

Whistleblower letter from Bhakti Manning
to all Satyananda ~~Ashram~~ Yoga
teachers in Australia

March 15th, 2014

Dear Satyananda Yoga Teachers

I am writing to you all, as you are people who teach yoga under the "Satyananda Yoga" name.

Many of you would be aware that recently an apology was put up on the Satyananda Yoga Mangrove Facebook page. The purpose was to apologise for past abuse and misconduct allegedly perpetrated by previous management in the 70's and 80's. Much discussion has occurred on that Facebook page since and is still on-going.

I am glad that an apology has finally been issued. I was a member of a group of people who attempted to have action taken on this issue back in 1994-95. That effort resulted in the drawing up of an ethics code for your association, but in no acknowledgement or apology being issued by the Ashram itself.

I realise that amongst your membership there are people who would have a varying degrees of knowledge of these events. Some were members of the group of people who sought action in 1994-95. Some more recent members may have little or no knowledge. The shame that has surrounded this sorry episode in the Ashram's history has caused a silence that has endured for many years now.

The current situation is that a Royal Commission is running that is investigating the Institutional Responses to Reports of Child Sexual Abuse. It is possible that the response of the Mangrove management to the various attempts by individuals and by groups such as the one that formed in 1994-95 to report and get action may come under scrutiny. It is also possible that earlier attempts by individuals to report and get action to stop the abuse at the time it was happening may come to light.

As can be seen by the comments and contributions of others to the Facebook page, the abuse and misconduct is allegedly not limited to child sexual abuse. In the event that issues are investigated by the Royal Commission, it is possible that some matters will also be passed on to other investigative inquiries or authorities, such as the police. These entities may choose to expand their investigations to cover the other forms of alleged abuse. The possibility of Royal Commission findings and media coverage that paint the Satyananda name in a poor light is real.

I believe this is relevant to you, as people who teach under the Satyananda Yoga name. It is a matter that could affect your reputation.

Though I am glad that the apology has been issued, I have some problems with its content. I posted my comments in this regard in the "Review" section of the Facebook page, but will attach them here also. As I pointed out at the end of my comment on the Facebook page

"We need to understand that this apology is only a baby step in the righting of the wrongs. The journey, both for the survivors of the abuse, and for the ashram itself, is just beginning. To suggest that the apology or any healing ceremony will be sufficient to put all this in the past would be ignorant and childish. The path forward will require understanding, patience, compassion, and a willingness to take all the steps needed to help those affected to heal."

I sincerely hope that many of you will understand this sentiment, and that members of the Satyananda Yoga Teachers Association can play a role in helping the current Mangrove Ashram management to move forward in this process.

Yours sincerely,

Bhakti Manning