

**Addressed to: Društvo Joga v vsakdanjem življenju (The Yoga in Daily Life Association), Ljubljana
The President, Executive Board, and Yoga Instructors (the Instructor Group)**

Re.: Notification of the Testimonial of a Former Member and My Withdrawal as a Yoga Instructor

Appendix to Notification dated 3 April 2014

*As of the time of this notification, the former member at issue decided to disclose her identity. Therefore, I am enclosing **Maša's completed testimonial**. In order to provide information and assistance, it can be forwarded to members and YIDL organisations.
Mojca Černelč K., former instructor at YIDL Ljubljana, Maribor, and Celje*

Dear Vlado, Urška, Executive Board and Yoga Instructors!

On Friday, 10 January 2014, at 6 p.m., I attended the instructors meeting together with 17 other yoga instructors and our president, and I shared with you information on two matters:

- 1. A personal testimonial by a former member of YIDL Ljubljana regarding her sexual relations with Swamiji (dated 8 January 2014).
My withdrawal as a yoga instructor – I cannot lead yoga sessions and teach yoga on behalf of Swamiji and his Yoga in Daily Life system until these matters are cleared up.**

We discussed both matters for more than two hours, and I expect this to be entered in the minutes of the instructors meeting. I still have not received the minutes, therefore - **to help you complete the minutes and eventually plan the further activities of the YIDL Association in Ljubljana – I'm sending you the following appendices relating to the matters concerned:**

- Appx. 1: A summary of Swamiji's disciple's testimonial, which I informed you of at the meeting.
 - Appx. 2: My resignation letter and explanation.
 - Appx. 3: My considerations, which to a large extent I already shared with you at the meeting and on the day following the workshop.
- The testimonial:** Since that meeting, I have received Swamiji's disciple's written testimonial, which I now forward to you with her consent.

Appx. 1: Personal testimonial of a disciple of Swamiji*

On Wednesday, 8 January 2014, I heard a 4-hour testimonial from a disciple of Swamiji, and learned the following:

1 Swamiji used to have sexual relations with his disciple for many years.

2 He had sexual intercourse with her and with multiple girls or young women at the same time; many times she was personally involved in satisfying Swamiji's sexual needs in a group of 2, 3, and, as far as she can remember, even 7 disciples at the same time.

3 Swamiji requested that this should remain a secret and that she should not talk about it.

Swamiji's disciple gave me an exhaustive account of where, how, and when she satisfied Swamiji orally and had sexual intercourse with him starting in 1996, when she was a young woman in her early twenties, until 2006. He always wore a condom during sexual intercourse, and many times she ended up in situations wherein Swamiji did this with multiple women at the same time (2, 3, or even 7). He was careful, and always made sure no one could surprise him or would be looking for him at that time. He started having intercourse with her after she had already been in yoga for some time, when she started bringing him tea before bedtime or after lunch in Seva. One day, he pulled her head to his crotch and wanted her to satisfy him orally. Swamiji also demanded that she keep it a secret. Furthermore, she described in detail a rape

attempt by Guruji that she had been the victim of, but had managed to resist with all her strength. Guruji nevertheless managed to bite her lips. She wrote Swamiji about this event. Much later, a known representative of the Fellowship contacted her and told her that she should no longer communicate such things in writing. Upon meeting Swamiji the next time, he only told her that he would tell Guruji that he should never repeat such behaviour. Never again did he speak about this issue with her.

When I asked her why she had kept quiet about this, she told me that she had believed in Swamiji. She believed he knew what was right. That's why she kept quiet, as he had demanded, and by doing this she protected him and the system. She never thought about it as abuse, not until the scandal involving Nika, and the accusations that Swamiji had had sexual intercourse with his disciples. The response of the yoga community – the people and Swamiji himself – to the accusations of the young women, opened her eyes and shocked her. She was aghast at how they and their personal dignity were discredited, humiliated, and depreciated. Such behaviour could be expected from people who did not know the truth. But when she saw that the very guru of these women was labelling them as demons and *rakshasas*, and that also the people who knew the truth (and that everything the women spoke about was true) – about Swamiji and Guruji – acted in the same way, only then did she realise that what we were dealing here with was a community of abused and abusing people. On that very day she withdrew from YIDL. At that time she did not reveal her secret because she was following the cases of Nika and the other women and she had the chance to see what the power of blind masses was capable of. In the years that followed she realised that the people had the right to know all the truth. They have the right to all the information, and then decide for themselves what to do with this information. That is why she has broken her silence.

I also notified you that I had first indirectly heard about this disciple's statements regarding the existence of her sex life with Swamiji 2-3 months ago, and also about the disciple Andreja V., who personally disclosed to me that Swamiji had once given her an unexpected strong kiss on the mouth in India.

Appx. 2 My Withdrawal as a Yoga Instructor and Group Leader for Workshops at YIDL, Ljubljana

This straightforward personal testimonial has been so shattering and real for me that for the first time in more than 20 years of practising yoga at YIDL and after 10 years of instructing yoga I had to suspend **my further activities at YIDL in order to be able to look myself in the eye and be truthful with myself**. The existence of sexual practices between this spiritual leader and his disciples as described to me is utterly unacceptable to me. In my opinion, it stands in absolute contradiction to everything Swamiji has publicly taught and declared about himself (as a spiritual teacher, sanjasi, and swami). I believe that the trust of his disciple, gained also on account of his reputation, trust in and study of the ancient practice of yoga, as well as the position of a yoga spiritual master, have been abused in order to sexually (and perhaps not only sexually) exploit a disciple regardless of the fact whether she was aware of this or not.

Continuing to teach yoga at YIDL, Slovenia, and pledging my name to Swamiji's system (from practice to practice, to Swamiji's seminars) in front of our yoga practitioners would mean the following to me:

- 1. That I maintain the impression that Swamiji and YIDL can be fully trusted.**
- 2. That I support a system that at least indirectly enables abuse or even supports such.**
- 3. That I would conceal information on the sexual life of the guru and author of the system that is known to me**, and which can be important to yoga practitioners when choosing whether to follow this teacher or not: whether to become Swamiji's disciple or not, whether to trust in him, rely on him when making life decisions (e.g. about marriage, children, moving, studies, and also regarding chargeable karma yoga at home and abroad, etc.) and also handing over one's property to him (something that has already happened here in Ljubljana, as far as I know).
- 4. That I allow the possibility** that by teaching yoga and working for YIDL I can indirectly and unconsciously end up in the position of a pimp for YIDL, and that by maintaining silence on facts known to me I would conceal things and mislead people. **One single girl, woman, or man sacrificed in such a way for the benefit of YIDL is already too much for me.**

Therefore, I would find it unethical and deceiving to our yoga practitioners for me to continue to teach yoga at YIDL in Ljubljana at this point. I hereby resign from my position as yoga instructor at

YIDL, Ljubljana; I can not hold such position until the issue of Swamiji's sexual practices with his female disciples is cleared up **within the system itself, at YIDL, Ljubljana, the Yoga Association, and the Fellowship** in a way that is at least as well-intentioned, respectful, and compassionate – and without any photos of monkeys (as happened in Nika's case when she first disclosed abuse) – as has been the case in relation to Swamiji thus far.

**For the same reasons I have also resigned from my position as yoga workshop coordinator (appointed by Executive Board Decision dated 15 February 2013) on the day following the anti-stress workshop.*

Appx. 3: My considerations (also with regard to Nika's case)

Nika. As far as I know, the information on Swamiji's alleged sexual life in Slovenia and around the world leaked into the yoga community and the general public in Slovenia through Nika's story revealed at the beginning of 2011. To my knowledge, **it managed to plant a strong seed of doubt** at two yoga meetings, at least, which I attended (I remember the first one convened by the Yoga Association, which was held in the small hall of the Ljubljana Yoga Centre, and also a meeting of instructors in Ljubljana, which among other matters, also dealt with this issue), as well as in the e-mails **regarding the truth of Nika's and other stories** which followed.

In recent conversations with instructors¹ I have discovered that already back then at least one instructor knew that **what had happened to Nika was true**, but he was trying to find deeper reasons; he thought that Swamiji must know what such actions were good for. Another reason proposed was karma. In a phone conversation with a disciple of Swamiji's from another YIDL association, I have recently found out that she, too, knew about the existence of the sexual relation between Nika (19 years old) and Swamiji (more than 50 years old). She thinks that Nika herself wanted it, at the age of 19. She can live with that. I cannot.

At the meeting I said that during the first storm in 2011 everything passed by relatively quietly for me. I had no contact with Nika or any of the other possible victims. I trusted the interpretations of Nika's closer yoga friends, and also the explanations at the meeting of the Association that Nika had obviously sort of flipped out because she had been abused in her youth. As far as I can recall, another disciple was said to be untrustworthy since she had already changed her identity many times. I also followed Swamiji's statements on this issue, for example at the Instructors Seminar via Skype in Novo Mesto, where he declared nothing was true. **For this reason I didn't believe that Swamiji, being also a swami and sanjasi, could conduct any sort of parallel sexual life, let alone with multiple disciples at the same time.** Based on the information I had at that time, I trusted Swamiji, and I even joined the first meeting at the PR agency that we asked for advice on how to “stop the campaign against Swamiji”. I introduced Swamiji to the doubting director in the best light, the one I had known from his teachings. If I had had the information I have now, I would have acted differently.

Compassion. If we, the yoga community, reflect on **whether to kill a mosquito or not**, and feel compassion for all animals, **where on earth has all the care and compassion for Swamiji's female disciples vanished to?** If the disciple hadn't been telling the truth, it should have crossed our minds that she was at least in serious trouble. Who among us would dare – in the present atmosphere and environment and surrounded by people who think in such a way as is partially described in Nika's case and in Appx. 3 – to openly talk about things that might have been going on in Swamiji's bedroom, in his bed, or on the floor?

The instructors' dilemmas in recent years. I was surprised to hear that as a result of Swamiji's alleged sexual relations with his disciples some YIDL instructors had found themselves facing serious personal dilemmas and doubts since 2011. If I understand it correctly, they themselves felt responsible for their

¹ To simplify matters, I use the masculine form for instructors in the Slovene version – regardless of whether a woman, a man, or both sexes are being referred to.

doubts. They say that they have somehow managed to overcome them over time (it has taken some of them more than a year). This has given rise to many questions. I regret that we haven't talked about this openly. As a consequence, I knew nothing all this time. Besides, I have the impression that already in Nika's case they suspected more than I myself knew at that time. I wonder whether they didn't consider themselves good disciples because they had doubts. I've heard that disciples have been leaving photos and YIDL materials in front of the centre. At the instructors meetings I attended we never talked about this, or about who could be doing this and why people were leaving, and I don't know if any of the instructors have any more knowledge as to why those people left.

Human error. Yoga is supposed to be practical and the spiritual teacher Swamiji is supposed to live and teach by his own example the self-awareness and self-control that enable us to become our own masters, and conscious living as well. **I must wonder where Swamiji's awareness, sensibility, and common sense vanish to in his bedroom.** If all this is to be regarded purely as a “human error”, can I really consider it unimportant? Would I consider it safe if, for example, my boss behaved like this with my female or male colleagues, a psychiatrist or gynaecologist with his/her patients, a teacher, trainer, or headmaster with his/her pupils or students? Could I still trust them “considering all the rest”? Let alone a yoga teacher possessing a long line of eminent yoga titles, and who was supposedly even bound to celibacy!

If female disciples are “Swamiji's weakness”, I would expect – with respect to his asserted realized knowledge – that he would at least be aware of this, if not able to control it. As far as I know, he used to explicitly invite – in the name of spiritual learning and progress – a group of female disciples to join him in Vienna, for example. Isn't that like a recovering alcoholic finding a job in a wine shop?

Spiritual and sex teacher. Swamiji teaches: “Animals too can eat, drink, sleep, procreate. Only men can realise their human and divine potentials, develop their qualities such as compassion, love, helping others, etc. The purpose of a human life is spirituality – to develop these human qualities.” **That's why I regarded him as a spiritual and not as a sex teacher, in all the 20 years of my life at YIDL. How to explain this gulf between his teachings and his sexual practices?**

I have no intention to moralize: As far as I am concerned, he could be intimately involved with a woman who is on an equal standing as him or many of them in a row if all of them agree to it, and if he is sincere about it. But even in such a case, the question of his vow of celibacy as a sanjasi and swami remains open. **Hiding those relationships and the women involved is, in my opinion, at least deceptive to other disciples, and humiliating to the disciples involved in having sexual intercourse.**

Teacher, trust, and security. The role of teacher involves the idea that the teacher knows more about something than the people he is teaching. A spiritual yoga teacher is supposed to have special knowledge about the meaning of life, which is why he/she felt called to teach and lead others with regard to how they should live their lives. To enable this transfer of knowledge, the **disciples have to trust his realisation of the asserted/cited knowledge, whereas he takes on the responsibility of offering them safe guidance, which means that he will not abuse their trust.** Swamiji teaches that a disciple who does not follow his/her guru, who knows best what is good for the disciple (Guru Vakya), will throw away his/her human life.

Swamiji introduces himself as a spiritual teacher who is supposedly completely devoted to God (sanjasi, swami, and therefore lives in “celibacy”), a teacher with only one mission, i.e. to serve humanity and all living beings, and all this with “equal vision”.

Swamiji teaches the idea of the absolute **trust and loyalty of “good disciples”**, and also declares himself to be someone who has outgrown worldly temptations, who was born only for the purpose of serving his disciples, who is going to take care of them in this life and also in the ones to follow, etc. Considering all this, **none of his disciples (except maybe those who know about it) expect him to have a sexual life at all.** That's the reason why we – when witnessing an action that we would otherwise, in normal circumstances, find suspicious – rather think that our mind is playing tricks on us, that it is seeing things upside down; or we tend to think we DON'T understand, etc.

Swamiji also teaches through yoga stories that his relationship to his disciples is “more loving than our relationships with our dearest”, and above all that a spiritual teacher in his/her relationship to a disciple knows everything, and therefore offers him/her spiritual guidance, and takes responsibility for him/her. Swamiji gives the impression that he knows much more than normal people about life, our past, present, and future, as well as our good and bad qualities. And you are considered a “**good disciple**” if you follow your spiritual teacher without any hesitation and unconditionally, and the disciple is supposed to shoulder all the responsibility for any internal doubts that may arise in his/her mind, and to discard them. **How could a disciple in such a case know when the boundaries of his/her spiritual guidance have been broken and abused, or whether it means that the disciple merely hasn't understood the spiritual purposes?**

The women “WANTED IT”. After the meeting, some yoga instructors tended to think that “**the women wanted it and that Swamiji, too, was a man**”, that Prakrti, nature, was manifesting itself. I believe this and it also seems true; maybe we are dealing here with a two-way manifestation of it. However, this being the case, you cannot declare yourself to be a guru possessing divine qualities, and at the same time sleep with your disciples and even keep it a secret, and all this at the expense of ancient yoga teachings and the trust you have gained as a spiritual teacher.

Swamiji's sexual practices described in the testimonials by far exceeds what I could still consider a possible love relationship and closeness, and makes me think more of a means to satisfy his own sexual lust and to abuse a disciple's trust. And even if such sexual practices are considered useful, I still can't understand why the disciple should keep them a secret.

The women should have said “NO”. I have also heard opinions that **the women were supposed to learn to say “NO”**, that the teacher must have had a higher hidden purpose. I beg your pardon. Can you, without remorse, say “NO” to your spiritual teacher – at least if we consider his own teachings? Isn't it true that disciples keep cleansing themselves for years because all their unhappiness might be attributed to the fact that they, at one point, did not follow their guru's advice? And this may range from **invitations to Vienna and karma yoga in India, advising them to renounce having children, a partner, whether to stay with their partner or not, whether to dedicate their lives to yoga as a swami or do other things for the sake of karma yoga**. The opinion of many that the chosen girls and women would have gained special knowledge from Swamiji's sexual lessons are without a doubt well-intentioned as regards Swamiji, the question is, however, if they are at least to the same extent real, understanding of, and compassionate to the girls and women, as well.

Karma. Some consider that the experience could have been positive for the disciple, so to say karmic. If that is the case, how could one miss such a chance? Or is it just easier to think this way if one is not personally involved? Would any of the instructors and disciples really like to experience something like that to solve their own karmic issues? Does anyone regret he/she was not among those involved? I don't.

Equality of lives. I consider all human lives equal, equally sacred, and worthy of being treated with dignity and respect. They are worthy of being much more than mere objects of sexual satisfaction. After all, that's exactly what Swamiji used to teach us. And the life of a disciple of Swamiji's would be equal to the life of a guru even if he were a real guru.

YIDL and weighing the benefits. The knowledge of yoga that I have gained through hard work as well as from Swamiji and his system is invaluable to me. But I cannot, cold-bloodedly, put on one side of the scale the fact that I like teaching and practising yoga according to the YIDL system, all my knowledge of yoga, the possible threat to my future relationship with all of you who are yoga instructors and YIDL members in Ljubljana, and with my yoga friends if you are not able to understand my withdrawal as an instructor and my current actions, or if you even judge me – and on the other side of the scale the abuse of trust and integrity of a given disciple (in this case, a woman, but it could just as well have been a man) simply because it hasn't happened to me. And even if there were “only” one single girl at issue, already this price is much too high and unacceptable for me.

The signed testimonials of the disciples. If the disciples involved ever voluntarily speak out, they will

need a very serious reason to do so, but above all they will have to have already recovered from the consequences of having been involved or having continued to participate in secrets by trusting their spiritual teacher (it also depends on their life experience in the past), and even more, they will have to **trust and feel sufficiently secure** that they will be heard and taken seriously, and not reproached for having wanted it themselves, because they could have said “no”.

Now I think that YIDL in Slovenia – maybe only by chance and with the best of intentions – acting as it did at the time of the first disclosure, has so far managed to prevent this. I’d rather not think how efficiently we all – with our attitude, which as regards Nika’s case was at least indifferent, if not scornful – helped maintain the silence of other possible victims. Have we not (perhaps unintentionally or not knowingly) **caused another abuse**? Where is Nika today and what is she doing? Why has God given us ears, eyes, and mouths? To turn away if what we see, hear, and experience is not in line with our ideas? I hope that the women involved who are still obeying as “good disciples”, and by following his instructions protect the system and Swamiji, one day manage to step out of the darkness of hiding secrets they have been misled into by their teacher. Maybe they have husbands or children now, and have swept all that away as if it no longer concerns them.

Am I puzzled that the disciple decided to speak out only now, after so many years? Who would be ready to tell even their closest friends and family where and how they lost their virginity, for example? Who would dare publicly speak about even a normal sex life? Ireland is discovering sexual abuse in the church only after 50 years. It is very likely that “the female disciples in the sexual Seva” were not firm personalities at the time of the abuse, nor had been given love and self-confidence in their childhood.

YIDL and Swamiji have external enemies. This is another explanation I encountered in Nika’s case and fell for a little: I heard this was probably all a conspiracy of a church faction since it was all so well organised and happening in many parts of the world at the same time. I must say that with such sexual behaviour as has been revealed to us, Swamiji has no need whatsoever for external enemies.

Our children. I would like our children to develop healthy self-confidence, to be able to recognise the boundaries of their own integrity, and to be able to say NO even to their parents. I do not want us to keep pushing them in blind faith and with our blessings into the arms of unpredictable gurus, as happened to a woman who told me her story. I would not want any woman or man to have such sexual experiences with her/his guru or any other teacher. Despite many good things at YIDL, I consider such a risk to be unacceptable. That is why I am going to do all I can to not contribute to this. I have told my child – as it is appropriate for her age – about the content of the testimonials and about the reasons that made me stop being a YIDL yoga instructor, and I have also openly declared that I have been wrong about Swamiji all these years.

Swamiji. Swamiji may be a world yoga master, but he is not allowed to do anything he wants. As his disciple, and wishing good to everyone, including him, I want him to stop his sexual practices involving his disciples immediately if he hasn’t stopped himself already! Such behaviour is unacceptable according to any human law, even if he is God himself who has descended from I don’t know where, from where such behaviour is something usual, and even if such customs are considered to be common practice in India. As far as I know, Swamiji has never spoken about this, and there is not a single word **regarding the sexual initiation of female disciples** in his books either. The only right thing for him to do would be to **at least apologize to the disciples** whose physical or emotional boundaries and integrity he violated, and whose silence he even demanded, **and take full responsibility for his conduct and for what they did together, as well as for all the consequences that follow from this.** I also wonder to what extent it is still possible to **trust the honesty and usefulness of his other requests and the expectations directed at his disciples and instructions, things that he himself does not respect, at least as they have been revealed to us.**

What now?

I feel obliged to tell what I know now because I would have liked to have known already a long time ago what at least some people already knew then, for example about Nika. And also about the fact that at least some instructors had problems regarding meditation and sadhana for months afterwards. I wonder how much they have denied their intuition, trusting instead that Swamiji knows better what is good for them than

what they themselves feel. Is it easier to be loving, trusting, and compassionate towards the guru than to oneself or to someone who is close to you all the time?

The matter we are dealing with is very straightforward and serious. Yet, I do not know if it is serious enough for YIDL or the Association. I am now convinced that the sexual relationship between Swamiji and his disciple at issue – at least to the extent confided to me – is credible, therefore I would like the association to also pay attention to the information that was dismissed at the meeting as “the gossip of previous years”, and to listen to the disciples who left YIDL “in silence”, to find out why they made such a decision, and out of compassion to offer them at least understanding, and if we are dealing with abuse, to offer them help.

What are you going to do in light of all this? I can understand that you will stay in YIDL. After these testimonials I, myself, cannot pledge my own trust or the trust given to me by our yoga practitioners in either Swamiji or the YIDL system.

Mojca Černelč Koprivnikar

Ljubljana, 28 February 2014