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COMPILATION OF EVIDENCE: EXCERPT FROM YONI SHAKTI 2020
ABUSER ABUSE LINK REFERENCE

Testimony is evidence.

Observations and reports are evidence.

Journalistic investigations reveal evidence.

Legal judgements and privately conceded experiences both carry weight.

Often the question of criminality distracts from the question of humanity.

Legal or illegal, abuse is always inhumane.

Whether perpetuated by institutions or individuals with a community of enablers, whether there is abject violence or subtle subjugation, it all holds the same patterns. This compilation of evidence reveals those patterns. I present both confidential and public testimony, journalistic investigations and legal documents. I present names and places where abuses are already known to have arisen. My intention is to raise awareness of places where it is not safe to send anybody's daughters.

All of the short links [shakti.link/yoni###] lead to relevant documents and websites.

I have taken a broad definition of yoga to include both contemporary western and more traditional Indian based yoga organisations, as well as some Tibetan Buddhist Meditation and retreat centres where the yogas of Tibetan lineages are practised. Some of the perpetrators are deceased, and some are still living. I have chosen to include the details of the deceased, because in many cases the institutions they founded continue to operate, and the convictions of their founders are not always widely known by current residents/students at these institutions, and in any case, any founder who perpetrated harm created models of behaviour which are still followed by devotees who may never have met the gurus whilst living.

I refer only to cases which directly relate to the abuse of women within yoga organisations, and more specifically to those cases where women's intuitive wisdom has been overridden or suppressed. I include cases which have been the subject of legal and/or journalistic investigations, and/or where there is evidence and testimony from women involved. I shall not reveal any of the sources that provided personal testimony to me to support the evidence here.

Sadly I fear that my list is not exhaustive. There may be many other places and people where abuses occur that I have not listed here. Future editions may include further evidence.

Agama Yoga:

Swami Vivekananda

(born Narcis Tarcau

1962)

2019: There have been multiple reports of sexual relationships between guru, senior teachers and students, and rape, sexual violence and abuse have been widely reported. The main ashram has recently been re-opened and continues to offer retreats and teachings of sexual intimacy and tantric sexuality. Personal testimonies, and many public accounts of experiences provide compelling evidence of the validity of these accusations.

<https://shakti.link/yoni2>

<https://shakti.link/yoni3>

<https://shakti.link/yoni4>

Amrit Yoga:

Amrit Desai

(b.1932)

1990: Accused and convicted of sexual and financial misconduct at the Kripalu Ashram he founded. Paid a \$2.5 million settlement, left the ashram in Massachusetts and set up another one in Florida. Considerable evidence testifying the truth of the accusations is available in the public domain and has been presented by those close to the Desai family at the time, including accounts presented in Stephen Cope's book 'Yoga and the Quest for the True Self' (2000).

<https://shakti.link/yoni5>

<https://shakti.link/yoni6>

<https://shakti.link/yoni7>

Anusara Yoga:

John Friend (b.1951)

2008 – 2012: Friend was accused of and confessed to a series of unethical sexual relations with students and theft of money from employees. He relocated and re-invented himself with a new form of yoga, which he continues to teach. Multiple legal and financial documents, journalistic investigations, and first-hand reports, including personal testimony by many UK and Irish students present convincing evidence of the validity of the accusations.

<https://shakti.link/yoni8>

<https://shakti.link/yoni9>

<https://shakti.link/yoni10>

Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga:

Pattabhi Jois

(1915 – 2009)

1998 – 2020: Pattabhi Jois sexually assaulted female students over decades. Senior teachers colluded to protect him from discovery and supported a culture of damaging practice and disavowal of the truth. Matthew Remski's investigations and reporting of the testimonies of many students in his book 'Practice and All is Coming' (2019) presents convincing evidence of the truth of the accusations.

<https://shakti.link/yoni11>

<https://shakti.link/yoni12>

<https://shakti.link/yoni13>

Bikram Yoga:

Bikram Choudhry

(b.1944)

2000 – 2020: Choudhry is the subject of multiple civil law suits alleging sexual harassment, assault and discrimination against racial and sexual minorities. Two lawsuits accusing Choudhry of rape were filed in May 2013, with other counts of sexual battery, false imprisonment, discrimination, and harassment. In 2016, Choudhry was ordered to pay a 6.5million-dollar judgment for similar charges. The following year, a US court awarded \$7 million to his former lawyer, Minakshi Jafa-Boden. He is currently evading US legal process in Mexico where he continues to

offer teacher trainings.

<https://shakti.link/yoni14>

<https://shakti.link/yoni15>

<https://shakti.link/yoni16>

<https://shakti.link/yoni17>

Heart of Yoga:

Mark Whitwell

1980 – 2020: Over twenty reported and corroborated cases of sexual harassment, assault, and rape of his female students were revealed after one young woman shared her experiences in an online article. Whitwell has denied the published accusation and has refused to comment on the other nineteen. Previous testimonies made by other women in 2018 have been deleted. Whitwell has not directly acknowledged the flood of testimonies in public, nor his pattern of grooming and silencing his victims with the help of his community.

<https://shakti.link/yoni18>

Himalayan

Institute:

Swami Rama

(1925 – 1996)

1997: A number of widely circulated accusations and testimonies during his lifetime raised serious concerns about sexual abuse and misogyny within the Himalayan Institute during Swami Rama's years there. A posthumous court judgement in 1997 found Swami Rama, who was sixty-nine at the time of the offence, guilty of sexual misconduct with nineteen-year-old Jasmine Patel. Patel was awarded \$275,000 in compensatory damages, and \$1.6 million in punitive damages. The jury found Swami Rama abused his position as Patel's guru to secure her consent to the sexual relations; breached standard of care and fiduciary duties inherent in the relationship between him and Patel; intentionally inflicted emotional distress on Patel; acted maliciously and with conscious disregard for the welfare of Patel; and was acting within the scope of his agency relationship with the Himalayan Institute when engaging in sexual relations with Patel. The Himalayan Institute unsuccessfully appealed against the punitive damages. Swami Rama continued as head of the Himalayan Institute until the end of his life. As far as I have been able to discover, nobody currently associated with the Institute, some of whom were fully aware of its founder's abusive behaviours towards women, have ever issued any kind of public statement on the subject. Multiple legal documents in the public domain provide evidence of the truth of these accusations.

<https://shakti.link/yoni19>

<https://shakti.link/yoni20>

Iyengar Yoga:

Manouso Manos

Accused of and confessed to a series of abusive and damaging teaching methods and bullying of students. Continues to teach even though he has been de-certified by the Iyengar Yoga National Association of the United States following an independent investigation. Multiple reports in the public domain, plus personal testimony shared with me by California and London students are evidence of the compelling validity of the accusations.

<https://shakti.link/yoni21>
<https://shakti.link/yoni22>
<https://shakti.link/yoni23>
<https://shakti.link/yoni24>

Krishnamacharya
Healing and Yoga Foundation
[KHYF] (Vini Yoga):
Kausthub
Desikachar

2014: Accused of and confessed to a series of abusive sexual relationships with yoga students, teacher trainees and yoga therapy clients. Removed himself from teaching at the request of the executive board of the yoga centre, retreated for three months and then re-emerged, re-inventing himself as a reformed character. Continues to offer yoga therapy and trainings. Multiple testimonies and direct reports made during the time of the first public discussion of Kausthub's activities present convincing evidence of the truth of the accusations.

In 2017 the US Yoga Alliance re-registered Kausthub Desikachar and KHYF as members and training providers.

<https://shakti.link/yoni25> <https://shakti.link/yoni26> <https://shakti.link/yoni27>

Kundalini Yoga:
Yogi Bhajan
[Harbhakan Singh
Khalsa]
(1929 – 2004)

Founder of a worldwide network of centres, teachers and training courses, Bhajan's abusive actions are currently under posthumous investigation following revelations of sexual violence from teachers, students and assistants. Bhajan and his inner circle had multiple convictions for fraud, extortion and drug dealing. Multiple public testimonies, sustained journalistic investigations, as well as personal reports, are compelling evidence of the truth of these accusations. Court documents present evidence of sexual slavery within the organisation.

<https://shakti.link/yoni28>
<https://shakti.link/yoni29>
<https://shakti.link/yoni30>
<https://shakti.link/yoni50>

Atman, International Federation of Yoga (over twenty different countries worldwide), also known as Tara Yoga (UK), Atman Yoga Federation (Germany), Mahavidya Yoga (Austria), Natha Yoga (Scandinavia), and in many places as Movement for Spiritual Integration into the Absolute (MISA): Gregorian (Grieg) Bivolaru (b.1952)

The Atman International Federation of Yoga and Meditation is an organisation that provides a basis for communication and co-operation between its many members all over the world. All the yoga schools within the federation have the same curriculum and the same so-called guru, Gregorian Bivolaru. He has been convicted of sex crimes in his home state of Rumania and is currently evading the law in France.

Bivolaru has been granted political asylum by Sweden and is continuing to teach 'secret retreats' to selected young women who have reported rape, sexual violence, abuse and coercive incitement into filming pornographic materials. He and his teachers worldwide use multiple techniques of harmful practices that exploit vulnerability and cultivate obedience. Their camps and classes provide girls for trafficking to the secret retreat house of Gregorian Bivolaru. Women from all over the world are selected and invited to "a secret initiation" with the guru...

Many of his enablers widely promote the image of him as a persecuted yogi, but personal testimony from victims, plus reports of his convictions and international activities provide compelling evidence that all the accusations are valid. Bivolaru and all of the yoga organisations guided by him have been expelled from the European Yoga Council of the European Yoga Alliance, and also from the European Federation of Yoga for the European Union.

The yoga schools go under many different names in different countries and therefore they can be difficult to detect, e.g. Tara Yoga Centre (UK), Mahasiddha Yoga (Thailand), Natha Yoga Centres (Scandinavia and Latvia), School of Yoga and Tantra Satya (Russia). The organisation also runs 'pop up' intensive trainings and retreats in India, where I have heard reports of aggressive 'recruitment' amongst young female travellers. The following link lists member schools worldwide.

<https://shakti.link/yoni31>

<https://shakti.link/yoni32>

<https://shakti.link/yoni33>

<https://shakti.link/yoni34>

<https://shakti.link/yoni35>

Samye Ling

Tibetan Buddhist Retreat Centre (Holy Isle Retreat, Scotland and other locations within this international network of Tibetan Buddhist Meditation and retreat centres): Drupon Rinpoche and Lama Katen

Abuses have been reported to the UK police and a number of students have called for an institutional investigation into the various forms of abuse that have happened within the Samye Ling organisation, including imprisonment, sexual grooming and coercion, abuse of tantric methods and harmful practices within long retreats. A culture of bullying and abuse within the organisation enables abusers to maintain power and ostracise students. Two teachers, Drupon Rinpoche and Lama Katen, have been named in multiple reports, including ex-nuns' personal testimonies that provide compelling evidence of the validity of these accusations. Widespread reporting of abuse within Tibetan Buddhist Centres internationally is now evident, including three different petitions at the time of writing calling for support to address these related abuses in different lineages. Young African and Nepali children have recently been brought by Drupon Rinpoche to live at his retreat space in Nepal.

<https://shakti.link/yoni51>

<https://shakti.link/yoni36>

<https://shakti.link/yoni37>

<https://shakti.link/yoni38>

Satyananda

Yoga (Worldwide yoga centres and ashrams), also known as Academy of Yoga Science and Well Being Foundation (previously known as the Bihar School of Yoga or BSY): Swami Satyananda

(1923 – 2009) and senior swamis in Australia and India

1970 – 2015: Sexual abuse of young women and children in Australian and Indian Ashrams. Theft of money. Widespread culture of disempowerment and cover-up. Evidence provided by the investigation conducted in 2014 by the Australian Royal Commission of Enquiry into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse provides compelling verifications of the accusations.

The enquiry uncovered evidence of sexual assault and rape committed by the founder of Satyananda Yoga, Swami Satyananda, and by his successor and other senior swamis. The Australian ‘Academy of Yoga Science’ has recently been rebranded as the ‘Well Being Foundation’ and has refused to join a National Redress Scheme to provide reparations for victims. The Indian HQ denies responsibility for the events in Australia.

<https://shakti.link/yoni39>

<https://shakti.link/yoni40>

<https://shakti.link/yoni41>

Mohan Singh

[Michael Lyons]

(1960 – 2015)

Jailed in July 2010 for ten years in the UK for rape and sexual abuse of female devotees and vulnerable women seeking guidance between 1998 and 2007. Police estimated that more than a hundred victims were involved. Further details were also revealed recently to me by two women who had been close to his teachings and organisation but too ashamed to speak about their experiences. Their personal testimonies provide compelling evidence and there are many more yet to come forward.

<https://shakti.link/yoni42>

<https://shakti.link/yoni43>

<https://shakti.link/yoni52>

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres (worldwide yoga centres and ashrams): Swami Vishnu Devananda ([Kuttan Nair] 1927 – 1993), Prahlada (Thamatam Reddy) and other senior staff members.

Long term and systemic bullying, abuse and sleep deprivation of Swami Vishnu Devananda’s close assistants. Rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment of students and staff by Vishnu Devananda and by senior swamis, and by senior teacher-trainer Thamatam Reddy, known as Prahlad Saraswati. Investigations called by the executive board have been suspended, and an independent community-funded investigation “Project SATYA” has been launched <https://shakti.link/yoni53> Multiple public reports, comprehensively researched journalistic accounts, and personal testimony shared privately, provide compelling evidence of the truth of these accusations.

<https://shakti.link/yoni44>

<https://shakti.link/yoni45>

<https://shakti.link/yoni46>

**I INVITE YOU TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR SISTERS BY
AVOIDING THESE ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS,
AND BY SPREADING AWARENESS OF THEIR HARMFUL
ACTIVITIES IN YOUR CIRCLES.**

All these harms have the same roots: and all are facilitated by oppressive hierarchies that erode women's self-esteem and destroy trust in intuitive wisdom. When we see the connections between all these different kinds of damage then we see better how to prevent any and all of them. The final section of this preface explores the bigger picture that helps us understand the inter-connections between all harmful and oppressive systems.

GROWING FROM THE SAME ROOTS:

SEXUAL ABUSES WITHIN TRANSNATIONAL YOGA ORGANISATIONS, INTERSECTIONALITY AND WHY WE NEED TO DECOLONISE YOGA

Curating this list, bringing together testimonies of the women who shared their experiences with me, and compiling the lists of Warning Signs and Nine Calls to Action reveals that this collection of abuses is part of a much bigger picture, a nexus of oppressions, exploitations and inequalities that all grow from the same roots. If we cannot see the shared roots that connect these inequalities, there is no hope of eradicating any single one of the abuses I have described. In order to understand the shared roots of the inequalities of power that result in oppressive hierarchies that harbour the abuses I have described, it is necessary to understand, at least at a basic level, the processes and structures of commodification and colonialism. If we wish to take action to prevent future harm, or even to have a discussion about the harm that has already been done, then we need to do this outside of the commercial studios that uphold the capitalist values of colonised and commodified yoga. And if we want to take action to dismantle the colonialist structures of oppression that harms women, indigenous people, people of colour and differently abled students in yoga environments, then we first need to recognise that all of these harms are connected: they intersect. I return to this necessity in more detail at the end of the preface, after first making Nine Calls to Action.