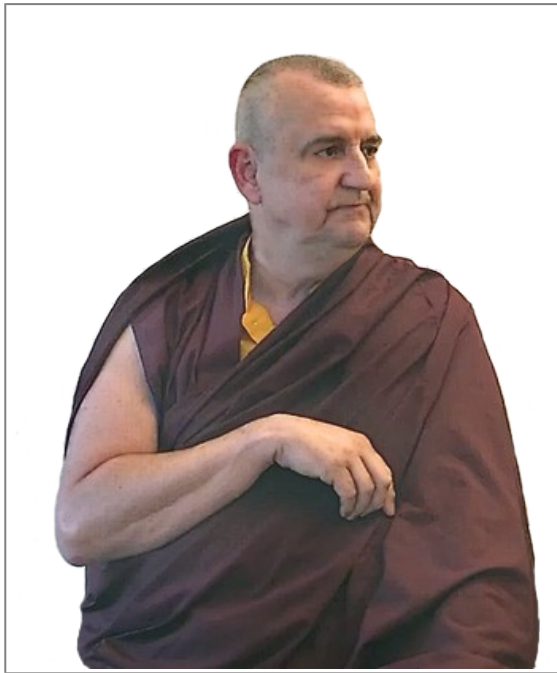


Rumours about sexual offences in Dhagpo

Lama Puntso accused and he has given up his position at Dhagpo

by Lama Tendar Olaf Hoeyer



Lama Puntso, clip from a video.

Lama Puntso is known as the official and friendly face of Dhagpo Kagyu Ling in Dordogne in Southern France. For some years, he has also been leading the Dhagpo centre in Bordeaux. Now, he has left it all and written a letter to the members of 'Dhagpo Mandala' about how he broke his monks vows and Dharma ethics. He wrote a sort of confession to his colleagues and the Lama Council of the monasteries at Le Bost. In this letter he told about breaking his vows several times in the last 24 years. In 2010, he laid down his monk ordination but retook the vows in 2017.

So Lama Puntso's story is, that he has cultivated erotic relations with several women all this time, even he thereby broke his vows and the intention of these vows. He also broke vows about alcohol, though this is not very serious within Vinaya. He wrote, that he was sorry for all of this.

Ad to this story, that the Vinaya rules of conduct for monks and nuns state, that breaking the vow of celibacy is destroying one of the root vows. This means that

the vows cannot be repaired nor restored. Now, maybe the monks that gave Lama Puntso a new ordination in 2010 did not know, that he had broken this root vow. Anyway, he never obtained the vows in his second term – he cannot become a monk again in this life. It seems that he was not aware of these restrictions in the Vinaya Sutra, but he should have known. So, he deceived the world and harmed himself. If a monk wants sex, he just have to give up his vows. And get consent from his partner, of course. Then all is beautiful. Lama Puntso does not explain, why he did not do so, when he no longer wanted to keep his discipline going.

Unfortunately for Lama Puntso, a very different story is also presented to us about the same series of events. This story come from some people of the Bordeaux centre. They are very upset because of his conduct. They think, it has been manipulative, brainwashing, overtly seductive, erotic misuse, suppressive, secretive, and that some of these relations have been of a criminal nature (one instance of violence and one instance of sexual relation with a minor). These people have demanded, that all informations about the misbehaviour of Lama Putso must be published on the front-page of the Dhagpo website. Lama Jigme Rinpoche said that was not possible, because it would constitute legal injuries, that could entail reparations due to legal proceedings in a court of law. This is quite true.

For the moment, there only exist rumours that have not been documented by anyone. But some people think, that something of a criminal nature has happened. Lama Jigme Rinpoche has encouraged such people, that may perceive themselves to be victims of Lama Puntso's conduct and acts, to go to the French criminal justice system and file charges. Then it is up to the judge to decide, whether criminal acts has taken place or not.

The problem for Lama Puntso's good or shady reputation as well for the complainants and the victims – if indeed there are any victims – is that only Lama Puntso's name is publicly known. The 'victims' were maybe willing participants enjoying erotic plays, that they consented to at the time. We do not know, when no 'victims' dare appear to the public and complain in their own names. Also the formal complainants from Bordeaux are for the time being anonymous. They are known to the leadership of the Dhagpo Mandala, but they may claim silence, says the leadership. The complainants have anyway addressed themselves to the leadership and not the public.

The victims are completely unknown and they have not complained to the leadership nor to Lama Jigme Rinpoche. So there is a lot of clatter and noise,

while very serious accusations of criminal conduct buzz in the atmosphere. But there is not much #metoo about this case when no one go public in their own name.

Never the less, the complainants have no worry in destroying Lama Puntso's name among the members of the Dhagpo Mandala. While Lama Puntso himself say, that he did something wrong, he did not confess to misuse of his position, nor to something of a criminal nature. But for now, he is a suspect – and we do not know, if it is justified.

So, this is a peculiar case, clouded in rumours and no facts. At this time, it is not possible to determine, what is up and down. When people are willing to accuse, but do not want their names mentioned. When the people, who allegedly have suffered, do not want to complain in the open. When the leadership of Dhagpo do not know what to do. Then we have a very mess.

And of course, these rumours will leak to people on the outside, to sponsors, friends of Buddhism in general and to families of all the members of the Dhagpo Mandala. These are rumours, that we in principle cannot trust. Something of a criminal nature may have happened, but it is not possible to establish as a fact, because no charges have been filed by the police nor at any court of law. So, this case should maybe not be mentioned publicly at all, when so obviously, it is all rumours being forged and no facts are present.

Here on Tilogaard in the far away Denmark I feel, that it is necessary to go public about this case, because I do not want to be accused of complicity in keeping a scandal secret in the organisation, that I as a Lama stems from – and that I since 1990 have associated with.

Rumours, reactions and new organisational initiatives

The nice thing about this story is naturally, that the Dhagpo Mandala have been able to discuss this matter and relate to it. Like they did at the scandal of Lama Yeshe some years ago. Consequently new initiatives have been initiated with regard to organise a sort of 'ombudsman' institution to take care of complaints

about the conduct of Dharma-teachers and the leadership in general. This new institution has not yet materialised, though. But many more people have been engaged into the leadership of Dhagpo Kagyu Ling. In this way, it will be difficult to form informed 'clans' and secret agendas. Or so it is hoped.

The case about Lama Puntso is in no way solved or resolved at present. No one has presently written about the case on official media, because the case is based on rumours. Never the less, Tilogaard feel obliged to publish the matter, since rumours are abundant and no one knows, what is the truth. So people need to know, what is known – and what is not. At least from an official source like Tilogaard. People also need to know, that we are not trying to conceal something, or trying to hide embarrassing behaviour by our colleagues. Lama Puntso is by the nature of this case **innocent**, until the opposite has been proved.

And the possibly and allegedly victims are also innocent, because it might be embarrassing for them to go public – and possibly devastating for them professionally. We do not know, who they are, or what their social and professional status might be. Besides, maybe they played along joyfully and consenting of their free will. At least at the time it all happened. Maybe they later regretted. And maybe we shall never know.

The issue started in the later half of 2020. Several meetings were conducted in the leadership of Dhagpo and in the Lama council at Le Bost. In February, Lama Puntso wrote his letter to the members. And here at the beginning of March, the Lama council and the leadership of Dhagpo has explained the matter in an internal message.

I was in the old days a good friend of Lama Puntso and hold very nice memories about him from the time in the 80'ties and 90'ties. When I lived at Dhagpo and Le Bost myself, Lama Puntso was either in retreat – or so was I. Therefore, I do not know him as a member of the resident group. And I have not had any contact with him for many years now. I am therefore not a suitable witness to his character. Lama Puntso has the civil name of Pierre Haenen. He was born in 1961 and came to Dhagpo first in the 80'ties and has since accomplished two sequential 3 years retreats at Le Bost. Both before and after his retreats, he served as a prominent member of the leadership in the Dhagpo Mandala. There even is a page on Wikipedia about him. What he will do next at his age of 60 years is very uncertain. This is a modern tragedy, no matter what actually happened.