



## Spiritual Predators and Their Victims

**An important focus** for the yoga community at large is to **empower our students far and wide with knowledge** that spiritual predators exist and how to recognize them and not fall prey to them. They thrive on power through ignorance of their students; often adoration from their students; and sometimes blatant seduction from their students.

It is said that “power” is one of the last tests faced by yogis who walk on a spiritual path. Those who fail may become spiritual predators. Ultimately, **it is always a choice** to become an abusive predator, a submissive victim, or to consciously control our power *according to our own free will*. A spiritual predator may abuse their students in a myriad of ways, such as mentally, emotionally, physically, and sexually.

In any case, **a victim can prevent and stop the abuse**. In general, it is not likely that a predator will ever stop, since there is no motivation for them to do so. Only victims have the motivation to use their free will to stop allowing the abuse. **Ideally, we can stop the possibility of abuse from ever starting by educating ourselves and our students** everywhere about how spiritual predators behave.

Within our 3HO Kundalini Yoga and Sikh Dharma community, claims of victims reporting harm by Yogi Bhajan, as well as other Kundalini Yoga Teachers have emerged. People’s experiences and beliefs about the reports of Yogi Bhajan *greatly differ*. However, **EVERYONE agrees that we cannot ever allow harm or abuse to happen now or in our future**.

We have an office of **Ethics & Professional Standards (EPS)** that responds to reports of abuse and actively works to maintain the ethics and integrity of all Kundalini Yoga Teachers, Teacher Trainers and Sikh Dharma Ministers. *If you have experience or have knowledge of abuse of any kind, we encourage you to contact the EPS Office:*

<https://epsweb.org/helpline/>

## EMPOWERING STUDENTS

I personally, fervently believe in self-help, self-correction, self-discipline, self-liberation, and self-illumination. Therefore, I have posted this page, including the following information, as an initial resource for students everywhere to beware, to be aware, to love yourself and use your own intuitive awareness and divine consciousness within you to guide you, should you encounter a spiritual predator. I love yoga and meditation and wish the tainted behaviors of those who cannot handle the power it may instill were not a reality. But the truth is, these practices of yoga and meditation also serve as a powerful shield for self-protection when we educate ourselves and apply the technology of awareness.

The following information is drawn from *Sex and the Spiritual Teacher* by Scott Edelstein.

### *A Student's Reality Check*

## SPIRITUAL TEACHERS' BOGUS REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD HAVE SEX WITH THEM

This offering is just a beginning and I encourage students of all spiritual paths to educate themselves about these behaviors and to **KNOW that you are always in charge of you**. Do not give away your power to any other human being ever.

- **“I’m filling you with deep spiritual energy” or “I’m opening you to Divine love.”** You’re already filled with deep spiritual energy and Divine love. This is why you got interested in spirituality in the first place. And—as spiritual teachers from all major traditions have pointed out for many centuries—you already have full access to these; you don’t need to get them from someone else. Either the teacher knows this and is exploiting your innocence, or he doesn’t and he’s a fraud.
- **“I’m enlightened. I’m not subject to the laws of karma like most people.”** Ask the teacher to demonstrate this by running naked across six lanes of heavy traffic. Or, if you’re in a more gracious mood, remind him or her that you are fully subject to the laws of karma—and, for the sake of your own karma, you need him or her to back off. (In any case, how does a teacher’s enlightenment—whether real or imagined—enable you to avoid cause and effect? It’s like saying, “I’m a brilliant mathematician, so you’re not subject to the laws of physics.”)
- **“I’m helping you break some of your deepest attachments.”** True. Attachments are typically broken by painful, disillusioning experiences, and the teacher is about to provide some. This teacher could also help you loosen your attachment to money by swiping your wallet, or to your health and appearance by pushing you in front of a moving car.
- **“I’m completing a big part of your karma.”** Perhaps. And adding a big new piece to the karma pile.

- **“It’s a spiritual initiation.”** Spiritual initiations are fine, but they don’t need to involve sex with the teacher. Ask for the initiation without the sex; if the teacher insists that the two are inseparable, turn down both.
- **“It’s what God wants.”** When a teacher assures the student that sex with him or her has been approved by the Absolute, it takes two common variations: (1) “It’s okay for us to have sex—we were husband and wife in a previous life.” (Does this mean that if you were my servant in a previous life, I can order you around? Or, if I was your guard dog in a former life, I can come to your home and bite strangers?); (2) “I’ve prayed to God long and hard about this, and we have God’s blessing to sleep together.” (What if the teacher prays even longer and harder, and receives God’s gives blessings to have sex with your kids, too?)
- **“It will loosen you up, help you become more open.”** So will twenty minutes of yoga or ninety minutes of massage. So will a self-induced orgasm. If all the teacher can offer is loosening and opening, he or she is not much of a spiritual teacher—and a lousy lover.
- **“I’m acting from a higher plane.”** Maybe, but you’re getting exploited and manipulated on this plane. Encourage the teacher to have sex with someone on that other plane instead.
- **“I’m testing your faith. Do you trust me or not?”** Correct answer: “Not anymore.”
- **“I need to find out if I can trust you.”** Implication 1: the best (or only) way to find out if someone is trustworthy is to ask them to have sex with you. Implication 2: if the person does have sex with you, they’re trustworthy; if they don’t, they aren’t. This would make sex workers and their customers the most trustworthy people on the planet—and celibates and whistle-blowers the least. In saying this, the teacher has actually proven that he or she is not trustworthy.
- **“If you ever expect to learn from me, you must not question me or my actions.”** Don’t be like Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, Lady Julian of Norwich, Martin Luther, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, or the Dalai Lama—all of whom questioned spiritual authority.
- **“This is how it’s been done in my family tradition for many generations.”** Possibly true. But this justification has been used for centuries to support clitorectomies, widow burning, racism, anti-Semitism, the binding and crippling of young girls’ feet, the murder of newborn girls, and mass murder.
- **“To you it looks like abuse or exploitation, but it’s not. You don’t see what’s really happening here, but I do.”** Translation: “Don’t trust your own heart, mind, or gut. Instead, trust me.
- **“I’m acting out of nonduality.”** How does acting from nonduality justify exploitation or manipulation? Would it be okay if the teacher broke into your home, trashed it, and punched out your kids, so long as he or she did it out of nonduality?
- **“I’m worshipping the One in you.”** Worshipping the One in you (or anyone) is great, but it certainly doesn’t require sex. Say yes to the worship and no to the sex.
- **“I’m beyond lust” or “I have no desires.”** (1) This is probably a lie. (2) How does being “beyond lust” or “having no desires” justify sexual exploitation? Would it be okay for your teacher to spit on you if he assured you he was beyond salivation? (3) What does being “beyond lust” even mean? (4) Especially when the speaker has an erection.
- **“It’s just energy going from one part of the universe to another.”** By this definition, so are pushing a pie into the teacher’s face, spraying him or her with seltzer, or putting a poisonous spider down his shirt. Ask him or her if it is okay for you to do these things.

- **“There’s no doer; there’s just doing. There is no ‘you’ or ‘I,’ so how can there be abuse or exploitation?”** This is the cheesiest excuse of all. True, in Absolute terms, there’s no doer or doing, no good or bad, no right or wrong, no life or death, no pain or pleasure—in fact, no specifics of any kind; everything is One. At the same time, though, we also live in the relative realm, where we need to pay our taxes and lock our doors; where people sometimes try to manipulate us; and where we need to protect and defend ourselves from such folks. This excuse is particularly transparent and truly foul—because it can be used to justify anything at all: rape, torture, genocide, even the destruction of all life on Earth.

## BEING IN THE COMMUNITY OF A SPIRITUAL PREDATOR

Living in a **spiritually aware** community or intentional community can be a wonderful and elevating experience and a powerful way to enhance serving and healing our larger, surrounding communities. Ideally, communities governed by volunteer or elected councils can provide the best protection against being controlled by a spiritual predator.

If you are aware or have become part of a community that is controlled by a spiritual predator, or associate with those who are, you may be told by them that your concerns about the spiritual leader/predator are negative thinking or simply not true. Following are a few examples of some of the comments you may hear:

- **“You have no right to judge him or her. Stop judging people. Judging isn’t spiritual. Look at yourself instead.”** In fact, we all have a right—and an obligation—to judge people’s motives and actions, and to decide how to respond to them. That’s why we give money to certain charities (and certain panhandlers) but not others; why we smile at some strangers but not at others; and why we choose our sexual partners instead of having sex with everyone who asks us to. Judging—i.e., being discerning—is not only spiritual, but necessary. As for looking at your own actions and decisions and habits of mind, that’s always a good practice for all of us.
- **“He or She is a powerful and charismatic leader. Sex is an expression of that spiritual power. You can’t have one without the other.”** The issue isn’t the teacher’s expression of sexuality, but sexual involvement with his or her own students. Unless the teacher has vowed celibacy, he or she is free—and, indeed, encouraged—to be a sexual powerhouse with a partner who is not a student. In any case, it’s nonsense to say that if you have power and charisma, you also have to have sex. Consider the great contemporary Buddhist figures who also have stayed celibate—the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, for example. Or think of the great contemporary Christian figures who have remained celibate—e.g., David Stendl-Rast, Thomas Keating, and Mother Teresa.
- **“He or she is human like the rest of us. We all make mistakes.”** True. If we’re wise, though, we publicly acknowledge them, apologize for them, learn from them, accept their consequences, and don’t repeat them.

- **“So he or she made some mistakes. You have to balance the damage done against all the good done.”** This is a legitimate way to review the life of someone who has died. But someone who is still alive has the potential to do further good—and further damage. We need to continue to hold ourselves, and each other, accountable for our present and future actions. No matter how much good someone has done, that doesn’t entitle them to exploit others, now or in the future.
- **“What’s the problem? It’s a fair trade. He or she gets sex; we get to be around him or her all the time. We love basking in his or her aura. And now the other students treat us like royalty.”** This may indeed be a fair trade. But the teacher, the students, and their spiritual community should honestly recognize the nature of this polygamous relationships.

## REPORT ABUSE

It is incumbent upon us in the yogic community to identify spiritual predators who may exist or emerge and to take action to protect our students and communities from harm.

Within our 3HO Sikh Dharma community, we ask that you contact the office of **Ethics & Professional Standards (EPS)**. *If you have experience or have knowledge of abuse of any kind, we encourage you to contact the EPS Office:*

<https://epsweb.org/helpline/>

If harm occurs, we are committed to provide protection and support and healing to those harmed and prevent spiritual predators from doing any further harm. This includes reporting them to the authorities and providing support for their own recovery and healing. I personally believe that educating and empowering our students and all of our surrounding community and friends is one of the most important steps we can take to illuminate our awareness and achieve transparency in our actions so that everyone is safe and protected. Sat Nam.