

Letter to Guru Dev Singh about abuse in SNR context in Belgium in 2012

By Els Ravinder Coenen – organizer of SNR trainings in Belgium 2012-2014

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Sat Nam Guru Dev Singh,

I hope this letter finds you in good health.

I write to you related to what happened in Belgium 8 years ago during the SNR training. In December 2013 two students informed you about the sexual relationships they had had with Hari Singh in 2012. They explained the conditions in which they had sex with him, both being in a vulnerable situation that Hari knew about. They expressed how they felt abused and how the silence they were urged to keep made it all worse. Being able to speak out brought a first sense of relief. But they did not feel listened to. There was never a genuine personal response from the SNR leadership with a proposal to cure this. However, this would for them be of great significance.

Both women are aware of and agree to my bringing the story out into the open again. Times have changed. In 2020 more ears seem to be available and ready to listen. That's why I come back with my old request: Could you please reply to the two women?

They have reflected on their own share and sought their own ways to process things. In the situation as it was, with Hari in a position of power, the big question remains when your responsibility for the border crossing will be assumed. The SNR leadership has never been openly acknowledged that the sexual transgressive behavior shown by Hari in 2012 is not acceptable in an SNR training.

It is very well possible that today Hari is not crossing ethical borders anymore. It may be painful for him and his loved ones to be reminded of his mistakes by this writing. He admitted it all happened. He apologized towards me, but never towards the women concerned.

They have had the courage to be vulnerable by speaking out in order for this to stop and they have a right to something other than to be silenced until now.

As one of them put 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.

Abuse should never be hidden, tolerated or forgotten. It needs to be healed.

One of the women wrote in January 2014:

I remained silent for a long time. I kept the experience I had had with Hari locked up within me. It took months before I could open up. In my emails I have been very clear

about what happened, about the effect it has had on me, and on how I suggest teachers should keep to the purity of the teachings.

I wonder if your long silence after everything I wrote is really your answer to me.

You, great teachers, healers, businessmen, do I really need to explain the lack of respect this invokes? How difficult is it to spend a moment of your time to address some words to me? Could you express what this topic brings up in you? Could you simply open up your heart? I believe that in an open communication between us we can heal this, and it can help us grow. I am open to hearing from you.

...

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 looking at the human side of it, let the light in. Open it up. Allow people to speak up. Bring it to the light. Be willing to say sorry. Get this kind of behavior out of our systems.

Inquiring: What in me was looking for what in you?

How did I as a student misunderstand my longing to join a spiritual group, spiritual teachings, spiritual practice, healing, and let it change into a man-woman story in a context of unequal power?

How did I as a teacher use my position in which students look up to me, and changed our relationship into one of sexual abuse?

So many other questions we can ask ourselves. 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 are all given a chance to deal with this in a certain way. Nobody can do that for someone else.

Then, in early 2014, the students reached out to you to start the conversation. You denied their invitation. Today, in 2020, here is another opportunity to allow the impurities from the past to be brought into the light so they can be resolved and healed. Everyone will benefit from that.

Looking forward to your answer.

Love & light,
Els Ravinder