



Bhakti Manning <[REDACTED]>

Re: About Easter at Mangrove Ashram

Working Together <workingtogethertf@gmail.com>

Mon, Apr 28, 2014 at 5:29 PM

To: Ahimsadhara Saraswati <ahimsadhara.[REDACTED]>

Bcc: [REDACTED]

Hari Om,

As you know, last weekend was a special one at Mangrove, as about 200 people gathered to remember the 40-year history of the ashram. There were many reunions, feelings and reflections as the joys and sorrows, the highs and lows, the laughter and the pain were remembered and acknowledged by individuals and the organization alike. Although the experience of each person will be different, our impression is that the overall feeling was one of openness, positivity and courage in being part of the journey of hearing and supporting those who are affected by the abuses that were perpetrated in the past.

The first step was taken on Good Friday morning when Terry O'Connell met with a group including both present ashram management and those who had lived at Mangrove during the years when Swami Akhandananda was in charge. We felt that this was important preparation for Sunday, as it was a chance for this group of key individuals to re-visit their own experiences and emotions in a new way. This session enabled them to trust the process that is now happening and therefore participate in it and support it themselves. This is a key part of the restorative approach, which is all about being inclusive and working with relationships. Some of these people had been fearful of attending, but these fears were replaced with relief. There were tears and there were smiles.

On Friday night during the introduction to the Easter program, a talk was given about this aspect of the weekend and everyone was encouraged to attend the Sunday workshop. This included people who are quite new to Satyananda Yoga, and people who had their own history of abuse that had nothing to do with the ashram. Those who had already been part of meetings with Terry were introduced to everyone, so that others could talk with them as needed.

In this way, the Easter journey began, with all who were present aware of both the celebration of the positives and the acknowledgement of the wounds. The question we had been asking ourselves, "what might meaningful support look like?" was beginning to be answered, as each person's story was given space to unfold.

A talk by Dr Swami Shankardev on Spiritual Life, the Ego and the Shadow further prepared us by describing how every person has 'a dark side' which needs to be learned about and understood, rather than being denied. He said that due to the nature of ego, as our light grows, so does our shadow, and therein lies the challenge.

The workshop with Terry went from 1.30 until 6pm. We had decided to give it as long as it needed, allowing stories from all points of view to be aired and shared. Those who had felt isolated for so long, finally felt safe to speak. People who had struggled with deep and painful emotions found release and support, as their stories were accepted. As the whole room journeyed together, some expressed their gratitude to the ashram for doing what other institutions have failed to do, by offering this opportunity for learning, growth and relationship. As the afternoon unfolded, it became clear that something very special was happening, as out of the 'crisis' came enrichment and an honouring of our humanness, our vulnerabilities, our mutual desire to give and to be given love, understanding, compassion

and support.

After several hours of facilitated sharing, small groups were formed and given a number of tasks. One of these was to write ideas for 'where to from here' onto butchers paper. This group effort at identifying ways of continuing the journey was collected by the Working Together Task Force so that the collaborative process can continue to evolve. Finally, every person in the room was asked to express one reflection on the afternoon's experience. Each person's observation was unique, and of value to us all.

If you weren't able to attend Easter Sunday, we invite you to let us know your thoughts about what is going on and what your own participation in this community process might look like. We feel that something very important has begun and we know that there is room for each person to be part of it when they are ready.

One of the most commonly given suggestions was for a future session to be held with Terry specifically for the victims of abuse and those significant in their lives. Terry feels it is important that such a workshop is held at Mangrove rather than somewhere 'neutral'. The wisdom of this was certainly borne out by the group feeling on Easter Sunday, in the heart of Mangrove Ashram, which has been witness to so many life journeys in its forty-year history. Please let us know if you would like to be involved in such a session.

Mangrove's next e-news will describe the Easter weekend in full, with pictures and feedback. It will be ready shortly and we will send you the link.

With kind regards,

Ahimsadhara for
Working Together Task Force