

Dear Yoga Brothers and Sisters!

We spent so many years together: working together, attending meetings, sharing our lives and so many moments in yoga together, and that's the reason why I would like to explain why I no longer attend meetings and yoga practice, and why I am no longer present in the association.

When I started practicing yoga at the age of 22 and later by attending Swamiji's seminars, my life was given a completely new essence. So much that I decided to visit Jadan already after a year of practising yoga, and I spent two and a half years of a very fulfilling and meaningful life there. There are no words to describe how seriously I took the yoga philosophy as a whole, and above all the relationship between Swamiji and me. I took my discipleship seriously and with full responsibility. An entire page would not suffice to describe how I experienced our relationship, and in what ways it determined and gave meaning to my life. Immeasurably. For me, it was a source of wisdom and guidance that directed my life and actions. During all these years I have tried to serve and work for Yoga in Daily Life (Joga v vsakdanjem življenju) to the best of my abilities. Sometimes more, sometimes less. But always with the same purpose: to serve and to do good.

I've had many beautiful and meaningful experiences. Not only FROM MY relationship with Swamiji, but also in our yoga community: all the acquaintances, friends, our collaboration, etc.

I have to admit that I had felt that something was wrong already before the affair involving the abused women. I had not, however, dared to consider my feelings as something valid, let alone significant. I had always managed to attribute them to my possible "miscomprehension".

When Swamiji's sexual affairs were disclosed, I was not only very shocked. I was shattered. At the same time, I did not fully reject this possibility. A seed of doubt managed to become planted deep in my mind. And there were many reasons that made this possible. The first one was my own experience of a strange kiss. Back then it shocked me, and it was hard for me to "work through it". In India and a few years after my return home I spent a great deal of time among the people surrounding Swamiji. From this perspective, many things were very different than from the perspective of a seminar participant. From this first-hand "perspective", I had the chance to see many things from within, and I remember - especially during my stay in India - that I was surprised at the strange promiscuous behaviour of some yoga centre "leaders". I kept asking myself how they could be holding such high positions. And I also kept telling myself that in yoga, in this all-embracing love - the most powerful force that can make us change - there was a place for every single person, regardless of his/her human weaknesses. It goes without saying, of course, that I also met exceptionally devoted, hardworking, ethical, and loyal people. These people had devoted 20 or even 30 years of their lives to yoga, and yet some of them left yoga at that time. No one could convince me that they had become insane or something like that. I am a therapist by profession, and I know something about the profile of people who, so to say, "flip out". All this was nagging at me, and I just couldn't find peace. But I also found it impossible that Swamiji would act like that. I myself did not hear nor see anything. During all that time I was struggling with myself and becoming ever more reserved.

All this changed when Maša told me her story. We were together during our entire stay in India,

and since then we've remained connected in our own way. Maša is like a sister to me, a younger sister maybe. I have always felt protective towards her, and I really love her very much. When she told me she was leaving the yoga community, I did not ask her for reasons. I only told her that she was not my friend because we were together at yoga but because I appreciated her as a human being. She said she would like to tell me something, and one evening in a moment of confidence, she shared her story with me. I had mixed feelings about it. At first, I was completely astonished, after that devastated, and this was followed by feelings of guilt, anger, and deep sadness. There was never a moment when I would doubt her story – and I am stressing this more for others than for myself. I fully support her. Maša is like a sister to me, and I'm going to stand by her regarding this story. When I thought back – after all the two of us had been sharing a room for two years – I finally understood why she kept going out in the evenings. Swamiji used to invite her to his rooms in the evenings. At the very beginning of my yoga life and in my own immaturity, I came to the conclusion that she was obviously a “better” disciple, that she was something “special”. At times it even hurt me. Days after her confession I reproached myself for not having noticed it! How could it have been going on in front of my eyes, and I did not see it. Within the context of faith in your master, I would have never even thought of this possibility. As a matter of fact, it would have been the last thing to occur to me. Maša, of course, didn't dare tell me anything because she knew our stay in Jadan would be over, and I would “flip out”, and also Swamiji told her she should keep quiet since it was a *guru vakya*. Who on earth would dare oppose such an absolute as a *guru vakya*? At that point in my life, at that stage of my own journey, I would not have dared to go so far. At the same time, however, I was witnessing her health deteriorating month after month during the two years in India, where Maša got severely ill. Already then I knew that the source of her problem was to be sought on the mental level. But still I would find excuses in banalities like “cleansing”, and the like.

Today I am a therapist and I have some knowledge of neurology, and I know for sure that such “cleansings” don't exist, at least not the cleansings we have come up with in yoga.

After that – which surprised me even more – things started to develop really fast when another – today a grown-up and married – woman told me her own similar story. She had had sexual relations with Swamiji for many years, and she also told me that for years she didn't dare ask me about my experience with him. Since I had lived in Jadan, she supposed my experience had been the same as hers. I never spoke about it, and she was afraid to ask. But the fact is I've had no such experience. I was never involved in this, except for that really strange kiss. And already that kiss was enough to unsettle me for a while.

I must say, however, I found it repulsive that Yogesh visited Maša during his last visit to Slovenia, and tried to convince her that Swamiji was a tantric master. But I'll come back to this issue later.

This second story was as shocking as the first one for me. I know of at least six more women, and some of you who are going to read this, are among them. You know it. I just hope you manage to find enough courage to speak out one day. And I hope that those of you, who think this kind of behaviour was meant for your own good, realize you were just abused. Secrets are

one of the most destructive things for a human and his/her surroundings. This applies to individuals and systems alike. Secrets have an incredible power, and above all it takes a lot of energy to maintain them. They determine how a person feels, acts, and relates to others. They prevent us from being genuine, and from relating to others. They caseate, so to speak, and they infect. When the scandal came to light, Swamiji called each woman (most of them grown-up women now) and told them they should not talk about this, and keep quiet.

Perplexed and indignant as I was, I wanted to talk about it, of course. I simply couldn't hold this back. It was beyond me. It had bothered me already before that we had never spoken about this, and that each of us tried to come up with his/her own conclusions. But the fact is, no one should be left alone with such stories and doubts. The air was filled with doubt, even though unspoken, so much that one could grasp it. Not to mention denial.

At this point, let me tell you that I won't buy any conspiracy stories. Nowadays, the conspiracy concept is being abused for so many purposes. So much that real conspiracies are being overlooked.

I couldn't find peace knowing all this. I still cannot find it. It is curious that all the abused women I know of come from very vulnerable families. I am not going to explain what kind of mechanisms are ingrained in such girls and women, and how quickly they can become attached, how they long for attention, and how quickly they can become victims of abuse without even being aware of it. A body deprived of love seeks love on its own, needs to belong, to be comforted, and so much more.

An older and wiser person has to know what drives a young woman to participate (the majority of them were very young, innocent, and most of them had had no boyfriend before). If a 46-year old coach seduces a 17-year old girl (even if that girl has fallen in love with him), this is considered abuse. He should know that he is not dealing with a mature person. If I were courted by a 17- or 18-year old boy, I would be aware that he doesn't know what he is doing.

When I - perplexed as I was - tried to **talk to some people about this**, I was given explanations which I simply cannot find plausible:

- That we need to accept Swamiji as a human being (When I came to yoga that was exactly how I saw him. Later it changed, but even now I would have no problem with this. I love people. I have no problems with "humanity". But I do have a problem with his abuses and his promiscuity. Dear yoga sisters, if you found out your husband, boyfriend, or father had been having sexual intercourse with young, wounded girls and women in different places, with many at the same time, etc., would you say that he is just a human being? I don't think so. Hence this is not the case.)

That he is a tantric master. (If he is a tantric master, what was the point of keeping it a secret? And why were only girls and young women granted the privilege of his tantric skills?)

- That they themselves wanted it. (The majority of them froze, they did not want it.

Most of them were confused, and didn't know what was going on. The majority of them thought that it was the right thing to do, and that they just didn't understand. This is the typical dynamics of abused girls and women. But most of them found it unbearable and intolerable when they were part of or witnessing group sex.)

Why didn't they leave? (It took most of them a long time to restructure the yoga philosophy they so deeply believed in: the relationship between the guru and his disciple used to have an absolute superlative value, and we all believed in this. For most of them the body was the first to resist: for some of them it went so far that they got seriously ill. The body was telling them that they didn't want it any more, that they could not do it any more. And they would still feel guilty and believe that they did not understand something, that they were not good disciples!!!!!!!!!!)

That Krishna, too, had his Gopis (Yes, you may not believe it, but this was another of the explanations. None of us really knows much about the Gopis, and not even about Krishna. However, as far as I know, he never disavowed them, let alone hid them.)

I could go on. With regard to all this, I have to say that I was most surprised by the fact that everyone was talking ABOUT THESE WOMEN. Not about Swamiji. From the therapeutic point of view, this mechanism is very common. It is easier to deal with them than with him. The latter is too dangerous: it gives rise to too many doubts, anxieties, fear, etc., not only with regard to him, but also with regard to our lives. Some have dedicated their entire lives to yoga. They have renounced having a partner, children, even their property. Some of them have nothing else in their lives. Their entire social lives are tied to this community. The yoga philosophy gives you the feeling you have been chosen, the feeling you are something special, and that things are being revealed to you that represent “the one and only truth”, the feeling that they you are heading towards the light, while the majority of poor mortals wander in darkness. Some people would be lost without this. Their personal attitudes and all their meaning of existence are based on Yoga in Daily Life (*Joga v vsakdanjem življenju*). Dealing with Swamiji and losing it all would definitely be too dangerous. That is the reason why everyone is talking about the women, and trying to label them as not normal, silly, even schizophrenic.

Many research studies on abuse have been carried out. And most people think that the abused lie. But the fact is only 3% of people lie.

The interesting thing is that most people don't even know what abuse is. The English language defines it really well: to take advantage. You take advantage of your advantages; for example, your power, age, status, position, emotional maturity, etc. And from this perspective, I find it even more painful because Swamiji takes advantage of the guru–disciple relationship, which is based on the disciple's complete trust in his/her guru. Furthermore, it is based on principles like *guru vakya*, *guru kripa*, *guru tatva*, etc., matters that we cannot know for real, but can only believe and trust.

What is this if it is not abuse? I personally find no comfort listening to others saying that the girls and women wanted it to happen, that they were queuing to get it, and the like.

For me **HIS** behaviour is perverted, deviant, abusive, and worse.

And to be honest, there is plenty of abuse in Yoga in Daily Life. I have been noticing this for some time. By this I also mean financial abuse. We are a unique precedent among charitable organisations: one has to pay to be able to help. And still we believe that we should be happy to have been CHOSEN, to pay to be able to work. At least in Ljubljana and Domžale it is like this, even though people struggle ever harder to survive.

I have done some research and also discovered that Swamiji's history is questionable. Supposedly, his story is somehow different from the one we know.

Abuse has also been committed by the leading members of Yoga in Daily Life. As far as I know, some of them knew all this was true. I just might be able to understand why they have kept quiet all these years, I cannot, however, understand how they could hire services which systematically attempted to label those who spoke out as crazy. How would you explain this? Please help me because I cannot find the right words. How could they sacrifice human souls with such ease, while caring so much for animal souls, nature, and world peace? Yoga in Daily Life (Joga v vsakdanjem življenju) is a large financial company, of course, built on the unpaid work of thousands of people.

One of the leading members of Yoga in Daily Life said (she knew this was really happening): I add up the pluses and minuses, and the result is still positive!!! Is such behaviour really only a matter of pluses and minuses?

What does abuse cause? It wounds one's soul. It wounds it very deeply. And I find it sad that the human soul in this case doesn't mean much.

I'm really sorry because we have also shared many beautiful and deep things. I'm really very, very sorry all this has happened. I liked Swamiji very much. But now I cannot and I don't want to be a part of this system any more.

This letter is intended to explain why I no longer attend meetings and practices. I sincerely thank you all for the beautiful things we have shared together. After all, this was a big part of my life.

Andreja Vukmir, Anandi

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