (mental diseases)

5.2 slandering any people they would have *rlung* disease (which is conceptually equalled with psychosis) and then,

5.3 based on the above concept, even telling that people slandered would not have practised „meditation“ properly as if meditation would be the one remedy for all (which shows a challenging system of indoctrination)

5.4 authorities using the term *‘hallucination’* to impose their indoctrinative attitude



Definition of the current habit in Buddhist groups:

the attempt to stigmatise people as mentally ‘*unstable*’ or even mentally diseased with the phrase “he/she has *rlung*”; sometimes this is even interchanged with using the term ‘*hallucination*’ out of medical context but with the intention to hint at any severe mental disease or so called ‘*confusion*’ of others (and in this way try to insist on and impose ones own point of view)

Current challenge in Buddhist groups:

that is stigmatisation, discreditation and slander of others by using the term *rlung* (by people unqualified and uneducated in the field of mental diseases and diagnosis of mental diseases, but talking and behaving as if far advanced in specialised knowledge of Buddhism)

Unfortunately, this rhetoric is currently used and widely practiced within Buddhist groups,

see: <https://www.en.transtibmed.ethnologie.uni-muenchen.de/testimonies/research-results/index.html>



Background:

in Tibetan medicine, all mental diseases are conceptualised to be *rlung* disorders (that is: diseases of the *rlung* system, which is simply one of the three factors/ three humors that are supposed to stay balanced for health in people).

Conclusion:

The effect of commercialising instead of preserving knowledge (in *Vajrayāna* Buddhism as well as in Tibetan medicine) has turned into distorted concepts and clearly defined terms being used by unqualified people.

This, for example, resulted in using the term *rlung* not only as a concept for diagnosing and curing disease by medical doctors, but for methods of singling out and stigmatisation, for denigrating and slandering others even though knowing what is said is untrue.

With selling Tibetan medicine for massage for nonmedicals in the German speaking area this will not get any better.



General diagnosis "Methods of examination involve visual examination, palpation and interrogation"

in Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2015: 243). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las rtsa ba'i rgyud dang bshad pa'i rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so The root tantra and the explanatory tantra from the Four Tantras of Tibetan medicine.*
Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.

"Diagnosis through indirect skillful means involves understanding characteristics of a disorders [disorder], digging up information, taking one's time, investigating prior treatments, voluntary disclosure, restricting the patient from speaking, declaration and taking cover in an excuse."

in Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2015: 246). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las rtsa ba'i rgyud dang bshad pa'i rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so The root tantra and the explanatory tantra from the Four Tantras of Tibetan medicine.*
Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.



"Taking cover in an excuse refers to a situation in which the physician fails to identify any diagnosis despite employing all possible means. In such a situation, a comparable diagnosis should be pronounced and then one should escape with an excuse. [...] The first of these relates to declaring the cause of the disorder to an unwholesome diet and lifestyle or attributing it to the influence of an evil spirit, having eaten rotten or sour food or having participated in strenuous activities combined with the intake of raw food. Give prescriptions that have neither beneficial nor adverse effects. [...] Escaping with an excuse refers to mentioning a type of disorder and a medicine that is hitherto unknown. State that no one knows about this medicine and that it is something very special. Although one could not understand the case, at least, a credit for ones skillfulness will be achieved"

in Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2015: 249). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las rtsa ba'i rgyud dang bshad pa'i rgyud tses bya ba bzhus so The root tantra and the explanatory tantra from the Four Tantras of Tibetan medicine.*

Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.



This citation is written in the reprint (2015) of the second edition (2011, first edition 2008) of the core text of Tibetan medicine from the eighth century (Four Medical Tantras *rgyud bzhi* by Yuthog Yonten Gonpo 708-833), which is the core text for current education in Tibetan medicine.

Analysis of the above statement:

1. professional ethics: lack of medical, scientific and personal ethics
2. deceit of patients and professionals in suggesting to know something special after a failure to diagnose instead of dialogue with professionals and ones own advanced training
3. caring for ones own reputation instead of abiding by ethics
4. this is found in the current core text for medical education in Tibetan medicine



Women, female doctors and “*do not listen to women nor disclose your secrets to them*”:

In the Root Tantra it is said: "Virtuous worldly conducts are the foundation of all good qualities. [...] Be true to one's word and fulfill all commitments. Negative actions, though encouraged by others, should be avoided; noble actions, though discouraged by others, should be undertaken. Think well in advance and look for long-term benefits. Do not take every statement to be true, accept them only after thorough analysis. Contemplate wisely before you speak, and never reveal confidential matters. Do not listen to women [2] nor disclose your secrets to them."

in Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2015: 144). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las rtsa ba'i rgyud dang bshad pa'i rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so The root tantra and the explanatory tantra from the Four Tantras of Tibetan medicine.*

Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.

[2 "Women here refers only to those who are cruel, deceitful, jealous and mentally unstable."]

Comment: in the Tibetan text (pg. 143) it is said: *bud med ngag la mi nyan sbad kha ltsi bar bya.*



"The specific therapeutic methods for treating each of the three principal energies are as follows: Sesame oil is the supreme medicine for *loong* disorders, associated with both hot and cold disorders. A diet including jaggery, *chhang*, aged butter, dried mutton, meat of marmot, horse, donkey and human, garlic and onion which are heavy oily, smooth and warm in qualities should be consumed to treat *loong*. Lifestyle such as staying in a dim and warm place, enjoying the companionship of loved ones, listening to pleasant words, sleeping comfortably and wearing warm clothes are recommended. The medications include the three nutritious bones soup ^[1], concentrated soup made from aged head of a lamb, decoction of the four essence ^[2], decoctions of *Shingkun sumpa*, powdered compounds of *Zati* or *Shingkun* as the main component, dairy compound, broth compound, garlic compound and *chhang* compound, and medicinal butter compound of *Zati*, *Gokya*, *Tsendhug*, *Mirue*, three myrobyalan fruits and the five roots. In short, *loong* disorders should be treated with sweet, sour, and salty taste, and oily and warm qualities. Mild enemas with aged butter and warm quality medicines are especially recommended. External therapies include performing massage with aged butter, compresses of oil on the site of pain and performing moxibustion on specific *loong* points such as the crown of the head, etc."

in Men Tsee Khang (transl.) (2015: 277). *bod kyi gso ba rig pa'i rgyud bzhi las rtsa ba'i rgyud dang bshad pa 'i rgyud tses bya ba bzhugs so The root tantra and the explanatory tantra from the Four Tantras of Tibetan medicine*. Dharamsala: Men-Tsee-Khang.

[pg. 280: 1 "The three nutritious bones soup are prepared from ankle, cocyx and end part of scapula"; 2 "The four essences are meat, butter, jaggery and *chhang*."]



With regard to mental diseases, the categories and diagnostics of mental diseases as defined by WHO (World Health Organisation), according to *ICD-10* resp. *ICD-11* and *DSM V*, seem to be largely unknown to physicians of Tibetan medicine

(according to the current status of the interviews conducted with doctors of Tibetan medicine in 2018 in Nepal, 1.4.2019)

Impact:

1. lacking general medical consensus for even diagnostic criteria in terms of medical and interdisciplinary health communication
2. as well as for scientific investigation on treatment outcome
3. it is not possible to preserve knowledge without ever updating it and being able to communicate to professionals in the field



1. teaching of advanced training in the ICD-11 diagnostic system (to be able to communicate at a common medical ground)
2. teaching of advanced training in medication for psychiatric diseases, in psychotherapy and trauma therapy and specialised training for children
3. teaching advanced training in conducting surveys investigating into the treatment outcome with the herbal medication of Tibetan medicine
4. updating medical, psychological and psychotherapy education according to the current scientific knowledge of treatment of mental diseases
5. training awareness on concepts which enhance stigmatisation of mental diseases
6. information as to referring to the country's legal system in order to defend oneself against the popular slander campaigns
7. training awareness on behavior of stigmatisation with saying „that person has *rlung*“ e.g. in buddhist groups



1. . informed and differentiated translations from the medical texts and commentaries as well as Oral Instructions from Tibetan language
2. exchange of medical, psychological and psychotherapy knowledge with professionals and scientists
3. systematic scientific investigation into treatment outcome (of treatment with Tibetan medicine/ herbs/ acupuncture) for specific diseases
4. continuing medical training regarding WHO standards and the current state-of-the-art of medical care (shared diagnostic tools)
5. updating of medical, psychological and psychotherapy knowledge in the literature
6. respecting Women's Rights (without denigration of females)
7. basing the argumentation (about causes of diseases and their symptoms) on logical reasoning and science
8. addressing cultural issues and cultural differences
9. mandatory continuous training to provide the population with the health care urgently needed



Thank you for your attention.