

## Abuse in the Sat Nam Rasayan training in Belgium 2012-2014

Els Ravinder Coenen – September 24, 2020

*I posted this text on September 22, 2020 on the closed Facebook group "Beyond the Cage". In another document (coming soon) I will tell step by step what I saw as the organizer during the training and especially how the leadership of the Sat Nam Rasayan did what they could to hide what happened.*

In December 2013, two students from the Sat Nam Rasayan training in Belgium told their stories about the sexual relationships they had had with their teacher Hari Singh in 2012 and the harm done. I was the organizer of this training.

Both women are aware of and agree to my bringing the story out into the open again. Thanks to the book of Pamela and the testimonies of many other brave women, more ears seem to be available in 2020.

I would not be sharing this story had Guru Dev Singh (master of SNR) and his team taken the appropriate measures in 2013-2014. It is possible that today Hari is not crossing ethical borders anymore. It will be painful for him and his beloved ones to be reminded about all his mistakes. He admitted it all happened. He apologized towards me, but never towards the women concerned.

They will tell their stories as long as there is no recognition of the suffering they had to endure. Abuse should never be hidden, tolerated or forgotten. It should be healed.

*As one of them puts it: **Stopping the training course abruptly after we spoke out, and that way punishing all the students in Belgium, while Hari just continued teaching in other countries, was a very bad signal. Hari misused his status as a teacher. He knew that both of us had ongoing relationship issues when he seduced us to have sex with him.***

The two women say it was Hari who proposed and initiated the sexual contact. At first, they felt overwhelmed. Then they were confused but also flattered by his attention. One of the women was in the middle of a painful divorce at that time. The other had just broken up with her boyfriend. Hari knew about their issues. He ‘supported’ them with healing sessions and advised them on which meditations to do. He said it was not wrong to have sex with him. But he urged them not to talk about it. After a while, both women realized he was using them for his own needs. They mention a sense of loyalty towards Hari that they could not, and still cannot, explain. They felt deep shame and it took them months to have the courage to speak about it. Keeping silent made it all worse.

Despite the detailed reports and the fact that Hari did not deny the relationships, the leadership of SNR never recognized that what he did was wrong. Their main concern was that it would be known to the outside world. Maybe today in 2020 they can do what seemed impossible in 2014. For the women involved it would still mean a lot if the SNR organization would just admit that Hari’s behavior at the time was transgressive. Even if they are fine now, such a sign of recognition would be a great relief.

Until now the only reply to them was a Hukam that was not useful at all. (A Hukam is a hymn Sikhs retrieve from their holy book in an early-morning ritual and that serves as ‘guidance for the day’.)

These stories are also important because they show us in a painful way how 'the man on the stage' can cheat us. As one of the women reports: ... *in this year 2012 when he was at the Surjhee, even holding the space, he sent me horny SMSs to ask me to come to this place of the meditation event to meet.*

Below are some more words from the women involved. I admire and honor their courage and generosity for giving the leadership of Sat Nam Rasayan so many opportunities to do something constructive with their painful stories and to grow. They missed this chance once. It is never too late though.

In presenting her story to the heads of SNR, this is what one of the women wrote in December 2013: *We see our own role. But we also see that it is the responsibility of a teacher to keep a clean connection with his students, not to get mixed up with flirting and have sex with them. What we ask is that Hari looks deeply into his own behavior and stops using female students for his own needs. We both think it is time for an open discussion about teacher-student relationship in the SNR training, in order for such misbehavior to stop. Thank you for reading about our experiences and to do what needs to be done.*

In April 2013 sometime after she told me about her abuse, this is what one of the women wrote: *What I feel is that what happens now in SNR Belgium is something that happens a lot in spiritual structures, sangats. Not just now and not just here. Teachers having sex with students. Flirting in both directions. In that sense it is maybe not so exceptional. But what happens mostly is that women keep quiet. Try to continue to protect the teacher. Try to not lose their face in the sangat as one of the cheap women who said yes to this. Try to reframe the experience into something 'special', something spiritual, something that opened up their kundalini, their feeling of being a woman, their whatever, but anything to avoid feeling like a cheap whore.*

*From my point of view, how to use this in the light of this time on earth, is to, through the cracks, the ugliness, vulgarity maybe, and also by humanness, let the light in. Open it up. Allow people to speak up. Bring it to the light. Be able to say sorry. Be able to work this kind of behavior out of our systems. See through our own ego-patterns, teachers as well as students, that made us think it was necessary to do this. Inquiring: What in me was looking for what in you? And how did I as a student misunderstand my longing to join a spiritual group, a spiritual teaching, spiritual practice, healing, and let it change into a man-woman story in a situation of unequal in power? And how did I as a teacher use my place in which students look up to me, and changed the relationship into one of sexual abuse? So many other questions we can ask ourselves, but both parties are in this time of life given the possibility to either be honest to themselves and acknowledge the consequences of their own behavior, own responsibility, or to miss this chance and continue to harm, destroy, to play and mess around with teachings we should honor and respect.*

*When things like this come up, we ourselves are given a chance to deal with this in a certain way. Nobody else can do that for someone else.*

*For me, there are two perspectives.*

*One is the picture I just described. In this, I feel I want to help to break the pattern. Help to invite transparency. In some way I put myself in an embarrassing position. Let's be honest, I am truly not proud of what I did. I see the extremely low self-esteem I must have had at that time and it just hurts to see how I let things happen to me. Followed blindly. But it also shows the position of many people who enter spiritual practices, and maybe that's why students are so vulnerable. We feel miserable, we go somewhere to get healing, we look up to the teacher, idealize him, project enlightenment or great spiritual power on them (maybe even because, for example standing so close to Masters like Yogi Bhajan, Guru Dev, ...), we trust, we surrender, and hup there we go.*

*This just needs to stop.*

*The subject needs to be opened up. In trainings these feelings need to be explained, very simple. Rules. Relationships. Lines. Teach teachers to teach from another energy than the sexual one.*

*Remind students that what they come for and what they will get is the teachings. This illusionary business of a teacher giving a student more closeness to spirituality in exchange for her body absolutely has to stop. Whatever beautiful theory can be told about it; it is abuse.*

*We need to learn to come back to absolute respect for the teachings. The power of healing itself instead of what we make of it. And whoever is able to teach in purity, will become attractive to learn from. It will take time for people to open their eyes, and maybe for some if they start to leave out the game of gender-based attraction inside the student-teacher relationship, they will find out that there is nothing left. That the spiritual environment was just a coincidental theatre to play something that was in fact an ego-game. A place to feel sexy and attractive. I say it as it is, and I say it as I have seen it. It's ok. There will be experience of emptiness. Not one that we experience because of some kriya, but a true one, a crisis. Experience of embarrassment. Of betraying ourselves. Believing our own stories that we were looking for something oh so spiritual. It's fine. No one to blame. But it is time for people to take this step. And whoever wants to keep on dreaming will do so. But we have to be responsible to create the openness for people to become true to themselves and let them grow to another spiritual level.*

*The other perspective is my personal one. My personal experience with Hari. The effect it has on my own system. My (in)ability to come back to a spiritual practice. I started this year by feeling 'I guess I have become atheist', and I even laughed at it. I am a non-believer now. What I started to believe in is love and friendship. And for this I don't need a spiritual teacher anymore. Life can teach me that. And yes, of course I know that I feel this now because of the great disappointment I experienced in a spiritual teacher; the hurt, the experience of a teacher as a preacher without practice. And yes, of course I see that while saying this something inside me screams to just reconnect to my inner me. I don't know how to get there. Many things I just don't know. Wanting to come back to Kundalini yoga? To Sat Nam Rasayan? I don't know. I see I do miss a system to help me be clear and healthy, a practice, but I am now in another part of the process, right here, and I will see if it is meant to be to come back to something in which I have had these experiences. I know how kriya's can help me heal and clean up, but I just feel so resistant that I don't know how to do it.*

*I feel what we do as women is powerful. We stop hiding. We make a change. We catalyze to change the energy in the training in Belgium. It helps me to live the name I was given:*

xxxxxxx. *There is no other way than what we are doing now. I know that. But I never said any part of this was easy. It is difficult, painful and it hurts.*

*About Hari, I know what has come to light in Belgium is a small part. I am almost sure the same thing happened in Holland. It is not some kind of behavior; it is deeply in his personality. It is not my task to push people to tell their stories, but I just warn you that I feel his attitude and behavior as a teacher comes from his second chakra. It is not only wrong for students he is messing around with, but also for the process of the entire group; what I saw at the start of the Level two (when fresh female flesh arrived in the group from Level one) was just ridiculous. It had nothing at all to do with the pure teachings of the true source: Sat Nam Rasayan. It was one big flirtation.*

*I thank you for taking time to read this.*

May this story serve the needs of the moment!

With love & light, Els Ravinder