

What is a destructive cult? How can we recognize it? Part one

Cults as usually are known among people, have been defined differently by different experts. Some have refused to recognise it as a viable name or adjective for those groups that are commonly known as 'Cult' and prefer to call them NRM (New Religious Movements); But majority have been loyal to popular feelings and understandings and have tried to define the word and set certain conditions for naming a group as a cult. For example Lifton, as one of the experts, who was among first recognizing mind manipulation committed by Mao's China under 'thought reform'; has defined it as:

'Cults in terms of a cluster of groups with certain characteristics, First, all cults have a Charismatic leader, who himself or herself increasingly becomes the object of worship, and in many cases, the dispenser of immortality. Spiritual ideas of a general kind give way to this deification of the leader. Second, in Cults there occurs a series of psychological processes that can be associated with what has been called "coercive persuasion" or "thought reform". And third, there is a pattern of manipulation and exploitation from above (by leaders and ruling coteries) and idealism from below (on the part of supplicants and recruits).'

Margaret Singer another famous expert in this field; in her book 'Cults in our Midst'; in a section under title of 'Definitions and Characteristics' of cults; writes:

*'The noun cult tends to impart an image of a static organization. But like people in other groupings, people in a cult interact in special ways, and these ways change across time. It is in their inner workings that cults tend to be unusual, so it's not always easy to grasp the difference between an open society or organization and a cult. Sometimes people fail to consider how cults work because they mistakenly either write cults off as filled with a bunch of crazies or think cults are just like the regular groups they attend, such as the local Rotary Club, the PTA, or the Loyal Order of Moose. The usual dictionary definitions of a cult are descriptive of certain aspects. But I also want to convey what life in various cults consists of and to convey a more dynamic picture of the processes that go on. I prefer to use the phrase "cultic relationships" to signify more precisely the processes and interactions that go on in a cult. A cultic relationship is one in which a person intentionally induces others to become totally or nearly totally dependent on him or her for almost all major life decisions, and inculcates in these followers a belief that he or she has some special talent, gift, or knowledge. For our purpose, the label cult refers to three factors: 1- The origin of the group and role of the leader. 2- The power structure, or relationship between the leader (or leaders) and the followers. 3- The use of coordinated program of persuasion (which is called thought reform, or, more commonly, brainwashing).'*ⁱⁱ

Describing 'cultic relationships' she explains:

'Cults are authoritarian in structure. ... Leader is supreme authority, ... Cult leaders claim to be breaking with tradition, offering something novel, and instituting the only viable system for change that will solve life's problems or the world's ills. ... Cults tend to have a double set of ethics. Members are urged to be open and honest within the group and to confess all to the leader. At the same time, members are encouraged to deceive and manipulate non-members. In contrast, established religions and ethical groups teach members to be honest and truthful to all and to abide by one set of ethics. The overriding philosophy in cults, however, is that the ends justify the means, a view that allows

cults to establish their own brand of morality, outside normal social bounds. ... "Heavenly deception" ... "transcendental trickery," ... "talking to the Babylonians", ...or referring to outsiders as the "systemite." Language such as this is meant to justify a double set of ethics, making it acceptable for members to deceive non-members."ⁱⁱⁱ

Lalich another expert in this field, *'discusses four interlocking structural dimensions that underpin the social dynamics of cultic groups: 1- charismatic authority. 2- A transcendent belief system. 3- Systems of control. 4- Systems of influence. "The relational aspect of charisma is the hook that links a follower or devotee to a leader and/ or his or her ideas."^{iv} The transcendent belief system "binds adherents to the group and keeps them behaving according to the group's rules and norms". Systems of control are "overt rules, regulations, and procedures that guide and control group members' behaviour", while the systems of influence reside in the group culture "from which members learn to adapt their thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours in relation to their new beliefs" These four factors working together can lead to a "self-sealing system that exacts a high degree of commitment -as well as expressions of that commitment- from its core members" and that is "closed in on itself, allowing no consideration of disconfirming evidence or alternative points of view" The self-sealing system forms a bounded reality. Within that frame of mind the person's choices become constrained because of the external sanctions of the social system and the person's own internalised sanctions. This places members in 'a narrow realm of constraint and control, of dedication and duty'- what Lalich appropriately calls "bound choice".'*

Some have studied only certain cults, mostly religious ones and have defined them accordingly; for example in 'All God's children' we read:

'A cult has a living leader. Cult doctrine is based on his, or her, revelations which either supplant or supplement traditional religious doctrine and scripture. -The cult leader is the sole judge of the quality of a member's faith and he enjoys absolute authority over the members. He often lives in kingly splendor while his subjects live in poverty. -A cult promises a system in which a convert may work to save the world and humanity, but actually sponsors no community improvement programs. - the daily work of nearly all cult members is demeaning and utilizes little of their potential, in terms of intelligence, training or education. -Religious cults are exclusive social systems, claiming that their members will achieve salvation (or happiness). Members are taught to believe that they are 'superior' to those outside of the group. -To be a member of a cult a person must remove himself from society, cut himself off from job, education, friends and family. Methods of ego-destruction and thought control are part of a religious cult's recruiting and indoctrination practices. -Cults discourage critical analysis by dictating the suppression of negative thoughts, therefore fostering a dependency on the cult's authority that arrests the maturation process. -the cult rituals and practices are psychologically unwholesome, and in some cases physically dangerous when they involve the use of drugs or perverse sexual rites."^{vi}

Some experts in this field have separated ordinary cults from destructive, extreme or totalitarian ones; by describing what happens to members when they join an extreme or totalistic cult; for example, Erving Goffman gives four characteristics for recognizing a destructive cult:

'1- All aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. 2- Each phase of the member's daily activity is carried out in the immediate company of a large batch of others. 3- All phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled, with one activity leading to a

prearranged time into the next, the whole sequence of activities being imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rulings, and a body of officials. 4- The various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfil the official aims of the institution.^{vii}

Dr. Olsson in his book 'Malignant Pied Pipers of our time', differentiates cults from destructive ones and describes the latter one as:

'Exploitive and destructive cults have many characteristics in common. -They concentrate a large percentage of their group efforts on fund-raising, recruiting new members, and subtly or obviously controlling the financial, social, familial, and sexual lives of their members. -Cult members are frequently lectured at or berated by the charismatic leader after the initial 'love bombardment' of recruitment or seduction. - The destructive cult devalues or attacks the nuclear family or extended family. "the family," a California cult, repeatedly said to recruits, "Spending time with your biological family is like eating your own vomit!"^{viii} -Destructive cult leaders often rearrange marriages, dictate sexual boundaries, or personally select sexual partners for themselves from the membership. - The exploitive cult rapidly develops 'in-group, out-group' dynamics, with group-sanctioned isolation from other groups and especially from a free range of dialogue about the difference in opinions between groups. -Money gathered by the cult group is often used to enhance the fame, power, or prestige of the leader and not to primarily help the community. - These cults have doctrines and practice based on a living leader's evolving revelations, which supplant or devalue rather than supplement or deepen traditional teachings. Thus these groups retain as their central goal the aggrandisement and narcissistic affirmation of their charismatic leaders. They actively promote isolation from the rich variety of ideas abounding in the broader society. Their leaders seek to alienate members from their families or communities of origin.^{ix}

Professor Dole; putting a condition for recognizing a terrorist group as a cult considers four characteristics for a group to be called a cult:

'1- Compliance: measures the extent to which members sacrifice their own goals, serve leaders who make decisions, and comply with group norms. 2- Exploitation: Implies the group seeks power unethically. A cult manipulates, abuses, and uses people. 3- Mind Control: measures the extent to which members are deceived, leaders use personal dominance, and the group uses coercive persuasion. 4- Anxious Dependency: reflects a cult situation in which dependency can be absolute and fear tends to colour all experiences.'^x

As it can be seen, above definition is defining a cult, more through understanding of what will happen to members when they join a cult. As does this one:

'Theodore L. Dorpat in his 1996 book Called Gaslighting. The Double Whammy, Interrogation, and Other Methods of Covert Control in Psychotherapy and psychoanalysis; In Chapter 9 specifically discusses psychotherapy cults. He points out (Page 184) How psychotherapy cult leaders often use shame and humiliation, among other thought-reform techniques (known as 'gaslighting'), to induce dependency and self-doubt in their followers. Such mind control leads to destructive and long-lasting psychopathological effects. Dorpat offers six major and cogent characteristics of all destructive cults (page 185). 1- Cult leaders are Charismatic, authoritarian, and dominating individuals. 2- Followers join the cult when they are emotionally disturbed and/or are in transition between developmental

state; i.e. when identity needs and security are the greatest. 3- The followers idealize the cult leaders. Both the leader and followers consider the leader to be the supreme authority. 4- The cult leaders suppress the followers' disagreement or opposition. 5- Followers become totally involved in the cult, which often controls every aspect of their personal life, including sex, social relationships, diet, dress, work, and the like. 6- Cults tend to have long-lasting traumatic and destructive psychological effects on followers, who gradually lose their autonomy and their capacity for critical thinking.^{xii}

Attributes of a Destructive Cult:

- 1- It should have an alive, leader, who controls most aspects of life of the members of the cult. In my view not any leader can be a cult leader, he or she has to have certain characteristics to be able to run the cult and manipulate members to be as obedient and loyal as to sacrifice almost anything for the leader. Characteristics such as: charm or charisma; Narcissism or extreme self love; sense of superiority with gigantic ambitions; confidence and power of speech. Cult leaders mostly are friendless as they will see no one as fit enough as being their equal or friend.
- 2- It should have a doctrine, or an ideology, or an extreme goal for the group^{xii}. Doctrine or announced objectives of cult are only useful in recruiting and gluing members to each other. being religious or none religious; its goal, being political or personal; its philosophy being eastern or western; are not as important as common characteristics of the cult's doctrine. Characteristics such as: black and white view toward almost any aspect of being and life; simplicity of message rapped in ambiguous, complicated and lengthy wordings; claim of being unique and superior to all other similar ideas; having different code of moral for inside and outside of the cult from one hand and on the other hand, different code of behaviour for the leader and the rest of the cult's members; flexibility of idea to match the interest of cult at any situation and anytime; or I might say ideological-deception and believe in the 'end justifies means' which is at the heart of any destructive cult's doctrine. In my view all elements of cult's doctrine can alter even to its opposite, but there are two elements, common among all cults that never can change. One: survival of the cult and its leader with any price; and two: absolute loyalty and obedience toward the leader again with any price. At this point I have to mention that one might look at some of the above common factors of doctrines of cults and claim that many religions and even secular political ideas have almost the same characteristics such as claim of being unique, or being superior to other similar beliefs; I have to emphasis that many beings and phenomenon in life in different categories, have similar attributions but each category is unique and has been defined uniquely through not only their common factors with their alike but in totality of their characteristics and mainly through their differences with their similar. We have an expression in Farsi; saying 'not all spheres are an apple.' Yes Apple has to have spherical shape; but to be apple any sphere has to have many other attributions as well. There are many similarities between even an ant and a human being if we look at their genetic code of their DNA; but an ant to reach to the point of humanity, has to pave millions of years of evolutionary distance^{xiii}. To differentiate a cult from a popular faith, one has to look at collection of all the characteristics of the cult and not pick and choose few common factors. This is why I differ fully from those who would like to call cults even destructive cults, and perhaps even none religious ones as NRM; because in my view, no known popular religion has **all** these attributions, while some might have some of them at one point or another point of their

existence; and if any group calling itself new church or new faith, has all these attributions, then I will not call them 'followers of a faith' but members of a destructive cult. Some argue that some of today's religions once in the past, they were a cult and then they evolved into a popular religion. Again if I can accept that there are some popular faiths or ideas that started from a cult like groupings; still we can not call a monkey, human because it might evolve into human, or we can not make an apple pie with the seed or flower of apple because it can change into an apple; a monkey is a monkey till if in millions of years it evolve into human and a flower of apple is a flower till it grow into apple. I am not claiming that cults can not evolve into something else. As there are many cult leaders who started as being religious respected activist and then changed into a cult leader, people such as Jim Jones or those who changed from a political leader or a revolutionary leader into most destructive cult leader such as Mao and Masoud Rajavi of MEK; or perhaps a western educated businessman like Osma bin Laden into Al-Qaeda's cult leader; cults can change and transfer themselves into a political party or even a new branch of a popular faith^{xiv}, but as long as they have common characteristics mentioned here, in my view they are cult and when they change and evolve into something else, their title can change too.

- 3- Organization; or a method of running and controlling the cult and in case of larger cults system of hierarchy. Smaller cults might seem not having an organisation as such and very large ones such as Al-Qaeda might have changed into some sort of franchise; but however small or big a cult is; however simple or complicated its organisation might be; all of them have similar organizational characteristics; such as: loyalty toward the leader and absolute obedience of members from their superior. All cult's organisations change the cult into an independent entity almost like an independent country or even a world within wider society; with its private symbolism and rituals, and perhaps even different emblem, anthem and flag, independent financial or tax system, laws and rules of conduct; most of the times totally different and even opposite of laws, morals and norms of conduct of the host society or country that they are not abide to. Other common characteristics of destructive cult's organisation are hard work, no doubt and no question, absolute secrecy and surveillance. All destructive cults see the wider society as enemy, therefore the organisation of a cult is based on total paranoia and phobia toward outsiders. Membership of a cult is for life, therefore there is no exit door within the organisation, unless a member escape which in this case he or she will be called a 'traitor' and in the view of cult will be worthy of execution, or being thrown away because of their lack of fitness or as it was called in MEK their Ghoolos-ness.
- 4- System of mind control, or mind manipulation or 'brain washing'. Or in simplest form of cults how they isolate their members from the wider society. All destructive cults according to my definition have to have a method of mind manipulation. In my view there are three stages in the mind manipulation that I call them accordingly: A- use of influence techniques. B- Mind control and C- brainwashing. I will call a cult, a destructive cult or as Lifton called them totalistic (even if that cult is a peaceful or none violent one), when they manipulate mind of their members through all three stages of mind manipulation, especially through the method that I call 'brainwashing'. Destructive cults while for recruitment use only influence techniques, but for members they use all three forms of mind manipulation to rub their members from their free will and change them into new slaves of the leader.

Misuse of different doctrines by Cults:

History of cults perhaps goes back to the beginning of the history of mankind. First sorcerer and wizards were perhaps first cult leaders. Number of cults through the history is countless. For example; in India; Dr. Lung writes:

'Down through the centuries, alongside 10,000 temples built to honour 10,000 gods, India has also produced 10,000 secret societies, Tantrum sex cults, and sanguineous sects, not the least of which are the devotees of the fierce black -faced bitch-Goddess Kali whose Thuggee stranglers preyed upon the subcontinent until finally suppressed in the mid nineteenth century by the British.'^{xv}

We have seen small cults with few members that became big in media such as Symbionese Liberation army, a left wing terrorist cult; through kidnapping of Patty Hearst, daughter of the famous millionaire, who through brain washing changed into a member of SLA. Also we have seen large cults with perhaps millions or even tens of millions of members; with little mentioned in the western media such as followers of Sathya Sai Baba in India who used to call himself the manifestation of the God on earth^{xvi}. Some cults through the history have become famous by Terrorising or assassination of other famous people such as Zealots in killing Roman occupiers of Judea; or Assassins in killing of Kings and ministers of Middle East; Thuggee in India; and recently, Mojahedin e Khalq (MEK) in Iran and Al-Qaeda as an international Terrorist organisation . Others became famous in killing themselves and their members; cults such as: Heaven Gate; followers of Jim Jones and David Koresh.

Though most important element for having a cult is to have a cult leader; still, cult leader to attract and recruit members, also later to glue members together, need to have a doctrine or a message. A doctrine or message such as:

- 1- Neo-Christian For example: Oneida Community^{xvii}; Dom's day cults^{xviii}; Unification Church^{xix}.
- 2- Hindu and Eastern religious cults. For example: Hare Krishna^{xx}.
- 3- Muslim or Jewish^{xxi}. Such as Assassins; Zealots; Al-Qaeda which is a little different from common form of cults; however I will talk about them more later. Also Mojahedin e Khalq or MEK that I was member of and I will describe them in length.
- 4- Political and Marxists; such as WDU described by Carol Giambalv an ex-member of the group.^{xxii} Or 'O' described by Alexandra Stein in her memoirs; 'Inside Out'^{xxiii}.
- 5- Occult, witchcraft, and Satanist. Example: Temple of Set^{xxiv}.
- 6- Spiritualist, self help cults. Such as followers of Georgei Ivanovitch Gurdjieff.^{xxv}
- 7- Zen and other Sino-Japanese philosophical - mystical orientation; such as: Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan.^{xxvi}
- 8- Flying saucer and other Outer-space phenomena; such as Heaven Gate^{xxvii}.

Well I can go on and on as no one can predict what the next trickery and slogan of a destructive cult leaders might be and what kind of promises he or she might give to his or her new recruits.

ⁱ Robert Jay Lifton John Jay College City University of New York, New York, January 1995 – cited from: Margaret Thaler Singer Cults in our Midst; Jossey-Bass; A Wiley Imprint; 2003; P: xii

ⁱⁱ Margaret Thaler Singer Cults in our Midst; Jossey-Bass; A Wiley Imprint; 2003; PP: 6 & 7

ⁱⁱⁱ Margaret Thaler Singer Cults in our Midst; Jossey-Bass; A Wiley Imprint; 2003; P: 9

^{iv} Lailch, Janja. (2004). Bounded choice: True believers and charismatic cults. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. , P: 17 Cited from: Responding to Jihadism: A Cultic studies Perspective Michael D. Langone, Ph.D. Editor, International Cultic Studies Association; Cultic Studies Review; special Issue Terrorism. Vol 5, No. 2; 2006; PP: 281, 282

^v Responding to Jihadism: A Cultic studies Perspective Michael D. Langone, Ph.D. Editor, International Cultic Studies Association; Cultic Studies Review; special Issue Terrorism. Vol 5, No. 2; 2006; PP: 281, 282

^{vi} Carroll Stoner and Jo Anne Parke; 'All Gods Children' The Cult Experience Salvation or Slavery?' Chilton Book Company; 1977; P: 4

^{vii} Goffman, Erving. 1961. Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates. New York: Anchor Books. - Page 6; cited from: Benjamin Zablocki & Thomas Robbins; 'misunderstanding Cults' Searching for objectivity in a controversial field; University of Toronto Press; 2001; P: 416

^{viii} In MEK the cult that I was member of, we used to use exactly the same term for being with our spouses; after order of a collective divorce.

^{ix} Peter A. Olsson; 'Malignant Pied Pipers of our time' published by 'Publish America Baltimore'; 2005; PP: 31, 32

^x Are Terrorists Cultists? Arthur A. Dole, Ph.D. ABPP Emeritus Professor, Psychology in Education University of Pennsylvania. Cited from: International Cultic Studies Association; Cultic Studies Review; special Issue Terrorism. Vol 5, No. 2; 2006; P: 204

^{xi} Dorpart, T. -1996- Gaslighting, The Double Whammy, Interrogation, and Other Methods of Covert Control in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis. Jason Aronson Press, Northvale New Jersey, London. Cited from: Peter A. Olsson; 'Malignant Pied Pipers or our time' published by 'Publish America Baltimore'; 2005; P: 170, 171

^{xii} In case of Psychology or psychotherapeutic or Self-help, Self-Improvement cults, they should have a prescription with promise of elevating members to higher level of being

^{xiii} Later we will see that in destructive cults such as Mojahedin e Khalq of Iran; cult's leaders preach their members to pave their way back, in opposite direction and change into an ant, establishing the same kind of relation an ant soldier or worker has with its queen.

^{xiv} 'Number of cults have switched back and forth between {social group and social movement}, sometimes more than one occasion in order to accommodate changes in size and / or shifts in recruitment strategies or proselytization tactics. Thus, at certain times in its history a cult can be a precisely defined group with clear boundaries separating members from outsiders, and at other times it can take the form of a more amorphous social movement with fuzzy concentric boundaries shading off imperceptibly from totally committed inner -circle members to fellow travellers to vaguely interested spectators.' Janja Lalich - Pitfalls in the Sociological Study of Cults - She was for ten years member of the Democratic Workers Party (DWP), a highly restrictive political cult. Cited from: Benjamin Zablocki & Thomas Robbins; 'misunderstanding Cults' Searching for objectivity in a controversial field; University of Toronto Press; 2001; P: 124

^{xv} For more on Indian cults see Lung, Haha and Christopher B. Prowant. Black Science: Ancient and Modern Techniques of Ninja Mind Manipulation. Boulder, Colorado: Paladin Press, 2001.

^{xvi} To learn more about Sathya Sai Baba; you can see the INFORM; Information Network on Religious Movements;

www.inform.ac

^{xvii} 'The Oneida Community was a 19 century Christian group that was founded by Noyes in approximately 1843 and lasted until 1881. It was only one of many new Christian sects that were formed during the 'Second Great Awakening' - a period of religious and social experimentation which began in the 1840s and ended in the 1880s. ... According to Noyes's perfectionist theology, for those who had become free of sin, the laws that applied to ordinary people did not apply to them because these converts had incorporated the spirit of scripture. Laws were only necessary for those who were still in a state of sin. Noyes even went so far as to declare that he did not feel bound to obey the constitution of the United States, or any other secular laws. ...' Child - Rearing Issues in Totalist Groups - Amy Siskind – cited from: Benjamin Zablocki & Thomas Robbins; 'misunderstanding Cults' Searching for objectivity in a controversial field; University of Toronto Press; 2001; P: 426, 427

^{xviii} To know more, refer to Benjamin Zablocki & Thomas Robbins; 'misunderstanding Cults' Searching for objectivity in a controversial field; University of Toronto Press; 2001; page 479

^{xix} Steven Hassan; an ex-member of group describe it as: 'The Unification Church (whose formal name is The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity) is one of the largest, and certainly most visible destructive cults in the United States. The organization is completely dominated by its absolute leader, Sun Myung Moon, a Korean - born businessman ... During 1970s, members of this group became a regular feature in most American cities. They stood on street corners selling flowers, candy, puppets, and other small items, and actively recruited young people in colleges and universities. Generally clean-cut, courteous, and persistent,... Another aspect of the Unification Church, still insufficiently recognized, is that members justify the use of deception to recruit individuals. ... Cited from: Steven Hassan; 'Combatting Cult Mind Control; Park Street Press; 1988; PP: 6, 7. To know more about the Unification Church refer to the same book by Steven Hassan.

^{xx} 'Guru Maharaj Ji claims to understand the key to the essence and spirit of knowledge and truth. ... 'he who seeks truth, finds it,' the young guru tells his disciples. If by chance a new devotee doesn't find what the guru promises when he practices the guru's meditative techniques, the fault of course is not the guru's but the premies. A disappointed premie will be told that he 'hasn't grown enough' to experience the 'knowledge.' 'Followers of the Guru Maharaj Ji. Premies that live within the ashrams either turn over all their income from outside jobs to the Mission in exchange for food, clothing and shelter, or work for the Mission itself and get, in exchange, the necessities of life and the privilege of living in the commune. ... Recruiters avoid speaking of a life-time commitment or describing the concessions that may have to be made in order to belong. 'You owe it to yourself, to come, to see, to hear, the prospect is told. He is invited to the cult's commune, house or meeting place to share in a picture of nirvana the recruiter paints in broad strokes.. ... Hare Krishna adopt a uniform, though unconventional, mode of dress.' {Carroll Stoner and Jo Anne Parke; 'All Gods Children' The Cult Experience Salvation or

Slavery?' Chilton Book Company; 1977; PP: 27, 30} 'Former Hare Krishna devotee John McCabe rose to a top-level position during his five years in the movement before he left the group on his own. At 24, ... John decided to leave the cult, after so many years, for a number of reasons. One reason, a minor one, he says, was his own reluctant celibacy. ... John had taken the vows of total celibacy as a Krishna swami and according to those vows, his thoughts of women were to be suppressed. He eventually decided that holding back natural desire was 'ridiculous and artificial,' since the rest of Krishna life didn't offer enough in exchange.' {Carroll Stoner and Jo Anne Parke; 'All Gods Children' The Cult Experience Salvation or Slavery?' Chilton Book Company; 1977; P: 281 }

^{xxi} I will talk more about these types of cults later.

^{xxiii} Carol Giambalvo an ex-member of the group describes how the group started and progressed 'The WDU's founding ideology, as explained to recruits and members, was to build a revolutionary feminist organization that would fight for real change in the daily lives of the U.S. working class, eventually leading to the advent of socialism. In the early years, there was a great deal of emphasis on labour committees, workplace organizing, community efforts, and so forth. At one point in the late 1970s, the WDU led a grass-roots organization of nearly one thousand members who worked on local political issues; many of the members lived in the city's communities of colour. Over time, because of Baxter's obsession with academia and intellectuals, the focus changed from local work to international causes, from a biweekly newspaper distributed locally by the members to academic books and theoretical journals put out by the party's publishing arm and distributed through trade and academic channels. Although militants still did some local organizing (usually in the form of support work for revolutionary struggles in Central America), most members were more and more distanced from what the party was espousing and what Baxter (the cult leader) was aspiring to. Baxter was professing new theories on east and west socialisms; she was taking a greater and greater interest in Eastern Europe; her goal was to get invited to the Soviet Union. Much of this was rather alienating for the average militant. It was hard to make the leap from talking to people on the street about local ballot propositions to getting excited about what was going on in Bulgaria. No one spoke it, but many a militant wondered what any of this had to do with the U.S. working class.' To learn more about WDU, refer to: Carol Giambalvo ; The Cadre Ideal: Origins and Development of a Political Cult, CSJ 9-1 1992; Sent: 08 August 1999; This article is an electronic version of an article originally published in Cultic Studies Journal, 1992, Volume 9, Number 1, pages 1-77.

affcarol@worldnet.att.net You will see more about WDU in following sections.

^{xxiii} Alexandra Stein; Inside Out; A Memoir of Entering and Breaking out of a Minneapolis Political Cult; North Star Press of St. Cloud, INC. 2002;

^{xxiv} To know more refer to Steven Hassan; 'Combatting Cult Mind Control; Park Street Press; 1988; PP: 92, 93

^{xxv} Georgei Ivanovitch Gurdjieff: died on October 29, 1949 'he bewitched so many interesting and intelligent people, including the writer Katherine Mansfield, A. R. Orage, the distinguished socialist editor of the New Age, Margaret Anderson, The editor of the Little Review, ... He was born in Alexandropol (formerly Gumru) in Russian Armenia, ...Gurdjieff established himself as a guru in Moscow in 1912. His principal contention was that man does not know himself, and is therefore not what he should be. He considered that modern civilization had made it difficult to co-ordinate the physical, emotional, and intellectual aspects of personality, which he believed were controlled by three separate centres. He thought that the majority of people were 'asleep', and behaved like machines reacting blindly to external forces. His training was designed to awaken selected followers to a higher level of consciousness and a new perception of reality. ... ' Group work is valuable only in the sense that it helps the individual to achieve individual self-perfection.' (Fritz Peters, Gurdjieff - London: Wildwood House, 1976-page 292 , 293) A follower writes: 'Mr. Gurdjieff demanded from us a very great effort, especially difficult because we did not know when it would end. We suffered and would have been only too happy to rest; but there was no protest in us, because the one thing we really wished to do was to follow Mr. Gurdjieff. Beside that, everything else seemed unimportant. (Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, Our life with Mr. Gurdjieff -London: Penguin, Arkana, 1992- , p. 26) Cited from Anthony Storr; Feet of Clay; HarperCollins Publishers; 1996; PP: 23, 27

^{xxvi} 'During the morning rush hour on March 20, 1995, Asahara's Aum Shinrikyo cult members released deadly sarin gas in the Kasumigaseki station of the Tokyo subway system. Twelve people died and 5,000 were sickened by this cult group action. At the time of the attack, the cult had 10,000 followers in Japan and as many as 40,000 members in Russia. Before the attack, Asahara appeared regularly on Japanese television, and in 1990, he and other cult members ran (mostly without success) for seats in the Japanese Parliament. ... Shoko Asahara was born in 1955 on Kyushu, one of Japan's main islands. Born sixth of seven children, Asahara was sightless in one eye from birth and partially blind in the other eye. ... At the school for the blind, Asahara discovered a peculiar power because of his limited ability to see. A former teacher said, 'Being able to see even little is prestigious because blind children want to go out and have coffee or tea at a tea room, but can't go by themselves. They would say to Chizuo (Asahara), 'I will buy you dinner, why don't you take me out?'' (Van Biema, David, 'Prophet of Poison,' Time, April 3, 1995, page 30) This position of social power allowed him to be a leader; he sought power by becoming the champion of social outcasts at the school. Even as a child, Asahara had grandiose fantasies of becoming a political leader. When he ran for office in school he was rejected; Japanese voters rejected him (though some of his followers got elected to parliament); Tokyo University rejected him. These accumulating Dark Epiphanies led to escalations in Asahara's apocalyptic predictions of Armageddon. ... Asahara benefited from the boom of new religions in Japan in the 1980s. His self-expression turned messianic in 1987 when he declared himself to be 'Today's Christ' and 'The Savoir of This Century.' His 'new' religion was nominally Buddhist, but was really a hodgepodge of ascetic disciplines, Christian platitudes, and New-Age occultism. Asahara began to identify supposed threats to Japan from the United States, Jews and Freemasons. His ideology and bizarre theology, like that of Koresh, Jones and Manson, grew steadily toward apocalyptic visions of impending doom. Early in 1995, Asahara published a book called Disaster Approaches the Land of the Rising Sun. He likened himself to Hitler in his passionate nationalism, and once spoke to 15,000 people at a Russian Sports Stadium. In his sermons, Asahara constantly wove his apocalyptic doomsday scenario into the actions and expectations he predicted for his followers. ... Asahara hit the Japanese paranormal media big-time when the Japanese magazine Twilight Zone ran a photo of him meditating in the lotus position while apparently floating in mid air. (The New Yorker, April 1, 1996, page 59) ... In

October 1989, Sunday Mainichi, one of Japan's biggest selling magazines, began a series of articles on Aum Shinrikyo and Asahara entitled 'Give Back My Child.' This article featured six families who charged that Asahara had stolen their teenagers. Asahara also began escalating his coercion of recruits, using methods that included kidnapping, murder, and eventually the gas attacks. Finally the Japanese authorities took effective action and arrested Asahara. The legal process and investigations took a long time because Asahara had cleverly developed degrees of distance from the actions of his followers, in a way that is reminiscent of Manson. On February 27, 2004, Asahara was finally found guilty of 27 murders after an 8 years trial. (The New York Times, Feb 27, 2004) Cited from: Peter A. Olsson; 'Malignant Pied Pipers or our time' published by 'Publish America Baltimore'; 2005; PP: 81, 85

^{xxvii}Peter Olsson describing the group in his book 'Malignant Pied Pipers of Our time', writes: 'How could 39 intelligent, idealistic, and dedicated people quietly allow themselves to die under the dominion of a guru who claimed that their spirits would be transported to a spacecraft travelling behind the Hale-Bopp comet? It may seem bizarre, yet these well-educated people did just that. The members of the 'Heaven's Gate' cult so believed in their Pied Piper's 'Music Man' song that they bought into the incredible idea that he would lead them to higher, spiritually rich domains of existence in outer space. On March 26, 1997, Marshall Applewhite, age 66, and 39 followers died together in a mansion at Rancho Santa Fe, California. Applewhite had been theologising, proselytising, and preaching a blend of Christian astrology and outer space fantasy since the 1970s. Applewhite promised his disciples that they would evolve into spiritually superior, bald aliens by serving all links to modern society and human desires. Heaven's Gate suicide cult members not only shunned sex, but approximately a third of the men in the cult chose castration, following Applewhite's personal example. Cited from: Peter A. Olsson; 'Malignant Pied Pipers or our time' published by 'Publish America Baltimore'; 2005; PP: 88, 89