

"Will you really give me everything?"

A yoga guru who operates out of Vienna is said to have sexually abused female disciples. Profil talked to women who broke their silence on the internet.

By Edith Meinhart

Marie H. * was 16, when her Czech grandmother died. Her father, an unpredictable, furious alcoholic, could not fill the gap that her death had torn in the life of the girl. Through a school friend Marie met followers of Yogi swAmi. In them she found what she was looking for: maintenance, security, answers. Today she says: "It has taken me 15 years to free myself from this illusion again."

Ana K. *, 34, heard "swAmi" for the first time in a gymnasium in Ljubljana. Her friends raved the yoga master knew everything, could read minds and see the future. "This has impressed me and made me interested." At 15 the Slovenian became his devoted disciple. Twenty years later Ana says bitterly the guru knows how "to capture and manipulate people, there is nothing supernatural about him."

Monika P. * had saved 30,000 euros for a bike ride around the world. In front of an ashram in India she had a flat tire. SwAmi came forward and informed the 27-year-old that her "outer journeys" would get her nowhere. The woman from eastern Germany had dropped out of medical school and had managed a hotel in Ecuador. Now she got stuck in the ashram, praying, meditating and working until she dropped.

As different as the stories of Marie, Ana and Monica begin, in the end they all felt dramatic - deceived, exploited and sexually abused.

SwAmi – called XXXXX by his followers - came to Austria in 1972 to build his empire YidL from here. In Vienna he founded the YidL first society. It was followed by sister societies around the globe. On the homepage www.yoga-im-taeglichen-leben.at swAmi shows himself with the (Austrian) Federal President Heinz Fischer in India, with the Dalai Lama in Croatia, planting peace trees in Belgrade, Villach and in the Vienna city park as well as in prayers for world peace. Recently there are also inglorious things to be found on the internet. On www.XXXXX XXXXX-abuse.com and <http://sites.google.com/site/paramliar> Marie, Ana, Monica and three other students report about disturbing experiences with the Indian guru.

The Slovenian Ana had been swAmi's disciple since five years when she came to the ashram in Jadan in the Indian province of Rajasthan. What happened there, she describes this way: One evening the master called her into his bedroom and asked: "What will you give me?" She replied: "My soul, my heart" But he was only content when she said "My body and my soul.". Then he pushed her head down to his penis and ordered: "Drink it."

After this incident she had been „totally out of order for one year“ says Ana. She had rebelled, been at odds, had doubted. Every time she tried to talk with her guru, "he had arranged it so that someone was there and I did not dare." Later, she tried to confide in

people from her yoga group, but the responses were "always very bad."
She has been denounced as a liar and as mentally ill.

For Marie, it happened in the Czech Republic. After a satsang - a spiritual gathering of yoga disciples - to which the master had arrived, he called the then 22-year-old in his apartment, into which he had moved during his stay. An elderly lady who knew her well had lead her in the bedroom. XXXXX had ordered her to lie naked on him and "to recharge my heart from his heart." Then he started to stimulate her sexually. "I was in shock," says Marie. "This is divine bliss," and he was for her "the only man in this Universe" he explained. Marie says for a long time she could not cope with the confusion she was in. Again and again she asked herself: "Has he done that to burn my bad karma?" Only fifteen years later, Marie is "through with that society": "I have given everything to my Guru, my time, my money, my trust. He has abused me in every way, also sexually. He pretends to live in celibacy. He has lied to us all. "

When Monika left the ashram in India, swAmi said to her, she was a good person and should be careful not to get exploited out there, she says: "But the only person who has ever exploited me really was him." According to her stories she had been sexually abused in 2002 in India, first by Guru***, the late teacher of her master, and two years later by swAmi himself. Until then she had not "doubted her master's perfection for even a second." After that she had been struggling for explanations that did not hurt as much as the truth. She has written letters to swAmi but never received a response. "The sexual abuse was not the worst thing for me. It has opened my eyes to a much more dramatic abuse. I had to admit to myself that I was in a cult for 15 years and had worshipped a man as a god who did not want to do me any good. My life has collapsed. "

Ana, Monika and Marie were the only ones who were willing to talk with Profil. Three other women have broken their silence on the internet. "Legally, the Guru is considered as pastor with special duty of care", says Ulrike Schiesser of the Federal Center for Cult issues in Vienna. All abuse allegations which have been raised are time barred, the period is five years. None of the women who went public wants to talk yoga down. Monica says she wants to warn others: "Do not let yourselves be manipulated, pay attention on your freedom."

" Yidl is a yoga-way with a strong centering on the founder," says Mrs. Schiesser, a professional psychologist and psychotherapist. "That makes it so difficult to get out of the ideological building and to trust the own instincts." The Guru - so the original idea - should accompany some chosen disciples on the path of enlightenment. SwAmi had taught his followers that to serve him a couple of minutes would be worth more than years of meditation. Ana says in the meantime she knows of twenty women who had experienced the same things as she had: "These are just the ones I know personally. I am assuming that there are many more in reality. "

The yoga master himself is silent on the allegations. He was also not available for Profil. C... M....sky, spokeswoman for the Yidl headquarters in Vienna, admits that he knows about the reports of the women since months: "But in Austria there is no court action,

there are no elements of an offense/no statement of facts."

Why swAmi does not speak out himself, she could not say. "He has a lot of life experience, he will have his reasons. Currently it is not possible to speak with him. His mother is ill. What I have heard from his surroundings: He is very concerned, he rejects and completely excludes all this." The Management Board of Yidl Vienna seems to consider all the action "as a sort of conspiracy threaded by a renegade henchman." M....sky: "There was a disciple in Serbia for over 30 years and it became apparent that somewhere there was arising a kind of competition. This man has said that he will destroy swAmi's work. At the same time, the internet sites were born. "

Addition in printed issue:

"The Empire

Swami Ma****wara***da is believed to be born in 1945. Some companions claim the simple village boy from the Indian Province of Rajasthan has made himself a few years older when he came to England in the beginning of the 70s. His uncle and yoga master had sent him with the mission to spread the spiritual teachings in Europe. 1972 he moved to Vienna and established there the centre of his empire „XXXXX“ (YIDL). The founder of the movement is also its flagship until today. XXXXXXXX gives lectures, seminars and workshops all over the world. What he collects is said to be invested in the ashram of Jadan in Rajasthan. There you can find a school, a hospital, a temple is under construction. There are no official numbers of YidL devotees. According to a German dropout four years ago one could count 20.000 course participants per week around the globe."