

INDIAN GURU: ALLEGEDLY DEMANDED ORAL SEX FROM HIS DISCIPLES

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Indian swami allegedly demanded oral sex as proof of devotion.



In Poprad: Swami Maheshwarananda often visits Slovakia, he likes the energy from our Tatra Mountains. He is greeted by Radovan Hovorka, the spokesperson for the Yoga In Daily Life organization.

Photo: Archive

What sort of a spiritual test do I need to pass? Am I sufficiently devoted, open to accept all his gifts? Does it mean I was chosen if my guru, a self-realized god, asks for my body and offers me divine nectar in the form of his semen? Do I owe him something for that? Am I receiving his blessing, or...? All these questions were spinning inside the heads of women allegedly invited to the bedroom of the spiritual master and founder of the Yoga In Daily Life

system, who calls himself Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda. Quietly, carefully, for over twenty years this Hindu monk abused his position of trust with his young female followers to satisfy his sexual urges. Or is this all fiction and is someone trying to demolish everything this yogi has built over the past forty years?

MORAL AUTHORITY

In Slovakia, so far things have been comparatively quiet about the Maheshwarananda affair. His closest disciples refuse to believe the scandalous information, and many without Internet access have no idea what accusations their beloved master is facing. He is still an example of virtue, love and morality. Born in the Indian state of Rajasthan, he brought yoga to Europe in 1972, and shortly found followers in former Czechoslovakia. He developed a system combining physical postures, breathing exercises and meditation, and called it Yoga In Daily Life.

Even in Slovakia, his system was utilised in healthcare and in spas. The Indian guru lectured at many peace conferences about tolerance and respect among the nations and religions and enjoyed the favour of several Slovak politicians, for example the former Defense Minister Pavel Kanis and his wife. He is also known to the former Minister of Education, and current Mayor of Bratislava Milan Ftáčnik, who in 2001 pushed for yoga exercises in schools and as the mayor of Petržalka in 2008 attended the official opening ceremony of the new Yoga centre in Budatínska Street.

UNEXPECTED INVITATION

Testimonies of how Swami Maheshwarananda, known as Swamiji was juicing up his nights after orderly days of yoga exercises and spiritual evenings, first surfaced in March of last year. Female students from Croatia, Slovenia, and Germany shared their bitter experiences on the Internet. By accident, Eva Vrbová from Prague stumbled upon these testimonies. She was one of those who had an intimate experience with the master. After fifteen years, she has finally found the courage to say publicly what she had previously only whispered to a few trusted friends.

She was sixteen when she was smitten by Swamiji's teachings and soon after she became his disciple. She would spend more and more of her time with people who dedicated their lives to the Yoga In Daily Life organization. They were building *ashrams*, meeting places for students, where yoga classes and seminars took place. After one such spiritual meeting, a *satsang*, in 1996, the master instructed another disciple to bring Eva to an apartment of an older female student, where Swami stayed during his visit in Prague. *"At first I was not suspicious at all. But as soon as I entered the room where he was, I knew something was wrong,"* Eva Vrbová remembers. For Eva, this chapter was ultimately closed only at the end of last year when she finally faced her trauma by going into the open with her story, and leaving the religious group that had been part of her life for twenty years. She also informed the police, but now she no longer wants to revisit the past. She made one final exception for our weekly newspaper.

DIVINE BLISS

"The room was dimly lit and I could smell the burning incense. Swamiji lay on his bed and asked me to sit down. Naturally, I sat down on the floor by his feet. He told me to come closer, and closer. When he asked me to take off my shirt I obeyed him without questioning. A lot of thoughts ran through my head. This must be a test of my devotion. It did not occur to me that it could be something sinister, I only wanted to show my best behavior." Today a 37 year old woman confesses her innocent and naive thoughts. And Maheshwarananda pressed on. She should lie on top of him and charge her heart from his. The scared girl lay on the naked chest of her master and the two stared into each other's eyes. *"He told me I was his Gopi and that we had been together for thousands of lives. I still felt that all this was some sort of spiritual process. However, when he put his hand between my legs and inserted his finger in my vagina, while talking as if giving a spiritual instruction, that this is divine bliss, I resolutely refused. No, it is not!"* Eva describes. In the end he sent her away. But first he wanted to be assured that her trust was now stronger than before and that was when Eva lied to him for the first time. She nodded, but there was complete confusion in her mind. This confusion never went away, not the next day, nor over the next years. *"I was completely shocked. At the same time I was afraid to lose my castle that surrounded me, I lived in it and did not want to leave,"* she admits. She confided her and her master's secret only to a few friends. Even so, nobody would ever believe her, in the same way as happened with other abused women. She continued to function within YIDL, but her absolute trust was showing some serious cracks.

WHAT WILL YOU GIVE ME?

Allegedly, the number of women invited to Swamiji's bedroom, may go to the high tens. It is shocking that a Hindu monk who is supposed to live in celibacy, not only broke his vow of chastity, but also, if the testimonies are true, displayed sexual preferences that are bordering on perverse. According to the testimonies, the sexual escapades peaked during the 90's. Almost all the testimonies follow the same pattern. The guru invited a girl to his room and asked questions of the type: "*What will you give me? Will you really give me everything?*" Some of the women who considered Swamiji as god completely submitted themselves to him, and only after a long time did they realize that satisfying their master's sexual needs is not compatible with a supposedly pure spiritual path which they followed. Many of the women called were expecting that they were somehow chosen. Instead, they found themselves participating in orgies, with multiple women in the master's bed.

"I always blamed myself for feeling so awful whenever I was with him. I always hoped that next time I would feel better. He was never kind. He would always start with I love you, then an embrace, a blowjob, and good night. Nothing else. No love, no intimacy," one of the former disciples recalls in her testimony published in the Czech web blog jogavdennimzivote.blogspot.com. Oral sex seems to be the favourite of the bearded Indian, and to spice it up with some mysticism, he referred to his ejaculate as *prashad*, a blessed offering.

CAMPAIGN OF DETRACTORS?

The truth is, Swami Maheshwarananda has succeeded in building up a large organization that has effectively spread yoga among the masses. In contrast to other religious organizations, it did not initially display any sectarian signs, and in fact, anyone can observe a number of positive effects of various elements in the YIDL system, whether it is physical or breathing exercises, vegetarian nutrition, or regular detox such as *shank prakshalana*. That is another reason why many devoted disciples are convinced that all the allegations are just a smear campaign. Radovan Hovorka, the spokesperson for the YIDL organization and the chairman of its Bratislava branch, told our weekly newspaper that at the beginning of these claims was the departure of one YIDL member who declared at the time that he would destroy all Swamiji's work. It is difficult to imagine that behind all this, and especially

behind the testimonies of abused women, there is nothing but a disgruntled former member. But it is difficult to provide proof of the events and many students have no doubts about their guru.

"It is a test of our trust, which is based upon our personal experience," Radovan Hovorka explains. He has known Swamiji for twenty years. He translates for him, works with him on his books and other projects. *"I have never encountered him in a situation where he would cause me to question my trust."* He speaks without negativity toward those who step on his beliefs. *"The YIDL organization gives its full support to the author of the system, Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda. We consider the published negative statements against him as lies and fabrications that aim to discredit his name and a lifetime of effort spreading the teachings of nonviolence, tolerance and mutual understanding. These actions are merely attempts to harm the organization whose goal is to improve human health through yoga exercises."* he recites the official position.

SEE NO EVIL

In many places around the world, including several in Slovakia, the associated yoga centres were closed down. Swamiji was renounced by his students in Australia, New Zealand, and also centres in the states of former Yugoslavia are in deep crisis. In Czech Republic and Slovakia, the situation is somewhat different. *"I do not expect that other yoga followers will be persuaded by my testimony. They do not want to lose their dream. However, I hope that it may serve as a warning to others who might one day treat another person as a god."* Eva Vrbová said. Also 37 year old Andrej from Bratislava does not want to close his eyes from the truth, even though he is alone among his circle of friends. He started yoga fifteen years ago, became a devoted follower and led yoga classes in Bratislava. *"Lately, more and more often I felt disturbed of the sectarian tendencies in YIDL."* he says. He did not like how the guru introduced uniforms to be worn for yoga classes, retreats, and other events, how he would promise enlightenment to those who attend yoga seminars while the others were threatened with bad karma. *"This is hardly the behavior of an enlightened master"* Andrej adds. The news about sexual abuse of female disciples has only convinced him even further that Swami is not who he pretends to be.

MAYOR FTÁČNIK HAS NO GURU

“Any suspicions of possible abuse of young women by Swami Maheshwarananda, must be thoroughly investigated. Neither in this case, nor in other such cases should one generalize a serious misdeed of one individual, which, if confirmed, is worthy of condemnation and is incompatible with yoga exercises or any human philosophy,” stated mayor of Bratislava, Milan Ftáčnik, himself a yoga practitioner for over thirty years, who practices yoga every morning. He claims that his relationship with yoga was never connected with a specific instructor, but considered it simply as one of the paths that contribute to a healthy lifestyle and helps to maintain good physical and mental condition. The mayor met Swami Maheshwarananda during a yoga centre opening ceremony where he was invited as a guest.

However, to investigate the allegations against Swamiji, who has denied everything, will not be easy. The testimonies are mostly from the distant past and the psychologically manipulated women have technically given their consent from their own free will. And this is another example of how dangerous it is to trust a person who has elevated himself to godhood and is then expected not to succumb to temptations awaiting him among his devoted flock of sheep.

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