

The Yoga Network

From Muktanand

Hari Om Everybody,

A second son **REDACTED** (blessing, benediction) - was born to Bhakti and **REDACTED** Manning on Guru Poornima. I'm glad to say that all are well and happy.

Guru Poornima was not that momentous for me, but it always seems a good time for review and reflection, and reflecting on the Yoga Network I realized it has been silent for the last year or so. We could let it just fade away, but I personally would be happier for us to declare that its purpose has been served and to bring it a formal close. Any comments or alternative ideas could be phoned or posted to Bhakti.

In the meantime, I have been looking back at what concerned me at the time we agreed to create this newsletter and where I am with those concerns now.

One issue was the possibility of relationship with Mangrove and the swamis of Satyananda Yoga. Over the last two years I have come to know the most of the swamis and I have presented a number of retreats at Bellingen and Mangrove. I feel much more comfortable about the ashram now and I have enjoyed the contact with dedicated students and teachers.

Another issue was related to the aftermath of Akhandanand. I have felt the need to try to do something to minimize the possibility that such things could happen again. My response to this has been to promote the development of a code of ethics to which we all subscribe, and to suggest the formation of an Australia-wide teachers association independent of the ashram.

Since the end of last year the idea of a teacher's association has gathered momentum, with most of the groundwork being done by Sivagyana with assistance from various people including Priyaratna and Shabdavani, Sannyasanand and myself. Most of this was done by phone and post, and there was a meeting of about twenty swamis and teachers with Nirranjan in February this year. As you probably know, the inaugural meeting of Satyananda Teachers Association is 17 August at Mangrove.

In addition, I have focused on developing a code of ethics and a mediation-based model for the Ethics Committee. For the code of ethics I have drawn on the codes of the IYTA, the California Yoga Teachers Association, the Insight Meditation teachers and some natural therapies organizations.

I am enclosing a copy of the proposed Code of Ethics for your consideration. I welcome discussion and feedback, by phone (07-3846 5056) or by mail.

I hope to see this code accepted by STA, and made available to all students and teachers who have any contact with the ashram. I would like to see the code on the door of all rooms at Mangrove and published in *Yoga Vidya* and *Yoga Links*. I feel that the best chance we have of minimizing abuses of all sorts is to make it widely known that a code of ethics exists, and that there is a clear procedure in place for contacting the STA Ethics Committee with any concerns.

Although it has been onerous at times, I'm glad I've made the effort. Of course, these are only first steps but they are necessary first steps to acknowledging the past and providing a foundation for a future environment of integrity and respect. Having connected (or reconnected) with all of you in '94 was a major impetus and I look forward to our paths crossing again sooner or later.

Proposed STA Code of Ethics: Guru Poornima 1996

Satyananda Teachers Association recognises that ethical behaviour is the foundation of all yoga practice and yoga teaching. While proscriptions for ethical conduct are presented in the texts of all major yoga traditions, the most widely recognised are those of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*. Pantanjali divides his ethical recommendations into *yama* and *niyama*. the *niyama* pertain to our personal relationship with yoga as a spiritual path, while the *yama* pertain to a yoga practitioner's relationships with other people. The *yama* are: *ahimsa* - not harming; *satya* - truthfulness; *asteya* - honesty; *brahmacharya* - wise and caring sexual conduct; *aparigraha* - non-possessiveness.

Satyananda Teachers Association adopts the *yama* as the basis of its code of ethics and provides specific guidelines for the application of these principles appropriate to our role as teachers at this particular time in history and in the context of Western culture generally and Australian culture in particular.

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1. *Ahimsa: refraining from harm: acting with care.*
 - 1.1 We respect the integrity and protect the welfare of all persons with whom we are connected in yoga.
 - 1.2 We recognise that the teacher-student relationship involves a power imbalance in favour of the teacher and it is unethical to exploit this influence for our own gain, or the gain of any institution or organisation with which we are associated.
 - 1.3 It is the responsibility of a teacher to determine whether s/he can assist a student in yoga development.
 - 1.4 It is unethical to refuse teaching or professional help to anyone on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual preference, marital status, national or ethnic origin, religion or political belief.
 - 1.5 We show sensitive regard for the moral, social and religious standards of our students. It is unethical to attempt to impose our beliefs on our students and assistants, although we may express them in class when it is appropriate.
 - 1.6 It is unethical to engage in exploitative coercion of students or assistants, to harass them in any way, or to use abusive words or actions towards them.
 - 1.7 We avoid those dual relationships with students (eg business, close personal or sexual) that could impair our professional judgement, compromise the integrity of our instruction, or increase the risk of unfair personal advantage.

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- 1.8 We recognise an obligation to safeguard information about students and assistants that has been obtained in the course of our yoga teaching.
- 1.8.1 We treat communications from students and assistants with professional confidence.
- 1.8.2 All records relating to students and assistants are stored or disposed of in a manner that assures security and confidentiality.
- 1.8.3 When current or former students are referred to while teaching, in a publication, or in a public presentation, their identity is thoroughly disguised.
- 1.8.4 We obtain written consent from students and assistants before audio and/or video recording or permitting third party observation of their sessions.
- 1.8.5 It is our responsibility to convey the importance of confidentiality to our assistants, trainee teachers or consultants.
- 1.9 We do not abandon or neglect students. If we are unable or unwilling to continue a teaching relationship, every reasonable effort must be made for referral to another teacher.
- 1.10 It is unethical to use 'psychic powers' to influence ~~students or assistants~~ for our own gain, or to cause distress or harm to any student, assistant or associate.
- 1.11 It is unethical to give advice or 'readings' to students or assistants based on 'psychic powers' unless this is specifically solicited by the student or assistant.

2. *Satya: speaking truth in the service of all: truthfulness.*

- 2.1 We agree to cultivate truthful, conscious and clear communication that takes into account the welfare of all concerned.
- 2.2 We are careful to represent facts truthfully to students, assistants and referral sources regarding our credentials and services. We will correct any misrepresentation of our teaching or professional qualifications.
- 2.3 It is unethical to misrepresent our teaching or professional qualifications, affiliations and functions, or to falsely imply sponsorship or accreditation by any organisation.
- 2.4 It is unethical to claim or imply degrees of initiation that we have not been granted. We use only those titles or yogic ranks accredited to us by our lineage.
- 2.5 It is unethical to offer or to promote ourselves as competent to offer yoga instruction or other services beyond our training, level of experience or competence. We advise our assistants and trainees to observe this same standard.

- 2.6 It is unethical to undertake yoga instruction or yoga therapy for problems or issues other than those within the reasonable boundaries of our competence.
- 2.7 It is unethical to discredit or to speak disrespectfully in class or in public of other yoga teachers or professionals.
- 2.8 We make only realistic statements regarding the benefits of yoga.
- 2.9 We observe the principle of truth in advertising.
- 2.9.1 Announcements and brochures promoting our classes and services describe them with accuracy and dignity.
- 2.9.2 All advertising and promotional material should be free of exaggerated claims about the benefits and effects of yoga.
- 2.9.3 We do not publish promotional material or make public statements which contain any of the following:
- * A false, fraudulent, misleading, deceptive or unfair statement.
 - * A misrepresentation of fact, or a statement likely to mislead because it makes only a partial disclosure of relevant facts.
 - * A statement implying unusual, unique or one-of-a-kind abilities, including misrepresentation through sensationalism, exaggeration or superficiality.
 - * A statement intended or likely to exploit a student's fears, anxieties or emotions.
 - * A statement concerning the comparative desirability of offered services.
- 2.9.4 We undertake that all advertisements or announcements relating to our classes and services are to give a clear description of:
- * the instruction or experience provided
 - * fees and financial conditions
 - * the training and experience of the provider.
3. *Asteya: to refrain from stealing; honesty.*
- 3.1 We agree to refrain from stealing materially, emotionally and spiritually; to be honest in all our dealings with money; and to bring careful awareness to the use of all resources.
- 3.2 In all contractual matters we agree to conduct ourselves in a clear, honest and professional matter.
- 3.3 We agree to conduct our fiscal affairs with due regard to recognised business, accounting and taxation procedures.

- 3.4 It is unethical to require any commitment from students or assistants before providing full information on fees, refunds and other financial arrangements.
- 3.5 We undertake to deepen and refine our understanding of the tradition of *dakshina* - the right of a teacher to be supported for teaching and student's right to contribute to her/his teacher's support. We agree to foster a clear understanding of this tradition in our students.
- 3.5.1 It is unethical for any teacher to demand a monetary fee for granting initiation or to act as an agent for such a demand on someone else's behalf.
- 3.5.2 It is unethical for any teacher to refuse yogic initiation to any aspirant on the grounds of inability to offer a monetary contribution.
4. *Brahmacharya: wise and caring sexual conduct.*
- 4.1 We agree to avoid causing harm through sexual conduct and to avoid all forms of sexual exploitation.
- 4.2 It is unethical to engage in any form of sexual behaviour with a student, even when a student invites or consents to such behaviour; except where the sexual relationship predates the teacher-student relationship.
- 4.2.1 Sexual behaviour is defined as, but not limited to, all forms of overt and covert seductive speech, gestures and behaviour including physical contact of a sexual nature.
- 4.3 It is unethical to engage in sexual harassment of students, assistants and colleagues.
- 4.3.1 Sexual harassment is defined as, but not limited to, repeated and offensive comments, gestures or physical contacts of a sexual nature; the implication that teaching will be refused or withdrawn if a sexual relationship is refused; or the implication that a student has failed spiritually if a sexual relationship is refused.
- 4.4 Single teachers in many spiritual organisations and communities have developed partnerships and marriages with former students and we acknowledge that such healthy relationships are possible. In view of the great care and sensitivity required in such cases, STA adopts the following guidelines recommended by acknowledged masters teaching in the West. Failure to adhere to these guidelines is unethical.
- 4.4.1 Initiation of a sexual relationship between a single teacher and his/her student is always unethical.

- 4.4.2 It is unethical to give any hint or intimation of student-teacher romantic or sexual relationship during meditation retreats, yoga intensives or any formal teaching, or immediately after a meditation retreat or yoga intensive.
- 4.4.3 If a genuine and committed relationship interest develops over time between a teacher and a student, the teacher-student relationship must be terminated and the student referred to the guidance of another teacher.
- 4.4.4 Before pursuing such a relationship there must be a minimum time period of three months from the last formal teaching between them, and clear understanding from both parties that the student-teacher relationship has ended.
5. *Aparigraha: accepting only that which is freely given: non-possessiveness.*
- 5.1 We agree to use our knowledge and professional associations for the benefit of the people we serve and not to secure unfair personal advantage.
- 5.2 We agree to establish fair and clear guidelines for:
- * participation in our yoga classes and other services
 - * the payment of fees, refunds and other financial arrangements
 - * donations of time, money or goods in relation to our teaching or to any organisation with which we are associated.
- 5.3 We agree to give due acknowledgment to the sources of information, techniques and teaching materials used in our classes and courses, with full compliance with copyright where relevant.
- 5.4 We acknowledge the right and capacity of our students and assistants to make their own spiritual choices; we do not 'own' them. We are ready to refer students to other qualified teachers and/or health practitioners when appropriate.
- 5.5 It is unethical to put pressure on students to make payments or donations of money, goods or time to ourselves, another teacher or any organisation with which we are associated.

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As members of Satyananda Teachers Association we recognise this code of ethics as the minimum acceptable observance of yoga's ethical principles. We invoke the inspiration of all our teachers to deepen our understanding of yama and niyama and to embody them as sincerely as possible in our personal lives and our teaching.

Hari Om Tat Sat