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International Tibetan Shugden Community
全球和藏人联合雄登法会

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Reuters Desperate Attempt to Repair the Dalai Lama's Image

A Response to Reuters Article – “Special Report: China co-opts Buddhist sect in drive to discredit Dalai Lama” by Sonam Rinchen

The recent article written by David Lague published in Reuters, “Special Report: China co-opts Buddhist sect in drive to discredit Dalai Lama” was disappointing and disheartening. When I was contacted by Mr. Lague to provide an interview and insight into the plight of Shugden followers in Tibet and around the world, I was elated. I thought a respected news outlet would provide the world with an unbiased report on the abuses and discrimination being perpetrated on Shugden followers throughout Tibetan communities. Sadly that is not what David Lague provided.

Mr. Lague's supposed unbiased investigation is immediately shown to be biased early in the article by his dim view of the Shugden followers' plight. He has described the protesters, including myself, in the third paragraph of his “Special Report” merely as “noisy” and causing a “cacophony”. He goes on to say that we, the protesters, follow the Dalai Lama, using abusive, harsh and insulting language in our protests against him. This negative tone shines an unwelcome light on all Shugden followers. It is an attempt to discredit our cause and repair the Dalai Lama's tarnishing public image. If Mr. Lague had listened to us and had spoken with us, he would have discovered that we are a peaceful group, wanting only to be heard. Many attempts to begin a peaceful dialogue with the Dalai Lama have been ignored by the Dalai Lama and his organization. Therefore, we have no alternative but to peacefully protest to get our message heard.

Mr. Lague continues his article, using the opinion of Lama Tseta as the basis for the majority of his claims. Lama Tseta is a known schemer and opportunist in the Tibetan community who holds little credibility among Shugden followers. He is not a major influencer in the Shugden community and I, as Mr. Lague points out, one of “the most visible” protesters, have never met Lama Tseta. It is known that Lama Tseta has provided US Visas to Tibetan immigrants, charging them thousands of dollars. Mr. Lague points out that Lama Tseta has travelled to China many times, supposedly helping the Shugden cause. This is not true. His travels to China are purely self-motivated, obtaining Visas for his human trafficking of Tibetan immigrants. Funding for Lama Tseta's travels and living expenses may be worth investigating, as he has never been gainfully employed. A look into the US Consulate in Chengdu may show where Lama Tseta gets his financial support. I have never received any funds from the Chinese government or any government to support my travel to these peaceful demonstrations.

The article goes on to discuss the recent accusations that the Shugden followers are threat to the Dalai Lama. The idea that Shugden followers are a “serious potential threat to the Dalai Lama's well-being” is ridiculous. None of the demonstrations I have been involved with have ever become violent nor have any of the protesters ever threatened the Dalai Lama's life. Without the Dalai Lama's help, our struggle will never be resolved. The Shugden followers are merely trying to get

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their message out, hoping that the discrimination and ostracizing being experienced by them in the Tibetan communities will cause a global outcry for relief.

In his article, David Lague quoted Richard Gere regarding the situation. Before the Dalai Lama's segregation, I worked for Richard Gere building a stone wall and lived at his house for over a month. He is a sincere devotee of the Dalai Lama and his point of view is expected. I respect his comments.

Shugden followers have never been an organized sect or community, with leadership and funding sources. There are many groups, such as ITSCcommunity.org, that have been organized in an attempt to get the truth told about the treatment of Shugden followers by the Dalai Lama and his supporters. These groups are not a cohesive organization. They only have similar goals. Groups such as International Shugden Community (ISC) are made up of volunteers. Many are Westerners who are shocked by the Dalai Lama's behavior towards their Dharma brothers and sisters. Being from the West, many of these volunteers have never experienced such discrimination and are accustomed to a non-discriminatory religious environment. David Lague states that the "majority of the rank-and-file protesters are Westerners who follow NKT". I have never been associated with NKT nor have I ever met Kelsang Gyatso, the leader of NKT. The same goes for Lama Gangchen. He has no official role in the Shugden community; he is simply a Shugden follower. Though I cannot speak for all of these organizations, International Tibetan Shugden Community (ITSC) is a self-funded, non-profit group, joining demonstrations throughout the world, alongside other organizations with similar goals. The ITSC is merely a group of Buddhists who would like the right to practice religion freely without persecution.

When interviewed by Mr. Lague, I sent him scores of documents and letters written to various world leaders and organizations pleading for assistance. These requests have been written personally by me and also from ITSC. I provided him with evidence of the discrimination and violence against Shugden followers. The ITSC, along with other organizations, have four main requests of the Dalai Lama. These four points have been sent to the Dalai Lama numerous times, most recently on International Human Rights Day. I also provided Mr. Lague with the four points given to the Dalai Lama. Mr. Lague did not include these points anywhere in his article. He did not explain the reasons behind the protesting. He only accused Shugden followers of being involved in a conspiracy with the Chinese government to overthrow the Dalai Lama, being "noisy" and meaningless.

Shugden followers request only the following from the Dalai Lama:

1. To allow anyone who wishes to practice Dorje Shugden the freedom to do so;
2. To stop completely the discrimination against Shugden practitioners;
3. To allow all Shugden monks and nuns who have been expelled to return to their monasteries and nunneries; and to receive the same material and spiritual rights as non Shugden practitioners;
4. To write to Tibetan communities throughout the world that they should apply practically the above three points.

The Dalai Lama has a charming public persona and, as a Nobel Laureate, is a supposed ambassador of peace throughout the world as well as the leader of the Buddhist community. However, there is no peace in his own Tibetan community. The Dalai Lama causes the suffering endured by many Tibetans. He has no peace in his own family. Before his death, the Dalai Lama's older brother, Thubten Jigme Norbu, stated that there was no Tibetan Government and that Tibet was owned by three families, his being the majority owner. The Dalai Lama did not attend the Norbu's funeral in 2008. Another brother has written a book accusing a relative of stealing from the old Tibetan gold reserve. The only Buddhist country that would allow the Dalai Lama to visit was Japan. The other Buddhist countries did not welcome him. He has manipulated the West with his charm and pleasing demeanor, gaining popularity and sympathy from many countries. But now Westerners are beginning to see through this public image. World leaders, including the British and Norwegian Prime Ministers, have chosen not to meet with the Dalai Lama. The Western leaders are beginning to see that the Dalai Lama is a hypocrite and religious dictator.

Reuter's, and possible David Lague's, hatred towards China has blinded them, unable to see the truth or even to be interested in seeking the truth.

Prior to the article being published, I provided to Mr. Lague the opportunity to interview other Shugden followers, including Lobsang Dorje. He did not follow through with these contacts. Since the article was published, I have attempted to contact Mt. Lague to express my disappointment. He has not returned my calls.

I think the article should have been titled "Special Report: Dalai Lama co-opts David Lague and Reuters in drive to discredit Tibetan Buddhists seeking religious freedom"

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