



Dear Members of the Sikh Dharma, 3HO, and KRI Communities,

Sat Nam. Early in 2020, multiple allegations concerning sexual misconduct by our founder Siri Singh Sahib Bhai Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogiji (Yogi Bhajan) came to light. As a non-profit religious organization with a commitment to high ethical standards, the Siri Singh Sahib Corporation (SSSC) took formal steps to address the allegations. We directed the formation of a Collaborative Response Team (CRT), which was tasked with responding to the allegations in a transparent and timely manner. The SSSC then commissioned an independent organization, An Olive Branch (AOB), to conduct an independent investigation into the allegations. As the allegations were made posthumously, efforts were made throughout the process to ensure that Yogi Bhajan's students and supporters had the opportunity to speak on his behalf. Neither the SSSC, the CRT, nor any of our affiliate organizations have had any influence over An Olive Branch's process or its report. The SSSC Board would like to express our deepest gratitude to An Olive Branch and to all who participated in this process.

We share the report here unedited and in its entirety. The investigation concluded that much of the alleged conduct more likely than not occurred. As described in more detail at the end of this letter, SSSC and its related organizations are taking immediate action to address the findings of the report, assist reporters of harm, and promote healing in our community.

The report is a difficult document to read. Please be aware that the report contains graphic descriptions of sexual misconduct and strong language that may trigger you as a reader. Please scroll down to read the report in its entirety.

We hope the release of the report can advance the healing of those who experienced harm. As an organization, the SSSC is presented with many challenges as a result of the findings in the report, but please know that providing support for the reporters of harm will be our highest priority. As noted below, one of the steps we are taking to provide that support is to embark on a program of compassionate reconciliation based on principles of restorative justice. We will provide further details on this program as it is designed and implemented.

We acknowledge the reporters of harm for their bravery in sharing their experiences. We also acknowledge those who suffered harm but did not come forward to report their experiences. We

extend our hearts and want to provide them a place of safety so healing can happen. The difficulty in reading the material in the report cannot compare to the experiences described by those who have reported harm. Their courage helps us all walk a path of truth, change, and reconciliation.

The SSSC has heard the voices from all segments of our community, and we thank you for your heartfelt and passionate expression. We have been present on the Khalsa Council and Listening Tour calls. We have conducted Zoom calls of our own to hear from the community. We have read and considered the emails, petitions, and text messages that we have received. We have in many instances made our best effort to respond to many of your questions and concerns through CRT communications and FAQs. However, we understand that the subject matter and gravity of this report is enormous and that strongly held viewpoints may remain and may not be amenable to rapid resolution. We accept and understand the magnitude of the task before us and, given the challenges that likely lie ahead, we accept and understand that it will take time, and all of us working together, to advance this mission.

We recognize that it will also take time for ourselves, and for the members of our organizations and community, to absorb, process and integrate the implications of the report. While the teachings of Yogi Bajan are valued and deeply appreciated around the globe, we understand that it may be difficult to reconcile the report's findings with the man who inspired thousands during his lifetime. We seek a path forward that rebuilds the faith and trust of those who look to our organizations and teachings for upliftment and inspiration.

Rebuilding faith and trust requires us to take a close look at ourselves and our organizations. The conduct described in the report does not conform with the values of our organizations. The SSSC and all of its affiliated organizations stand united against sexual abuse and abuse of any type. We are committed to creating and maintaining a safe environment for everyone who participates in any of our activities. The SSSC is committed to further strengthening the ethics, compliance, and enforcement policies and programs of our organizations and is taking steps to do so. All of our organizations take seriously our responsibilities to ensure a safe and respectful place for everyone who comes to learn about and practice the yogic and dharmic teachings that are the basis of our spirituality and the foundation of our communities.

Although the results of this investigation affect us deeply, both individually and collectively, the future of our community depends upon a clear understanding of our past. We recognize that the last few months have been very painful for members of the community and have resulted in a certain degree of polarization. Just as these allegations have created strong differences of opinion within the community, they also have created those same differences within the SSSC Board. Not every board member views An Olive Branch's process or report the same way. Likewise, each person in our community will have his or her own response to the report.

We understand that the investigative process raised issues for many in our community. Some community members have been deeply concerned with elements of the process. The SSSC will shortly publish a letter which will comprehensively address those concerns. The report is the

beginning of an effort to search for the truth about the history of our community. And there certainly will be much more work to be done in the future.

Many members of our global community have also expressed concern that these allegations happened decades ago, before their involvement in 3HO, KRI or Sikh Dharma. Many students and teachers have come into our organizations after Yogi Bajan left his physical body in 2004. They have a powerful positive experience of the spiritual practices that Yogi Bajan brought to the West and have built wonderful programs locally based on these teachings. We honor and respect that, as our community moves forward, the body of work he left behind will continue to be validated by people's experience of the practice.

We also recognize that an entire generation lived, worked and served Yogi Bajan directly. This Legacy generation built the foundation of our global community and of our organizations. The devotion and dedication of this group of people, over the decades, came from a genuine inspiration to do what they could to help make the world a healthier, happier and more elevated place. We recognize the path forward will need to honor their service while simultaneously re-examining the past and coming to a deeper understanding of it.

The SSSC is committed to creating an environment where all feel welcome to participate in the dialogue about the past and the future. By providing a safe space, we hope that community members with differing views will be able to talk and feel heard by one another. It is our prayer that our collective dialogue will illuminate the path to the future.

In beginning our healing process, we recognize that we have a lot of work to do, and we do not yet have all the answers. The steps we are taking to meet the challenge are as follows, and we invite the active participation of all community members in this process:

1. We are embarking on a program of Compassionate Reconciliation based on the proven principles of Restorative Justice. We are currently in the process of selecting a professional consultant to work with our global community, including reporters of harm, to design and implement such a program.
2. We are examining the totality of our policies and activities of all of our constituent organizations, events and teaching environments to ensure they live up to our stated values of being open, welcoming, respectful and safe for all.
3. The Office of Ethics and Professional Standards (EPS) recently engaged an external consultant to examine its policies and procedures to make sure they comply with industry best practices as EPS works to maintain the ethics and integrity of the 3HO communities, Kundalini Yoga Teachers, KRI Teacher Trainers, and Sikh Dharma International Ministers. The assessment is ongoing, and we will implement any recommended changes.
4. We acknowledge and will continue to examine our past to understand what present changes need to be made. We will continuously assess the improvements we have made and make changes if necessary. Finally, we are committed to taking the

---

necessary steps to ensure that our organizations provide safe and protective environments for all community members and respond appropriately and quickly if allegations of harm are reported.

5. We will also continue to reach out to our global community to provide spaces so that we can hear from the community, get feedback through the Listening Tour forums for discussion and healing, and create long term mechanisms to receive feedback. We are expanding our ability to hear more from the community.

The path forward for our community and organizations will take time to discover. It will require deep and authentic conversations across our global community. Please hold all those who have been harmed, the entire community and the future in your prayers. The consciousness of Guru Ram Das is within each and every one of us. We trust that Radiant Consciousness will continue to guide our collective steps forward.

Sincerely,

Siri Singh Sahib Corporation



---

**An Olive Branch**



**Report on an Investigation into Allegations of  
Sexual and Related Misconduct by Yogi Bhajan**

Prepared by An Olive Branch Associates, LLC

August 10, 2020

## Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Background	7
3. Purpose and Scope of the Investigation	8
4. Relevant Terminology and Definitions	10
5. Investigative Process	12
6. Standards for Findings	17
7. Findings	19
8. Conclusion	70

## 1. Executive Summary

### Origin and Scope of the Investigation

Allegations of sexual misconduct have surfaced periodically over the years since Yogi Bhajan's arrival in the United States. Allegations were raised again in December 2019 following the publication of *White Bird in a Golden Cage* by Pamela Saharah Dyson. In response, the Siri Singh Sahib Corporation (SSSC) Board formed the Collaborative Response Team (CRT) to look into the allegations. On March 3, 2020 the SSSC Board commissioned An Olive Branch to perform a third-party independent investigation.

The investigation commenced on March 9, 2020 and focused on "the alleged sexual misconduct by Yogi Bhajan and other related behaviors asserted to have created the circumstances that led to the alleged sexual misconduct."<sup>1</sup>

### The Investigative Process

An Olive Branch employed techniques designed to provide a secure method for reporters of harm as well as Yogi Bhajan's supporters to recount their experiences of living and working with him as their spiritual leader. More specifically, the investigation:

- Provided an opportunity for current and past members of the community who wanted to report harm at the hands of Yogi Bhajan to do so in a safe and anonymous way because the investigation would keep their identities confidential
- Offered Yogi Bhajan's Supporters the opportunity to speak about his personal character and accomplishments and to offer refutations of any allegations with which they were familiar
- Systematically collected, heard, and organized all information provided
- Evaluated all information received with respect to customary legal standards for judging credibility of the people who presented it and its alignment with other available information
- Made a determination of whether there was sufficient and reliable information to conclude that the alleged behaviors were "more likely than not" to have occurred.<sup>2</sup>

All information shared by participants in the investigation was kept confidential by An Olive Branch. Protection of participants' identities as well as the allegations made are customary for internal investigations of sexual misconduct to encourage reporters of harm to come forward and to protect them from potential re-traumatization.

---

<sup>1</sup> SSSC. (n.d.). FAQ. The Collaborative Response Team. <https://www.ssscresponseteam.org/faq>.

<sup>2</sup> This determination was made on the standard also referred to as "a preponderance of the evidence."

## Participation

Between March 9 and May 3, 2020, 299 individuals either contacted the investigation or were contacted by An Olive Branch. Ninety-six individuals were interviewed, 129 submitted statements (including statements from eight interviewees), 10 were referred to SSSC's internal review entities already responsible for handling specific types of complaints,<sup>3</sup> and the remaining 72 were either outside the scope of the investigation or were non-responsive after their first contact. Additional information was obtained from public social media sites and blogs as well as public documents and internal archival materials obtained from 3HO/Sikh Dharma.

## Analysis

An Olive Branch compiled and analyzed the input received using the steps below:

- 1) Synthesized and classified information from Yogi Bhajan's supporters about his virtues and the positive behaviors he exhibited
- 2) Compared and classified the reports of harm into three generally accepted categories: sexual battery and other sexual abuse, sexual harassment, unethical behavior, and circumstances that led to the alleged misconduct
- 3) Classified the supporters' refutations of the allegations against Yogi Bhajan
- 4) Weighed the credibility of reporters making allegations and supporters who refuted them
- 5) Assessed the strength of the information supporting vs. refuting each type of allegation
- 6) Reached a conclusion about the likelihood that each type of allegation occurred.

To reach conclusions, we used the criterion - "based on a preponderance of the evidence" - as the burden of proof. Meeting this criterion means that, based on all of the evidence, there is a greater than 50% chance that a defendant caused the harm alleged.<sup>4</sup> That is, our analysis determined whether we had sufficient evidence to conclude that it was "more likely than not" the alleged behavior occurred.

## Report Overview

Sections 2-6 of this report detail Yogi Bhajan's background, the purpose and scope of the investigation, important terminology used in the report, the steps in the investigative process, and the standards for determining findings. Section 7 presents the findings and Section 8 contains the report's conclusion.

---

<sup>3</sup> Complaints regarding ethics and professional standards, organizational misconduct, corporate or governance matters, or child abuse at any 3HO/Sikh Dharma school.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.legalmatch.com/law-library/article/the-preponderance-of-the-evidence-in-civil-law.html>.



Section 7.1 presents information culled from interviews with and statements from those who support Yogi Bhanan. This part presents several characteristics and behaviors exhibited by Yogi Bhanan that led his followers to revere him because they believed these characteristics and behaviors were pivotal to their spiritual development. This part also summarizes four types of refutations his supporters offered in response to the allegations of sexual misconduct of which they were aware.

From the supporters' interviews and statements, we identified seven positive characteristics and behaviors that endeared Yogi Bhanan to his followers. Supporters repeatedly and enthusiastically mentioned these characteristics and behaviors as evidence of Yogi Bhanan's efficacy and renown as a spiritual teacher. The characteristics and behaviors Yogi Bhanan's supporters emphasized included comments that he:

- Was a gifted, evolved human being
- Had an ability to read auras
- Tried to save everyone
- Devoted special attention to uplifting women
- Was a Saturn teacher
- Was a tireless worker
- Was revered for his teachings about Kundalini Yoga, Sikh Dharma, and service to others.

The refutations that supporters offered for reporters' claims of misconduct were classified into four categories. They included refutations based on:

- Yogi Bhanan's character and spiritual awareness
- The general character or motives of all those who alleged harm
- The fact that the supporter themselves had no knowledge of any abuse
- Explicit knowledge about the character or motives of specific reporters of harm.

Section 7.2 defines three types of allegations made by those alleging sexual and related harm. These included: sexual battery and other sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and unethical behavior. This section also includes information regarding the responsibilities of a spiritual leader in the United States.

Sections 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5 present the specific claims made by the reporters of harm that fell into each type of allegation of sexual and related misconduct. In total, 36 individuals claimed one or more incidents of sexual and ethical misconduct by Yogi Bhanan in the period spanning 1969 to 2004. The number of claims for each type of allegation was:

- Sexual battery and other sexual abuse – 25 claims
- Sexual harassment – 30 claims
- Unethical behavior – 30 claims.

These sections also include our findings on each type of allegation. Specifically, we found that it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhanan engaged in sexual battery, other sexual abuse (specifically, exposing minors to pornography, sexual harassment, and unethical behavior).

Section 7.6 identifies several factors that contributed to the initiation and perpetuation of sexual misconduct and abuse of power by Yogi Bhajan. These factors include control of information, seeing Yogi Bhajan as God, a culture that inhibited speaking out, and his direction of followers' major life decisions. Based on 75 incidents reported across the 36 reporters of harm, these factors created an environment of secrecy and dependency in which Yogi Bhajan was able to control some members' behavior to serve both his organizational objectives and his personal sexual needs.

Section 7.7 summarizes the findings. It acknowledges the different experiences of members of the community who were proximate to Yogi Bhajan and those who were not. It provides a table of the types of allegations, circumstances that led to Yogi Bhajan's misconduct, and the types of harm that resulted from it.

Section 8 contains the report's conclusion: after weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhajan engaged in several forms of sexual and/or ethical misconduct with 36 of his followers. Specifically, it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhajan engaged in sexual battery and other sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and conduct that violates Sikh vows and ethical standards. Taken together, these actions constitute abuse of power by a spiritual teacher.

In conclusion, this investigation acknowledges the virtues that Yogi Bhajan exhibited while providing spiritual guidance to many of his followers; it also acknowledges the harm that his sexual misconduct caused for some of those followers.

## 2. Background

Yogi Bhaijan came to the United States from India in 1968. He was born Harbhajan Singh Puri in 1929 in the village of Kot Harkarn, Tehsil Wazirabad, Gujranwala, which was a part of India that is now in Pakistan. After emigrating to India during the Partition in 1947, he worked as a customs inspector and continued studying yoga and practicing the Sikh religion until he emigrated to the United States by way of Canada in 1968. He was given the title "Siri Singh Sahib" by the central governing body of the Sikh religion in India. He is also credited with bringing Kundalini Yoga to the west, i.e., the United States.<sup>5</sup>

In January 1969, Yogi Bhaijan began teaching Kundalini Yoga publicly in Los Angeles, teaching his brand of Sikhism and vigorous yoga in the United States. Yogi Bhaijan established 3HO (Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization) Foundation which was incorporated as a non-profit in California in July 1969. Other non-profit organizations were created later to share different parts of his teachings about Sikhism and Kundalini Yoga. Over the years, several for-profit businesses were also established to provide products based on healthy living, employment for his followers, and general financial support for the organization. After Yogi Bhaijan's death in 2004, oversight of all the non-profits and ownership of all the businesses were consolidated under the Siri Singh Sahib Corporation (SSSC). Yogi Bhaijan taught his brand of Kundalini Yoga, namely Kundalini Yoga as Taught by Yogi Bhaijan® and White Tantric Yoga® across North America and throughout the world, attracting a large group of devoted followers.<sup>6</sup> Many followers lived in Los Angeles and, when the headquarters moved to New Mexico, many community members followed him there. Yogi Bhaijan passed away in New Mexico in 2004 after battling a series of illnesses.

Various allegations of sexual and other misconduct by Yogi Bhaijan were raised over the years, including two lawsuits in 1986 that were eventually settled out of court. The publication in December 2019 of the book, *White Bird in a Golden Cage: My Life with Yogi Bhaijan*, again raised the specter of Yogi Bhaijan's sexual misconduct. The book, by one of his prominent students, Pamela Saharah Dyson, prompted several other women to come forward with allegations in early 2020. The book, along with the public sharing of allegations on social media, prompted SSSC to take action and form the Collaborative Response Team (CRT) which then launched this investigation.

---

<sup>5</sup> 3HO Foundation. (n.d.) *Yogi Bhaijan*. <https://www.3ho.org/yogi-bhaijan>.

<sup>6</sup> "They're believed to number in the tens of thousands, scattered in some 300 communities across the United States and the world." Burnett, J. (2009, June 13). *American Sikhs Run Billion-Dollar Security Firm*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/104869550>.



### 3. Purpose and Scope of the Investigation

The CRT was formed on February 12, 2020 by the SSSC Board. According to the CRT's page for frequently asked questions [FAQs],

The CRT is a group of people representing the nonprofit and for-profit entities, empowered by the SSSC in a resolution dated February 12, 2020. The CRT has been formed by the SSSC with the duty to respond effectively and responsibly to the allegations about Yogi Bhajan's conduct. The CRT will act and communicate based on established best practices, transparency, respect and concern for all involved, and the goal of seeking the truth in all areas of this urgent situation.<sup>7</sup>

On February 18, 2020, the formation of the CRT was announced in an open letter to the community. The same letter explained that the CRT would be commissioning a third-party independent investigation "to seek the truth and the extent of the allegations so that our members can feel secure and safe."<sup>8</sup>

An Olive Branch was first approached on February 26, 2020 regarding the pending investigation. On March 3, 2020 An Olive Branch was formally appointed to provide independent investigative services to the CRT and SSSC to address allegations of misconduct by Yogi Bhajan. On March 4, 2020 the CRT posted a letter to the community announcing the selection of An Olive Branch to conduct the independent investigation into the allegations regarding Yogi Bhajan.

According to the CRT's FAQ, "The scope of the investigation is the alleged sexual misconduct by Yogi Bhajan and other related behaviors asserted to have created the circumstances that led to the alleged sexual misconduct."<sup>9</sup> The CRT and An Olive Branch agreed that other issues related to schools in India or other yoga teachers other than Yogi Bhajan would be outside the scope of work.

It was further agreed that An Olive Branch would use its own judgment and discretion as to the methods, conclusions, and other aspects of professional services that it would provide to complete an independent investigation and report. It was specifically and publicly agreed that neither the CRT nor the SSSC would direct, influence, or interfere with the investigation or An Olive Branch's conclusions;<sup>10</sup> that the investigation would be objective and impartial; and that the identity of the participants/interviewees would be confidential and not shared with the CRT or anyone else unless AOB was required by law to disclose the information.

At the conclusion of the investigative process and preparation of this report, we are satisfied that throughout the investigation, the CRT has behaved in the way that was agreed to at the outset; we have been allowed to investigate as we saw fit and have reached our own conclusions without interference, bias, or inappropriate influence by the CRT or the SSSC. We do want to note, however,

---

<sup>7</sup> SSSC. (n.d.). FAQ #2. The Collaborative Response Team. <https://www.ssscresponseteam.org/faq>.

<sup>8</sup> SSSC. (2020, February 18). *Statements from Our Response Team*. <https://www.ssscresponseteam.org>.

<sup>9</sup> SSSC. (n.d.). FAQ #7. The Collaborative Response Team. <https://www.ssscresponseteam.org/faq>.

<sup>10</sup> "The sole purpose of this investigation is to seek the truth, and the investigation will not be influenced in any way by the CRT or the SSSC." <https://www.ssscresponseteam.org/>; letter to the community, March 9, 2020.



An Investigation into Allegations of Yogi Bhanan's Sexual Misconduct

An Olive Branch Associates

August 10, 2020

that there were some attempts by community members to influence the investigation which we recognized as such and disregarded (see Section 6, Standards for Findings).

#### 4. Relevant Terminology and Definitions

In order to provide clarity throughout this report, particularly regarding how certain words are used, definitions of relevant terms are provided in this section.

##### 4.1. Definitions of SSSC Terminology

**Yogi Bhajan (Siri Singh Sahib Bhai Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogiji, 1929-2004):** also referred to as YB or Yogiji or as the Siri Singh Sahib; the founder and spiritual leader of the 3HO/Sikh Dharma community and all associated entities.

**SSSC (Siri Singh Sahib Corporation):** The Siri Singh Sahib Corporation is a nonprofit religious corporation. Its Board of Trustees provides governance to the 3HO/Sikh Dharma communities. (See [www.sssc.org](http://www.sssc.org) for more information).

**CRT (Collaborative Response Team):** a commission created by the SSSC Board of Trustees specifically to respond to allegations about Yogi Bhajan’s conduct. The CRT maintains a website where communications to the community<sup>11</sup> and FAQs<sup>12</sup> are posted.

**EPS (Office of Ethics & Professional Standards & Conscious Conflict Resolution, 2014):** an office of SSSC which receives complaints and investigates allegations of misconduct by teachers, teacher trainers, ministers and the organizations. EPS works closely with ODC on complaints.

**ODC (Office of Dharmic Counsel):** general counsel for the SSSC; handles corporate and governance matters.

**Secretaries:** a term used to refer generally to women on Yogi Bhajan’s staff. Note, there were officers in various leadership roles in the organization who had Secretary as part of their title, but were not necessarily members of Yogi Bhajan’s staff.

**Secretariat:** a term used to refer to those who worked directly for Yogi Bhajan to carry out the mission of the non-profit and for-profit entities. The term also refers to the Secretariat building in Los Angeles which was used as their physical office space for many years.

**Staff:** a term for the women who worked under the direction of Yogi Bhajan. He placed some of his staff in the for-profit and/or the non-profit entities. Other staff members managed his teaching and travel schedules, correspondence, etc. or served as his personal assistants. The terms “secretary” and “staff” were sometimes used interchangeably.

**Investigation:** The SSSC Board of Trustees contracted with An Olive Branch to perform this internal investigation into allegations of sexual and related misconduct by Yogi Bhajan. This effort, however, is not a legal investigation; it is not intended to gather facts for a case that would be tried in a court of law. Rather, the investigation is intended to report An Olive Branch’s findings as to whether it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhajan engaged in sexual and related misconduct.

---

<sup>11</sup>SSSC. (n.d.). *Statements from Our Response Team*. The Collaborative Response Team. <https://www.ssscresponseteam.org>.

<sup>12</sup>SSSC. (n.d.). *FAQ*. The Collaborative Response Team. <https://www.ssscresponseteam.org/faq>.

#### 4.2. Definitions of Terms Used in this Report

**Reporter/Reporter of harm:** an individual who participated in the investigation (via interview or written statement) by voicing an allegation of inappropriate behavior by Yogi Bhajan or witnessing him harming others. These participants provided accounts concerning sexual or related misconduct by Yogi Bhajan.

**Supporter:** an individual who participated in the investigation (via interview or written statement) by voicing support for Yogi Bhajan and/or refuting the allegations made against him.

**Use of Pronouns:** to protect the identities of Reporters of harm, we use the gender-neutral pronoun "they" rather than he, she, his, her, etc. In their quotations, however, the pronouns have not been changed.

## 5. Investigative Process

### 5.1. Intake

On March 4, 2020, the CRT posted a letter on their website announcing selection of An Olive Branch to conduct an independent investigation of sexual and related misconduct allegations regarding Yogi Bhajan. In order to have a direct, confidential method of contact for individuals wishing to participate in the investigation, we (An Olive Branch) established a dedicated email address for people to voluntarily and confidentially participate in the investigation. The email address was open to receive requests to participate from March 9, 2020 through May 3, 2020. No anonymous participation of any kind was accepted into the investigation process.

To ensure a complete, neutral investigation, we accepted emails from people who supported Yogi Bhajan or wanted to refute the allegations about which they were aware, as well as people who made allegations against him. It is the norm, when investigating alleged sexual abuse, that the identity of the those reporting harm and the nature of the abuse is not made public because of the sensitivity of the allegations and the fact that doing so might discourage Reporters of harm from coming forward. In order to preserve the confidentiality of the Reporters and enable them to feel safe participating in the investigation, we did not share any reported allegations or identifying information concerning the other interviews.

A log was kept to record the following information for each incoming email:

- Case ID # - to allow for anonymity of the sender (to further protect identities, we gave some people two case ID#s)
- Date of first incoming email
- Date the reply was emailed
- Category describing why the sender submitted the email (ex: requesting an Interview, asking questions, making suggestions/comments, narrative statement, other, etc.).

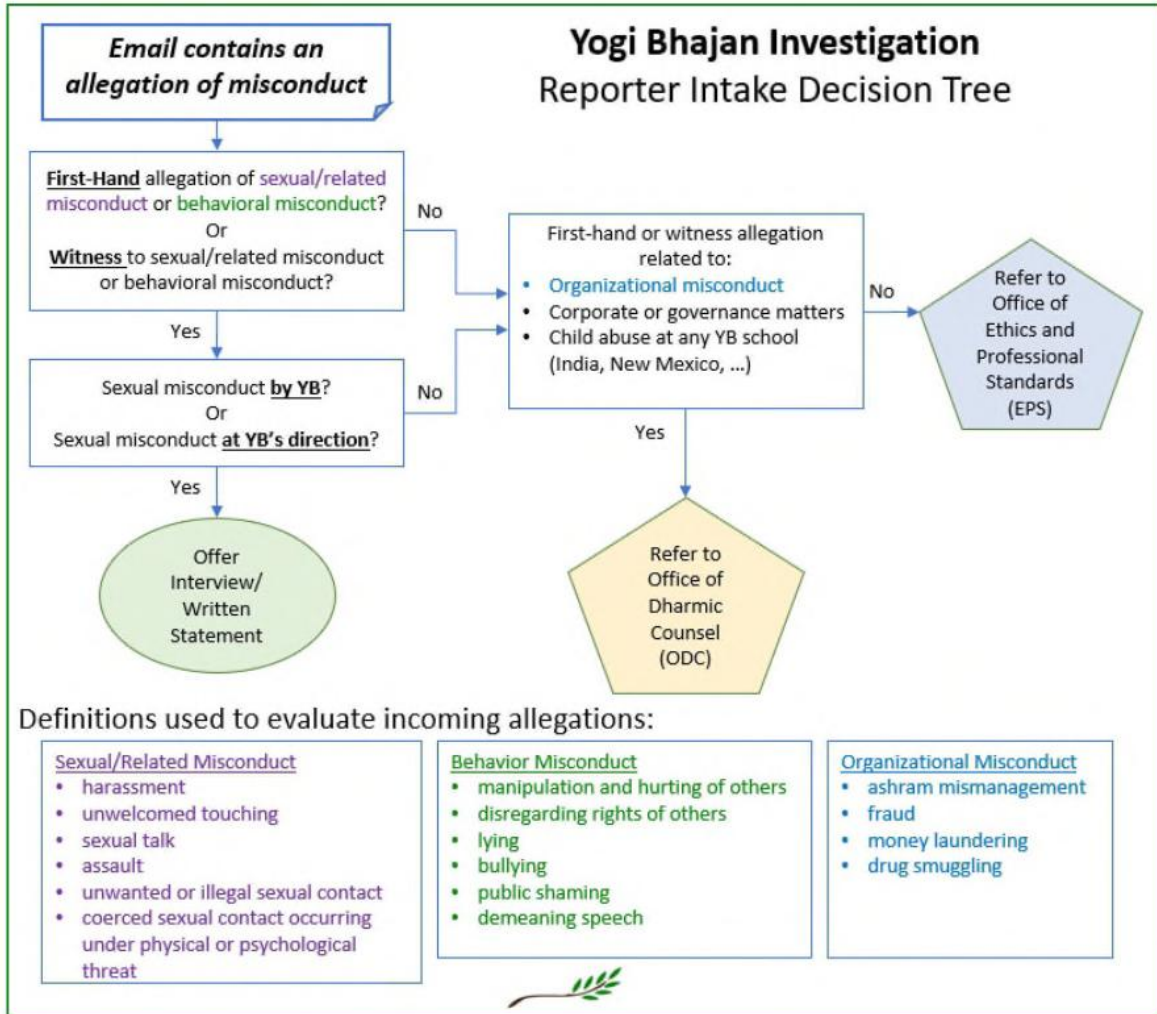
Additional entries were made as potential participants came to our attention. These individuals either made allegations on public forums, to the SSSC, or to the CRT directly. We also added to the log anyone who had held the role of Secretary within 3HO/Sikh Dharma since they could have relevant information to share. Additionally, the CRT forwarded names of key informants whom they thought might have pertinent information regarding the Reporters or who were Supporters or close confidants of Yogi Bhajan. We sent an outreach email to all those potential participants who had not already contacted us inviting them either to be interviewed or to submit a written statement.

Incoming emails from Reporters required more scrutiny than did emails from Supporters because an investigation like this one opens the door for a variety of complaints to be reported. Therefore, in order to determine if the complaints were relevant to the scope of this investigation or if they more appropriately should be referred to other entities within SSSC, we used the "Reporter Intake Decision Tree" (see Figure 1) to determine how each email containing an allegation of misconduct would be handled. Incoming emails from Supporters were clearer in



their intention and relevance to the scope of the investigation and did not need to be referred to an SSSC entity.

Figure 1



Each original incoming message required anywhere from a few to numerous exchanges between the sender and an Olive Branch to resolve questions, clarify intent and/or schedule an interview, if appropriate. When necessary, a response clarifying the investigative process was sent to the sender of the incoming email.

## **5.2. Interviews**

An Olive Branch established two teams to conduct interviews. One team interviewed Reporters of harm; another team interviewed Supporters -- those wishing to support Yogi Bhajan and/or refute the allegations or the credibility of those making the allegations. Each interview was led by a primary interviewer with an additional consultant taking notes and asking clarifying questions.

Interviews for the investigation were held using the Zoom audio/video platform except in a few cases when the interviewee requested using the telephone. Documentation of the interviews was done by An Olive Branch consultant serving as the note-taker for the interview. In some cases, follow-up interviews were conducted to check discrepancies or to seek clarification or elaboration of critical issues.

Each team followed a basic protocol for the initial interview in order to ensure comprehensiveness and uniformity in the process. However, the interviews were open-ended enough that interviewees could elaborate on information they believed was relevant. Specific follow-up questions were also asked to confirm dates, witnesses, and details of the situations described by the interviewee. When it was deemed relevant to the investigation, interviewees were requested to provide supporting documents, additional contacts, or other follow-up information.

The duration of the interviews was not limited - most took between 60 and 120 minutes. Reporter interviews required 160 hours; Supporter interviews required 188 hours.

## **5.3. Statements**

Some Reporters and Supporters felt they did not need to be interviewed and preferred to submit a written statement to the investigation. In addition, some people provided sufficient information in their email so that we could determine that an interview was not needed. The information in these emailed narratives was considered equally with the information obtained via interviews during the subsequent analysis. Statements containing Reporters' allegations against Yogi Bhajan, support for the Reporters, refutations of the allegations, and/or support for Yogi Bhajan were analyzed along with other input to the investigation.

## **5.4. Other Data Considered**

The CRT provided An Olive Branch with public postings gathered by a professional firm from Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube about and from Reporters and Supporters. These data were reviewed along with the interviews, statements, and documents we obtained. No private discussion groups were accessed.

Other documents such as articles, court records, letters, and certain archival materials provided by interviewees or the CRT were also considered as input to the investigation.

**5.5. Intake Summary Statistics**

The statistics below pertain to the overall intake volume and final actions taken. These statistics are provided to demonstrate overall participation and do not imply that the purpose of this investigation was to determine whether there were more or fewer people reporting harm versus those who were supporting Yogi Bhajan.

Based on the information we were given about the scope of this project at the outset, An Olive Branch expected to conduct approximately 20 interviews. A dedicated email address was announced by the CRT on March 9 and by the end of that week, 49 emails had been received; the number continued to climb in the weeks that followed. When the deadline for receiving emails was extended to May 3, over 275 emails had been received. Including the people to whom an outreach email was sent, the total number of individuals entered into the log was 299. The original deadline and the extension were widely circulated by the CRT during the process.

Below is a breakdown of the 299 individuals who contacted us or to whom outreach was extended:

Reporters of harm and others providing input about Reporters’ credibility:	96	32%
Supporters of Yogi Bhajan and refuters of the allegations:	140	47%
Stated a position/asked a question outside scope of investigation:	63	21%

The final disposition of each individual’s email is summarized in Table 1 below:

**Table 1**

Final Action	Count	Percent
Interviewed*	96	32%
Statement Only	121	41%
Referred to EPS or ODC	10	3%
Email was acknowledged (out of scope: no interview offered or statement saved)	35	12%
Participant did not reply to our follow up emails or to an outreach message	31	10%
Participant Withdrew	6	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Eight interviewees also submitted a statement.

On May 4, 2020 the dedicated email account began sending an automatic response which indicated that intake for the investigation was closed. The automatic response provided information for contacting the CRT with questions and a referral to the FAQs on the CRT website. After the deadline for accepting input had passed, we received emails from 15

individuals who wanted to be included in the investigation. In fairness to the process, the deadline established at the outset of the investigation, and our need to move ahead with analyzing the data and compiling the report, no further input was accepted or included in this report.

#### **5.6. Analysis of the Interview Data**

In order to reach conclusions about whether it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhajan engaged in the sexual misconduct found in the allegations, analysis continued over several weeks. This analysis included extensive cross checking of the interview notes, mapping the names of people mentioned in interviews, careful tracking of who may have witnessed reported incidents, and comparison of reports of harm with refutations of those reports. We also re-interviewed 15 individuals to follow-up on specific details, such as timing and location of events, to facilitate this comparison process, and confirm our credibility analysis.

As the analysis was underway, it became clear that the allegations and themes in the data fell into categories which are defined in Section 7.2 of this report. We used common definitions from statutes including those for New Mexico and California, as well as our past experience with classifying cases of sexual abuse.

Details of the standards we applied for evaluating the evidence collected are explained in the next Section: 6. Standards for Findings.



## 6. Standards for Findings

### 6.1. Burden of Proof

As stated earlier, the evidence available to us for a specific allegation might include statements made in an interview, written statements, written or interview observations from witnesses to the alleged behavior, social media posts, and archival documents such as legal documents and published materials. Our charge was to evaluate all the evidence for a specific complaint and to apply a specific standard of proof, not to determine that the allegations were "true" or "false." The standard requires the claim to be proven by a simple "preponderance of the evidence." A preponderance of the evidence is that amount of evidence sufficient to make a contested claim "more likely true than not." "More likely than not" means the claim is at least 50.01 percent likely to have occurred. This finding is not the same as a finding that an allegation is true or that the accuser is telling the truth.

This standard is not the same burden of proof that would be required in a criminal prosecution. In those cases, a higher burden of proof – "beyond a reasonable doubt" – is required for conviction.

It was also not the purpose of the investigation to determine that allegations were false. If there was insufficient evidence to support an allegation, the finding would be that there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that the allegation meets the burden of proof (i.e., is "more likely than not" to have occurred). However, this finding is not the same as a finding that the allegation is false or that the accuser is lying. Information about the credibility and motives of those making and refuting claims factored into our determination of whether the burden of proof was met for a given claim.

### 6.2. Assessments of Credibility

Determining the credibility of a person is an important part of rendering a finding about their claim(s). A credible person is "competent and believable."<sup>13</sup> As prescribed in various legal sources,<sup>14</sup> we weighed numerous factors in determining witness credibility:

- 1) Whether the witness is capable of knowing the thing thoroughly about which they speak
- 2) Whether they were actually present at the transaction and can narrate their recollections
- 3) Whether their perceptions of events are accurate (compared to known facts or other persons' observations)
- 4) Whether they paid sufficient attention (i.e., can remember the events that were perceived) to qualify themselves to be a reporter of a transaction

---

<sup>13</sup> *Brown v. Traylor*, 210 S.W.3d 648, 671 (Tex. Ct. App. 2006); *Halbadier v. State*, 87 Tex. Crim. 129, 220 S.W. 85, 86 (1920).

<sup>14</sup> Bouvier Law Dictionary, 205. [http://www.constitution.org/bouv/bouvier\\_c.htm](http://www.constitution.org/bouv/bouvier_c.htm); Fed. R. Civ. P. 608; *Hillen v. Department of the Army*, 35 M.S.P.B. 453, 458 (1987); Hallahan, T. (1996). An Overview of Trial Evidence Techniques, *Pract. Litigator*, 5 (21), 25-26.

- 5) Whether they are sincere, i.e. whether they honestly relate the affair fully as they know it, without any purpose or desire to deceive, or suppress or add to the truth
- 6) Whether or not they have a reputation for having a character for truthfulness
- 7) How they present themselves (i.e., their demeanor such as facial expressions, body language, reactivity, emotional expression, etc.)
- 8) Whether they have made prior inconsistent statements
- 9) Whether their evidence is supported by other evidence
- 10) Whether they have other motives.

We used all these criteria in assessing the credibility of both those offering evidence in support of Yogi Bhanan and those reporting claims of misconduct by him. Whenever possible, we sought corroborative evidence from other sources, not in the form of similar opinions, but substantive information about whether specific time frames, locations, and events offered by one person aligned with the information provided by others. Because the alleged behavior typically occurred in private, however, we often had to rely on the statement of a single individual. In these cases, however, credibility was enhanced if a pattern of similar behavior was reported by multiple people.

### **6.3. Attempts to Steer the Investigation**

We are very aware that, for the SSSC and the 3HO/Sikh Dharma community, much rests on the findings of this investigation. Consequently, we have taken appropriate precautions to ensure that the processes we relied on to collect and analyze data and reach decisions about the individual claims presented to us were unbiased and not subject to external influence by the various groups within the community that had a specific stake in the outcome of the investigation.

This is not to suggest that those who wanted to shut down or sway the investigation one way or another did not attempt to do so. We resisted pressure from any groups within or outside the SSSC organization or 3HO/Sikh Dharma community to influence the investigation in one direction or another. Nor were we influenced by the relative number of Reporters versus Supporters who participated overall. Instead, we evaluated the consistency and substance of the information available to the investigation. Our findings for each claim were based solely on the credibility and sufficiency of the evidence presented to us and whether it met the burden of proof described above.

## 7. Findings

### 7.1. Supporters' Accounts of Yogi Bhanjan's Characteristics and Behaviors

#### 7.1.1. Reports about Yogi Bhanjan's Characteristics and Behaviors

The Supporters of Yogi Bhanjan whom we interviewed or who submitted written statements [hereafter, "Supporters"] provided considerable insight into the characteristics he exhibited and behaviors he engaged in that endeared him to his followers. In this section of the report we summarize these characteristics and behaviors, frequently in the spoken or written words of the Supporters themselves. Since many of them pointed to similar characteristics and behaviors that they admired, we have grouped the information into categories that each capture the sentiments of several of his Supporters. For each category, we provide illustrative quotes in the words of those who participated in the investigation.

#### **He Was a Gifted, Evolved Human Being**

Yogi Bhanjan's Supporters viewed him as an evolved human being. Some even viewed him as endowed with divine attributes that placed him on a higher plane or level of consciousness than his followers. Some even likened him to Christ or Buddha. Others extolled his wisdom. These attributes inspired awe, reverence, obedience, and loyalty from his followers.

71: He was in the fourth state. He had a lot of control on that stuff because he was a mahan tantric. If he blew up, it was on purpose to make a point.

90: Most of us believed that he is a divine master. We have experienced that. It is not the same thing as what is happening in other religions. It is inconsistent. Yogi Bhanjan is not a random priest. He is like Christ or the Buddha.

92: He was operating on levels beyond what you would call a wise man. He could tap into other lifetimes, to relationship from past lives . . . . He was a bolt of lightning into your psyche. He was operating from a different level of consciousness. He could tap into the akashic records, which hold cosmic knowledge.

138: He was a lit up, inspired person. The way he was, he was a wake-up call to western people . . . . He was radiant and full of high energy. He was powerful and pure as a teacher. I think it is kind of a cliché now. A pickpocket who looks at a saint will just see his pockets. People can look at SSS and read things into it.

183: He had saintly humility, respect, powerful care, and genuine wisdom.

211: He was saint-like.

308: I think of him as a gifted, extremely intuitive man who happened to be born into a religion that is kind of exciting and stimulating, and he was intelligent enough to see how some of the teachings of this religion could really help a whole other group of people in another country at a certain time.

### **He Had an Ability to Read Auras**

Among the many attributes that made Yogi Bhanan unique in his Supporters' eyes was his ability to read auras or psychic energy fields that are believed to reveal one's mood or state of mind. While many people reported that Yogi Bhanan was able to read and manipulate their auras, others described it as reading their mind or knowing and revealing their inner thoughts which he did both privately and publicly to his Supporters.

37: He looked at individuals from reading chakras; He exposes what you keep hidden; makes you uncomfortable. He controlled energy.

69: He could play with your aura and see what was funkng it up.

148: You can't lie to him because he can read you that way.

242: There was a group of students from [name of city] who came over about the same time I did. One of the leaders of the group said, 'Can you read my aura?' He paused and then said, 'When do you want me to read it?' It is a changing energy. He could read auras which he described as a burden. Most are gray and depressing. He could interact with that energy field and affect it.

290: He could read minds because he read mine word for word many times.

305: He could so keenly see into people's psyches.

### **He Tried to Save Everyone**

Yogi Bhanan was described as compassionate and generous toward his many followers. Most Supporters shared stories about how Yogi Bhanan positively intervened in their lives to provide spiritual counseling, assist with difficulties in their marriages, or offer career advice. Reportedly, he welcomed even the most recalcitrant students. Many individuals and couples turned to him for marriage counseling and even advice about their own health problems. Some Supporters described him as bending over backwards to save people even if it was at his own expense [with respect to time and energy], so much so, that it may have adversely affected his health in his later years. Even when he confronted people about their failings, he offered them a chance to redeem themselves and did not give up on them. In the language of 3HO/Sikh Dharma members, Yogi Bhanan uplifted and elevated his students. He was described as both comforting and challenging, which we address further below where we present his role as a Saturn teacher.

37: He did not reject any student. He allowed them to reject themselves. I abused them all (core values) and he still allowed me to live there. That is the kind of compassion he had. To be able to teach me, he had to tolerate a lot.

69: So many times, he pushed us beyond our own comfort zone of what we could do for ourselves. That was who he was for me -- always looking for that place where I could go beyond my own ego, neurosis trauma. He saw destiny in people.

90: One man was suicidal and Yogi Bhanan saved his life.

92: Look at the compassion he had to bring back Premka. He could have just said 'leave.'



123: Yogi Bhanan was caring and loving for the people he worked with, and he desired to uplift them. He did this at detriment to his own health . . . . He was generous with his time in the early 1980's. I was extraordinarily inspired by Yogi Bhanan. I had a lot of personal experiences in him giving me guidance in my life, direction and support. Early on it was often asked for.

182: His one fault, that I have heard, is that he would never let anyone down. He just did his best to forgive everyone, even if they slandered him.

219: Yogi Bhanan was like a father to me and I believe to many others. I could almost always ask him something very personal when we happened to be in the same location. He wrote inspiring letters to me and hundreds, if not thousands of us, looking after our growth and helping us through our personal life challenges.

220: He was of the utmost integrity and grace. He loved people's souls and wanted to help them get through.

227: Since the very first moment that I met Yogi Bhanan and until his death on October 6, 2004, Yogi Bhanan was always a masterful spiritual teacher with me, and, in my opinion, with every student in every situation I ever saw him in. At times, he seemed like a kind father, though also very often he would correct some of my thinking or actions so I could go past my own limitations or negative way of thinking. I was always very dedicated, and always wanted to be a perfect student, so these corrections were very hard on the ego. But I was always determined to listen to him and make the changes he told me to make, which always worked out very well for me and helped me avoid big pitfalls in life.

290: He said that out of karma he had to come back here because he had refused to teach one person. As long as people were coming to him, he agreed to help them. In a class one time he said, 'Do you see these people around me; they are all neurotic' [referring to some in his inner circle]. If you unwind that formula, they could be healed. He gathered people who were not well. Many women who came to see him described how he uplifted them and taught them to be gracious; others commented about what he taught about how to treat women with honor and respect.

### **He Devoted Special Attention to Uplifting Women**

Several people also spoke about how Yogi Bhanan focused on uplifting women, in particular. One manifestation of this focus was his offering a women's camp for several weeks each summer where he taught women his views about the importance of their role in society. Several people commented on the value that women derived from these encampments while others referenced the "Grace of God Movement" that he began in 1970 to "organize marches and demonstrations against exploitation of women and in support of the dignity and grace of women" (#305, below).

70: He helped me to work through issues in my marriage and helped me to grow professionally. It helped me through a lot of fears, and it was valuable for me. He teased me a lot, like a second father, but nothing inappropriate ever happened.

84: He talked about women only to say things such as, 'They should come into their own grace, etc. They shouldn't be treated like chicks.'



145: He said to me, 'I want you to train to be an executive and a strong woman.' He wanted to train women about themselves and their strengths. Women are more nurturing and look at the whole picture. In Indian culture, women are the caretakers for the home.

249: I heard and saw with my own eyes how the lives of many people, including my own, have changed for the better, a great positive transformation, thanks to the teachings of Yogi Bhajan, but also thanks to his own person, which I consider all in one with the teachings.

267: My experiences over the years with Yogi Bhajan were too many to recount here. I always felt he held me, other women, and everyone, in the highest regard. He had a saying 'If you can't see God in All, you can't see God at all.'

291: My observations of his caring and selfless actions toward hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals always inspired me and convinced me that I could trust his guidance. Though our community is now being cast as a 'brainwashed cult,' my experience was that the more I learned from the SSS, the more self-empowered and free I became. Yogiji taught women and men alike, 'What you do should not only be good, but it should look good - 500 years from now.' I found it liberating to apply his 'balancing' and motivating principles to all relationships, words, and actions.

305: Yogi Bhajan early and repeatedly taught that women were the Grace of God. He taught that through a woman all mankind was born, so it was essential to respect women, and that until women were respected and treated appropriately there would be no peace on earth . . . He repeatedly taught and fostered the empowerment and independence of women.

### **He Was a Saturn Teacher**

Coupled with his compassion, Yogi Bhajan engaged in a style of teaching that he labelled a "Saturn teacher." According to 3HO/Sikh Dharma, a Saturn teacher tries to instill discipline. He specializes in always doing the unexpected and he "carries a stick" so he can suddenly "whack" any student who gets out of line.<sup>15</sup> Two of his devotees (#69 and #181) believed his intention was to confront aspects of their egos that he said were impeding their growth and preventing them from realizing their full potential. His students' words are illustrative:

18: He said he was a Saturn teacher; Saturn is the planet of discipline and heavy energy; Saturn teachers clear blocks.

56: He was a tough teacher. Yogi Bhajan was a very powerful and spiritual man. I was a little afraid of him . . . [but] in all my interactions with him I only felt love for him.

89: I think of Yogi Bhajan as a spiritual drill instructor. Their role is to make you strong enough for the adversity of life. What he taught was to build yourself up so that you could deal with the adversity of life.

117: He was a strong teacher – don't get me wrong. He would use his voice to penetrate. He tolerated no bullshit/nonsense.

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.3ho.org/kundalini-yoga/teaching/spiritual-teacher>.

163: He did challenge people as a spiritual teacher and that was incredibly powerful. Yogi Bhanan had the challenge and the neutrality to keep doing this even though people would hate him for the rest of his life.

181: Yogi Bhanan was a Piscean teacher who spoke the Truth directly and clearly. That style was refreshing to me, as I appreciate the Truth without sugar-coating . . . He poked, prodded, confronted, and elevated all the time and that process helped us to confront our egos.

191: He would rattle people's cage he said because it would open up their aura so that he could work on their issues. That is the only reason he would sometimes be harsh with his students.

266: He would talk to us very straight. In those straight talks and one on one he would provoke and scold, praise and share in equal measures. He was direct with us to try to guide us to a place of awareness of ourselves or actions. . . . His usual manners were not always popular and could be downright verbally inappropriate. There are instances where in conversations with me he was direct and yelled at me, and he provoked me. He was definitely a product of his Indian Punjabi culture . . . [but] even when he was angry or cursing or being inappropriate, he could also be soft, kind, and deeply compassionate.

270: I saw him screaming, I saw him doing things that could be considered harsh to some people, but I was conscious that he was behaving like this not for his own purpose, but always to heal. I also saw the compassion that he had in putting again together a person after he was breaking his/her arc line with a big shout. He was not an easy Master, but our karma is our karma, it doesn't belong to him.

### **He Was a Tireless Worker**

Several of Yogi Bhanan's Supporters praised his unflagging energy, dedicated to managing the businesses, and to providing spiritual guidance to his followers. They reported that he worked fifteen hours a day and slept only a couple of hours in the early morning. He spent his time telephoning India, often before sunrise, providing long-distance counseling to his students, and offering guidance to politicians, entertainers, and dignitaries throughout the United States and globally, often about far-eastern political matters.

52: Even when he was sick and dying and in pain, he would still counsel people. We couldn't keep up with him. He was always serving.

90: He was a tireless worker, on the phone all day to people in India.

92: He was worldly in the sense that he met many politicians. He had the Governor of New Mexico coming over for counsel. Larry King was before him. He met the Pope, the Dalai Lama.

190: He talked about why he had to come back to this life – [it was] because he turned down one student when he was tired in a past life. He worked tirelessly here. He was on an airplane every day and he barely slept.

211: He was a man who tirelessly was at the service of others with an immense compassion.

228: He was very involved in the greater global community, with politicians and religious leaders. He met with top level people who had to vet him before he would have had a sitting with them. He consulted often with his close friend, the Head of the CIA. He handled Russia and the US relationship with India. Because of these contacts, he was an important person.

### **He Was Revered for His Teachings about Kundalini Yoga, Sikh Dharma, and Service to Others**

According to a Supporter, Yogi Bhajan left 12,000 lectures as part of his teaching archive. Many of his followers first came to him through the practice of Kundalini Yoga or White Tantric Yoga® and extolled the benefits of these practices. Despite criticisms over the years that Yogi Bhajan made up the yoga he taught as he went,<sup>16,17</sup> many of Yogi Bhajan's disciples insisted that it was effective for them and for others whom they taught. Additionally, although his teaching legacy is immense, he impressed upon his followers that he was not the center of his teachings. He simply served as a conduit to deliver the teachings for the benefit of his students. He tried to imprint this idea on his students through phrases such as, "Follow the teachings not the teacher" (#89 below) and "I am just the postman" (#301). Finally, he constantly tried to instill a sense of service (seva) among his followers.

37: This yoga he taught gives you the confidence to extend yourself beyond your comfort patterns.

66: Kundalini Yoga brought me clarity and purpose. I followed the technology. We [also] engaged in Seva – selfless service to others; in return is your own happiness [sic].

89: We were somewhat of a lost generation. I had left school and was a drop out. I had a friend that moved into an ashram. I was out of school with no direction. I went to one yoga class and was hooked. I experienced, 'Aha, this is what I'm looking for' . . . . Yogi Bhajan would come to town for the White Tantric meditations. I would always have deep experiences afterward. Painful things would release and move me toward equilibrium. I think I owe my experience today of equilibrium to this practice.

112: At a certain point, in the teaching – as he said, 'Love the teaching, don't love me.' It was more about the teachings than about a certain personality.

146: [After weeks of intense practice] That is when my spiritual awaking came forth. It threw me into realms I had never experienced before. Beyond the body. It had to do with the soul. I got a feeling of absolute ecstasy in every limb of my body.

176: He always said, 'I am here to teach teachers to teach more teachers to teach more teachers...not be 'idolized.'

242: Yogi Bhajan is a master of Kundalini Yoga and he uplifted people every day. In order to do that you need a certain purity of consciousness.

---

<sup>16</sup> <https://kellybroganmd.com/yogi-bhajan-kundalini-community/>.

<sup>17</sup> Scofield, B. March 5, 2020. <https://gurumag.com/master-of-deceit-how-yogi-bhajan-used-kundalini-yoga-for-money-sex-and-power/>.



### **Conclusion Regarding Yogi Bhajan's Characteristics and Behavior**

In summary, Yogi Bhajan's many Supporters who contacted the investigation painted the picture of a teacher who was wise, perceptive, compassionate, and otherworldly and who worked tirelessly for the well-being of his students. At the same time, many acknowledged that he used a "tough love" approach to teaching that was intense and challenging, even affrontive at times. However, his Supporters believed that, at least for those students who remained with Yogi Bhajan, his Saturn style of teaching enabled them to grow personally and spiritually.

#### **7.1.2. Supporters' Generalized Refutations of the Allegations of Misconduct**

In the interviews and statements submitted to the investigation, Supporters were invited to provide specific, first-hand evidence that could refute the allegations of misconduct being levied against Yogi Bhajan. These refutations took several forms: 1) refutations based on Yogi Bhajan's character and spiritual awareness; 2) refutations made in general about the character or motives of all Reporters who alleged harm; 3) refutations based on the fact that the Supporter themselves had no knowledge of any abuse; and 4) refutations based on knowledge about the character or motives of specific Reporters. In this section we report on refutations that fall into the above categories 1, 2, and 3. Our commitment to preserve confidentiality of individual Reporters prevents us from reporting publicly about refutations in category 4. However, these Reporter-specific refutations were factored into our credibility assessment of each individual claim of misconduct.

#### **Refutations Grounded in Yogi Bhajan's Character and Behavior**

Based on the positive, often glowing, testimonials to Yogi Bhajan's character and behavior quoted previously in this section, several Supporters expressed incredulity about the allegations levelled at him. These Supporters cannot reconcile how such a holy and esteemed person could even consider engaging in the misconduct that has been alleged. Not only did they believe such behavior would violate who he was, it was inconsistent with what he taught and the ethical mores he upheld as appropriate for the 3HO/Sikh Dharma community. Some Supporters also offered reasons why operating from his second chakra made no sense for someone who could control energy as Yogi Bhajan reportedly could. The following statements are illustrative of refutations grounded in Yogi Bhajan's character and behavior.

191: His whole mission was to elevate his students, to elevate women, elevate our future generations, to make us invincible by accessing the Source energy that is within all and building a conscious and graceful life in the Sikh tradition. There is no way that he would ever do something with the intention to harm another. He loved us so much that he was willing to be misunderstood in order to help us.

42: His teachings impacted me a lot. Those of us who became his students started practicing a 3HO way of life (3 a.m. yoga and chanting) and worked in businesses to support him. I spent full days with him and know the people who did night duty with him. I know most of the people making allegations, and I do not believe them.

67: There is nothing anyone could say that would change what I know from my hours and hours of teaching with this person. I can never imagine him doing anything to risk having to come back in another lifetime. I can't believe the allegations. It's a character judgment.

70: I personally would be shocked if that was the case. I think that someone who has gone through what he went through to get there . . . . The energy doesn't stay in those chakras. If someone was that perverted, how could you cover it up so well for all of those years? I find it hard to believe that anyone could balance both of those. I cannot conceive of Yogi Bhanan doing anything to harm anyone. Everything I saw him say and do was for the benefit of others.

71: The allegations are not believable. It is not possible. I don't believe that could happen. His intention with his students was stellar. We only had positive interactions.

84: I cannot see these allegations in my wildest dreams. . . . Yogi Bhanan always said, 'If you have a pint of milk, one drop of lemon ruins it.' I don't know how someone who lived and modeled that to me could have engaged in these allegations. How could someone have a secret life? It sounds like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

91: There was so much wisdom in his interactions it is incompatible that he would be pulled down to his base urges.

138: I just can't see him getting excited about a screen with body parts [e.g., watching pornography on TV] because he had a higher consciousness.

144: In my experience, he was a spiritual teacher and guide who I dearly miss. He was caring, understanding, always serving the sangat. His character was of a very high standard and his values, morals, and ethics stood out to be excellent.

146: Yogi Bhanan's Kundalini was constantly raised. He does go out the top when he meditates but he can also channel it through his chakras as he chooses. Having experienced this, it makes no sense why anyone would want to experience this energy in any other way. The sexual energy is a way lower vibration than what Yogi Bhanan was capable of channeling. There are no urges. The energy is too low.

### **Generalized Refutations Based on the Motives of the Reporters**

In addition to extolling Yogi Bhanan's virtues, many Supporters offered generalized explanations for why Reporters, as a whole, are making allegations at this point in time. These explanations often took the form of speculations suggesting that Reporters had experienced trauma in relationships with family members or others and, in turn, they were mistakenly projecting those past traumas onto Yogi Bhanan. While, in a few cases, such explanations were targeted to a specific Reporter, more frequently they were levied at the Reporters as a group. However, when questioned, Supporters were unable to provide specific credible evidence to substantiate their general speculations. The following quotes are examples of such blanket generalizations.

69: Of all the people I know who made allegations, there is not one that I find credible.

71: He didn't have excess energy [for sex]. These people are losers.

191: [Interviewer: What is the basis for the allegations?] Past trauma that they haven't dealt with.



227: Some of the women coming forward now seem triggered and perhaps experienced abuse somewhere else but now feel that it was from Yogi Bhanjan. In my opinion, this could even be part of a bigger plan by some to remove Yogi Bhanjan's name from the teachings so that they could redesign the teachings in some other ways.

242: When your second chakra is off you can walk into a room and pick out others in this state energetically. I never sensed it from him (Yogi Bhanjan). . . . If you knew him, you would see how incongruous this is. When people have sex, they are imprinted in each other's auras. . . . Why he would soil his mastery this way by sleeping with people? It is not within the realm of possible. It is filthy. To do this [the things he is alleged to have done] would bring a lack of purity that would be unthinkable. It's so dirty to be with some low level gunda [a 'low-life' -- referring to those making allegations]. I can't imagine it.

These kinds of generalized refutations are based on stereotyping—treating all Reporters as a group. When asked for specifics on which they based such conclusions, no concrete evidence was provided. Consequently, these specific refutations carried no weight in our credibility assessments of individual Reporters while evidence-based refutations regarding individual Reporters did factor into our conclusions about their claims.

In a few cases, Supporters dismissed Reporters' claims of misconduct because of their characterization of the Reporters' motivations and/or attribution of the allegations to the Reporters' accumulated resentments toward Yogi Bhanjan.

157: I fear many people are motivated by old resentment, anger at not getting what they felt they deserved, resentment against their own parents which then got channeled towards their parents' teacher, etc. For example, my friend's Jewish grandparents were killed in the holocaust and she suffers from genetic trauma. It's real and devastating. Have we looked at what kind of genetic trauma the claimants in this case may be experiencing? Is it possible that they may interpret certain situations according to their old trauma?

165: It seemed to me that most of the allegations were from people who had a brief encounter with him and really did not know him well, thus the misunderstandings. Other comments seemed to be from unhappy students or staff members who did not prefer to live a lifestyle of peace, prayer and discipline. Some of whom I witnessed wanted to place blame or anger about their lives in general directly onto him or onto the 3HO organization, which is common with a spiritual teacher.

227: In my view, the biggest factor seems that these people want to gain some kind of money, power, or even revenge. It was not easy to have someone chiseling your ego and pointing out weaknesses you didn't even know you had. Also, there were many enemies of Yogi Bhanjan who literally wanted to kill him because he wouldn't 'give' our Dharmic organizations to become part of their organizations from India, etc.

267: I do believe they are blaming Yogi Bhanjan for all of their unhappiness, lack of fulfillment and the current direction of their life. Their bitterness about their past cannot be reconciled through money, attention, drama, or the destruction of Yogi Bhanjan's legacy and our community.

281: Some of those who wish to destroy his reputation and everything he left behind are making allegations now and/or supporting and encouraging those who are making allegations.

**Supporters' Refutations Based on Lack of Knowledge of Any Misconduct by Yogi Bhanan**

Not all Supporters subscribed to generalized and/or stereotypical refutations of the Reporters or their stories; some asserted that they had no knowledge about the Reporters, the allegations, or any abuse. Neither had they themselves witnessed any untoward behavior by Yogi Bhanan, nor had they heard about any misconduct by Yogi Bhanan from others. Comments of this type were offered by Supporters who claimed to be in close proximity to their teacher on an almost daily basis, others who lived either in the Los Angeles or Espaola communities but were not in the "inner circle," and those who lived in ashrams in other locations. Most of those with no knowledge of misconduct also held that, because they had not heard of anything untoward, they did not believe any misconduct had occurred. Illustrative comments expressing this perspective appear below.

112: Absolutely not. No rumors. Nothing. There was no overt indication of anything of that nature. My whole experience of Yogi Bhanan was completely alien of that.

117: I neither saw, heard, or felt any impropriety in twenty-one years. Had we seen it, we would not have tolerated it.

249: In my experience of about 30 years with Kundalini Yoga, I have met many teachers, students, pupils, and their loved ones and never, and I repeat NEVER have got wind, reports of abuse, harassment or other [behaviors] that at this time I feel Yogi Bhanan committed towards his students.

261: Yogi Bhanan's conduct was always above reproach, gracious, and impeccable. I never witnessed any inappropriate behavior nor did I hear any rumors or sense anything improper or indecent.

293: My understanding and what we were told by him and others in the community was that the male/female relationship was very confined and only between a husband and wife. Whenever I was with the men, they were like brothers, very protective of me.

However, a small subset of those who claimed no knowledge were also open to honoring the experience of Reporters even if it was at variance with their own experience. While struggling to accept the possibility of misconduct by Yogi Bhanan, this group of Supporters gave Reporters the benefit of the doubt; they entertained the possibility that the Reporters' experiences were different from their own and deserved to be heard in their own right. This stance is reflected in the following quotes.

87: I can't say what happened. I know nothing of the things alleged. If I may jump to another philosophy – as a community we need to hear people's pain which is being manifested in the #MeToo movement. Moving with our community in order to hear people.

110: Regarding the second generation's abuses: I'm not saying it's not possible. To me, it comes down to – either it happened and they are expressing that or there is some other motive. I can't qualify that one way or another. I do not want to make light of anyone else's pain. I want to respect others. I'm saying I never saw it. I got very close with some of his staff, and it never came out.

129: I believe at least some of the allegations. I am managing to reconcile my consistent experiences of his unfailing wisdom and integrity, on the one hand, and the undeniable charges against him on the other.

Finally, some Supporters alluded to how times have changed with regard to sexual mores between the 1970's and today. These remarks centered on the fact that many of Bhanjan's early Supporters were from the hippie generation in which sexual mores differed substantially from those advocated now by the #MeToo movement, suggesting that there was more tolerance then, compared to now, for casual sexual relations between a spiritual teacher and his students. These explanations, however, are contrary to the expectations about celibacy of spiritual teachers and abstention from sexual relations outside of marriage that Yogi Bhanjan taught and the Sikh religion upholds.

67: If they are judging what was acceptable 50 years ago by the '#MeToo' standard, it is different by which we measure things now.

165: I would just like to state that I have never witnessed misconduct by Yogi Bhanjan in all the many years I was with him from the early 70s up to his death nearly 16 years ago. Of course, times have changed, and we all have grown with the times. Things were different in the sixties and seventies even eighties. Even Yogi Bhanjan grew and changed along with us. We have deepened our understanding and commitments to our religion and our way of life.

### 7.1.3. Findings About Supporters' Input to the Investigation

Our analysis of Yogi Bhanjan's Supporters' input to the investigation reveals broad agreement about Yogi Bhanjan's character and awareness as a spiritual teacher. His followers expressed unanimously positive admiration for him as a spiritual leader and a deep appreciation for the teachings and guidance he offered to them. They revered him because of his simultaneous compassion toward them and his skill at intensively provoking them to become their more noble selves.

At the same time, across all the interviews with both Supporters and Reporters, highly divergent experiences of reality were revealed. The majority of Supporters who provided input to the investigation claim they saw no evidence of impropriety during their long tenures with the 3HO/Sikh Dharma community despite evidence from other sources that allegations periodically surfaced within the community over the forty five years Yogi Bhanjan led the organization.<sup>18,19,20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> We note that this is not the first time allegations of sexual misconduct by Yogi Bhanjan have been raised. In fact, they seem to have resided in the background since soon after he came to the United States. See Scofield, B. (2020). Master of Deceit. *Guru Magazine*, March 5. <https://gurumag.com/master-of-deceit-how-yogi-bhajan-used-kundalini-yoga-for-money-sex-and-power/#:~:text=Sexual%20Abuse%20%26%20Rape&text=A%20long%2Dtime%20student%20and,Guru%20Amrit%20Kaur%20Khalsa%2C%20helped.&text=Felt%20alleges%20in%20her%20lawsuit,in%20an%20interview%20years%20later.>

<sup>19</sup> Stukin, S. (2020). Yogi Bhanjan turned an LA Yoga Studio into a juggernaut, and left two generations of followers reeling from alleged abuse. <https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/yogi-bhajan/>.

<sup>20</sup> Time Magazine. (September 5, 1977). Religion: Yogi Bhanjan's Synthetic Sikhism. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,915413,00.html>.

Others described an entirely different reality within the community. Their experiences are reported in the sections on the allegations which follow (Sections 7.3 through 7.6 of this report).



## 7.2. Categories of Sexual Harm Allegations Used in the Report

Before presenting the allegations and our findings, it is necessary to define the term sexual harm as well as the types of sexual harm used in this report.

To analyze the results of the interviews, we grouped the reports of harm into categories that reflect similar types of behavior in which Yogi Bhajan allegedly engaged. Generating clear and widely applicable distinctions among what is broadly considered sexual abuse is difficult, if not impossible, since national, state, and provincial governmental jurisdictions each codify their own terms and definitions. For example, what is commonly called “rape” is labelled “criminal sexual penetration” in New Mexico and “sexual battery” in California.<sup>21</sup> Other states use other words to classify criminal sexual behavior and delineate different subcategories within the broader terms. Similarly, for sexual harassment, in some provinces in Canada, sexual harassment falls under the broader statutory category of “sexual violence” whereas in the United States sexual harassment is defined under Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964<sup>22</sup> and is the responsibility of individual employers to monitor and enforce. Some kinds of sexual harassment, however, may also constitute criminal sexual assault in state-level jurisdictions.

To generate the categories of sexual harm used in this report, we consulted several sources.<sup>24,25,23,24,25,26,27</sup> For the purposes of this report, sexual harm refers broadly to sexual acts and sexual contact as characterized in Title 18, Chapter 109A, of the U.S. Code.<sup>28</sup> In this report, we grouped Reporters’ allegations against Yogi Bhajan into three general categories of misconduct:

- Sexual Battery and Other Sexual Abuse
- Sexual Harassment
- Unethical behavior.

These categories are explained below.

---

<sup>21</sup> RAINN (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network); [https://apps.rainn.org/policy/policy-crime-definitions.cfm?state=California&group=3&\\_ga=2.2601648.1890062979.1595425993-906135526.1595425993](https://apps.rainn.org/policy/policy-crime-definitions.cfm?state=California&group=3&_ga=2.2601648.1890062979.1595425993-906135526.1595425993); [https://apps.rainn.org/policy/policy-crime-definitions.cfm?state=New%20Mexico&group=3&\\_ga=2.35633953.1890062979.1595425993-906135526.1595425993](https://apps.rainn.org/policy/policy-crime-definitions.cfm?state=New%20Mexico&group=3&_ga=2.35633953.1890062979.1595425993-906135526.1595425993).

<sup>22</sup> Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964; <https://www.eeoc.gov/publications/facts-about-sexual-harassment#:~:text=Sexual%20harassment%20is%20a%20form%20of%20sex%20discrimination,organizations%2C%20as%20well%20as%20to%20the%20federal%20government>; The U.S. Code published by the U.S. House of Representatives

<sup>23</sup> The criminal codes of California and New Mexico since these states were the primary, although not necessarily exclusive, locations in which the alleged intimate contact between Yogi Bhajan and Reporters of harm occurred; [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=243.4.&lawCode=PEN#:~:text=\(a\)%20Any%20person%20who%20touches,is%20guilty%20of%20sexual%20battery](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=243.4.&lawCode=PEN#:~:text=(a)%20Any%20person%20who%20touches,is%20guilty%20of%20sexual%20battery).

<sup>24</sup> Dept. of Justice: Office on Violence Against Women (OVW); <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/sexual-assault>.

<sup>25</sup> <https://uscode.house.gov/browse/prelim@title18/part1/chapter109A&edition=prelim>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/sexual-abuse>.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/assault-battery-aggravated-assault-33775.html>.

<sup>28</sup> <https://uscode.house.gov/browse/prelim@title18/part1/chapter109A&edition=prelim>.



### 7.2.1. Sexual Battery and Other Sexual Abuse

In general, the term **sexual battery** refers to a form of sexual abuse in which a person intentionally touches another person sexually without that person's consent, or coerces or physically forces a person to engage in a sexual act against their will.<sup>29</sup> In this report, allegations that fall under sexual battery include non-consensual sex, physical injury during sex, and unwanted touching of intimate parts.

In addition to sexual battery, there are also other forms of sexual abuse that do not involve physical contact.<sup>30</sup> In this report, **other sexual abuse** includes unwanted exposure to pornography.

### 7.2.2. Sexual Harassment

The general definition of **sexual harassment** involves the use of explicit or implicit sexual overtones including the unwelcome or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favors.<sup>31</sup> Sexual harassment includes a range of actions from verbal transgressions to unwanted kissing or touching, to more egregious behaviors that often fall under sexual abuse. In the eyes of those harassed, the actions were inappropriate, generally left them feeling violated in some way, and generated feelings of anger, fear, disgust, and many other emotions. The allegations in this report that fall under sexual harassment include: using sexually offensive language, directing women to shave their pubic hair, unwanted talk about sex, sexual propositioning and coaching, and asking women to describe sexual relations with others.

### 7.2.3. Unethical Behavior

The category "Unethical Behavior" is included in this investigation because Yogi Bhanjan was the leader of a spiritual community and there were many reports of behavior not befitting a person in his position.

If any of the allegations of sexual misconduct meet the burden of proof, the behavior would violate the ethical norms that he taught to his followers and to which he held them accountable. For example, sex outside of marriage was forbidden in the Sikh religion and Yogi Bhanjan publicly chastised followers for engaging in this behavior. More specifically, Vow #14 of the Sikh vows reads,

Sikhs shall be celibate if single and monogamous if married. A Sikh shall have no sexual relations outside of a legal marriage. A Sikh man shall consider all women, except his

---

<sup>29</sup> RAINN, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/sexual-abuse>.

<sup>31</sup> Title VII of the US Civil Rights Act., op cit.

wife, as either his mother, his sisters or his daughters. A Sikh woman shall consider all men, except her husband, as either her father, her brothers or her sons.<sup>32</sup>

The head of a spiritual community would be not only expected to uphold their community's ethical standards but also to set an example for their followers with regard to ethical matters. The allegations in this report that fall under unethical behavior include: violations of Sikh vows such as non-celibate behavior, sex with multiple partners, and directing women to have sex with other women.

#### 7.2.4. Responsibilities of a Spiritual Leader in the United States

In addition to following the ethics embraced by their faith, spiritual leaders in the United States are generally held to high standards for at least two important reasons: 1) they wield power by virtue of their spiritual authority, and 2) they have a fiduciary responsibility to safeguard the wellbeing of their community members.

A fiduciary duty is a legal and ethical relationship of confidence and trust between two or more parties. In such a relationship, U.S. law requires the fiduciary at all times to act for the sole benefit and interest of the one who trusts. The three fiduciary duties are explained below as they apply to non-profit boards and their spiritual leaders.<sup>33</sup>

- Duty of Care: Spiritual leaders must protect the welfare of students, guide their practice with compassion, and act at all time for the benefit of the student, rather than for their own benefit.
- Duty of Loyalty: Spiritual leaders must act in the interest of the student, not in their own interest; must not use students as safety valves for stress, to meet needs for intimacy, as sounding boards, or as advisers.
- Duty of Obedience: Spiritual leaders must obey the organization's ethics policy, all civil laws, and ensure adherence to the organization's mission.

Given these fiduciary duties and the power vested in a spiritual teacher, it is the teacher's responsibility to set and maintain safe "boundaries to preserve the pastoral relationship."<sup>34</sup> Engaging in a sexual relationship with a student, therefore, breaches the boundaries of the pastoral relationship.

Many people dismiss sexual relationships between spiritual leaders and their students as affairs between consenting adults. However, the prohibition of sexual conduct between people in fiduciary relationships is based on the theory that "the individual appearing to consent cannot truly consent to the activity because he or she is under the influence or authority of the person

---

<sup>32</sup> Sikh Dharma International. (n.d.). *Sikh Vows*. <https://www.sikhdharma.org/sikh-vows/>.

<sup>33</sup> BoardSource. (2010). *The Handbook of Nonprofit Governance* (p. 16-20). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>34</sup> Fortune, M. M. (1992). *Is Nothing Sacred: When sex invades the pastoral relationship* (p. 42). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

in the position of power.”<sup>35</sup> It is not sufficient for consent that a spiritual leader and their follower engaged in a sexual relationship are both adults.

The term ‘consenting adults’ also reflects a misunderstanding of sexual behavior between clergy and congregants. It is assumed that because two people are adults that there is consent. In reality, consent is far more complex. In order for two people to give authentic consent to sexual activity there must be equal power.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, lawmakers have concluded that “a person in the victim’s position is legally unable to consent to sex with a person in a position of authority or trust.”<sup>37</sup>

Spiritual leaders clearly have more power than their followers because of their positional, moral, and spiritual authority. Education, community respect, and public image add to the imbalance of power between a leader and a follower. Further, spiritual leaders may have the additional power of psychological resources when students are vulnerable, such as when a student seeks pastoral care in the midst of personal or spiritual crisis, life change, illness, or death of a loved one. Consequently, if a spiritual leader “redirects the power a congregant has entrusted to him [her] toward his [her] own sexual gratification, he [she] has crossed the line into clergy sexual misconduct”<sup>38</sup> because they have abused the power of their office. In the words of the Dalai Lama, “Even though one’s realizations may be equal to those of divine beings, one’s behavior must always conform to convention.”<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Grenz, S.J. & Bell, R.D. 2001. *Betrayal of Trust: Confronting and preventing clergy sexual misconduct* (p. 92). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

<sup>36</sup> Liberty, P.L. (n.d.). *Why It's Not an Affair*. AdvocateWeb. <https://www.advocateweb.org/publications/articles-2/clergy/affair>.

<sup>37</sup> Nolo. (n.d.). *Sexual Misconduct Laws, Charges, & Defenses*. CriminalDefenseLawyer.

<https://criminaldefenselawyer.com/resources/criminal-defense/sex-crimes/sexual-misconduct-charges.htm>.

<sup>38</sup> Grenz & Bell, op. cit, p.92.

<sup>39</sup> *Ethics in the Teacher-Student Relationship: The responsibilities of Teachers and Students. Notes taken during the meeting of H.H. the Dalai Lama and Western Buddhist teachers in Dharamsala, 1993.* (n.d.). <http://info-buddhism.com/Ethics-in-the-Teacher-Student-relationship.html>.



### 7.3. Allegations of Sexual Battery and Sexual Abuse

This section (7.3) of the report includes allegations of both sexual battery and sexual abuse. In addition to sexual battery, there are also other forms of sexual abuse that do not involve physical contact.

We note that state statutes in New Mexico and California differ in the labels for these offenses. However, since this investigation is internal and not intended for legal action, we use the more general terms “sexual battery” and “sexual abuse” which encompass the state-specific language.

#### 7.3.1. Non-consensual Sex

##### A. Allegation

For this sub-section, 7.3.1 Non-consensual Sex, we used the definition of sexual battery in Section 7.2.1, above. The question of “consent” – which is important in deciding if a sexual act is rape -- was clarified in Section 7.2.4 where we discussed consent more thoroughly. This sub-section is limited to the individuals who specifically used the word “rape” or “rectal/anal” penetration in their statements. According to the CDC: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Uniform Definitions for Sexual Violence,

Penetration involves physical insertion, however slight, of the penis into the vulva; contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva, or anus; or physical insertion of a hand, finger, or other object into the anal or genital opening of another person.<sup>40</sup>

Three Reporters alleged that Yogi Bhajan raped them or penetrated their anus. Descriptions of these events in the Reporters' words appear below.

2: I wasn’t ready for intercourse. I wasn’t willing to have intercourse. I didn’t want to be there. But the master, who had trained his students to conquer everyone else, had to conquer the student himself. To me, it felt like rape. Sex had become the war of ‘conquer or to be conquered.’ It had nothing to do with love . . . The last time he raped me was in LA. The Yogi said, ‘I will conquer you’ – I said, ‘That’s the end.’

137: I did not consent the first time with Yogi Bhajan. I thought he was [description] – it was rape. . . . None of it was normal and none of it was ok and really none of it was consensual. Even my boss doing oral sex to me. Yogi Bhajan said to do it. He’s my teacher, she’s my boss. No one asked.

86: Anal [penetration] in the bathtub was really painful, forced. He used his fingers.

In this investigation, we were asked to include sexual acts directed by Yogi Bhajan. Accordingly, in this section on non-consensual sex, we include one statement in which the Reporter said Yogi Bhajan directed her to have sex with a young man and specifically to engage in anal sex:

---

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv\\_surveillance\\_definitions-2009-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv_surveillance_definitions-2009-a.pdf)

88: Yogi Bhanan said to me, 'You are going to have sex with this young man. I want him dependent on you. Go to your trailer; he will come to you.' I did have sex with him . . . he was out of high school. It happened quite a few times. . . . The last time with him, Yogi Bhanan told me to do something to his anus, which was never a thought I had in my life. After he [the young man] left, Yogi Bhanan called me and said, 'OK tell me what you did' but I had not fully done what Yogi Bhanan had asked and he was angry. I heard from [name] that someone had done this to Yogi Bhanan with her tongue. I got the impression that I would be asked to do it to Yogi Bhanan.

## **B. Findings**

In public social media made available to us, we found no confirmation or disconfirmation of these allegations of rape. We also found no inconsistencies when we tested the alignment of allegations of rape made in our private interviews with information made available to us from other sources.

For the three cases of alleged rape (#2, #86, and #137) the incident occurred in private so there are no first-hand witnesses.

For case #88, regarding being directed by Yogi Bhanan to have anal sex with a young man, the individual in question could not be located to affirm or deny the allegation. Since there are several other accounts of Yogi Bhanan directing individuals to have sex with other individuals, we take #88's allegation as credible.

In case #86, there are conflicting details about who escorted the Reporter into the bedroom. While this discrepancy raised some doubts about the Reporter's memory, we did not believe this detail was sufficient to refute the rest of the claim. The alleged escort denied that they did this, but also may have blocked or forgotten this incident or believed the purpose of the encounter was not sexual in nature.

After weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhanan raped three women and that he directed one woman to have anal sex with a young man.

We note that the three Reporters of rape continued their relationship with Yogi Bhanan for varying lengths of time after the initial incident and their consent is confounded by forces such as obedience to a spiritual teacher and conditions that facilitated their ongoing sexual involvement with Yogi Bhanan. See Section 7.2.4 above.

In another case, not quoted in this section, the Reporter stated that they had been taken into Yogi Bhanan's bedroom but that, "When I start to have those most traumatic memories of all, everything goes black." Consequently, we cannot reach a conclusion with regard to that incident. We did hear reports from people we interviewed and have read public postings about the possibility that a young girl was assaulted by Yogi Bhanan. Since the individual could not



An Investigation into Allegations of Yogi Bhanjan's Sexual Misconduct

An Olive Branch Associates

August 10, 2020

remember the incident, we cannot conclude that they were raped. In our judgment, this case did not pass the burden of proof.

Finally, we were made aware of one other allegation of rape. However, the individual did not come forward to be interviewed or submit a statement for inclusion in the investigation so we could not determine that individual's credibility. Consequently, we could not reach a conclusion with regard to this incident either.

### 7.3.2. Physical Injury during Sex with Yogi Bhanan

#### A. Allegation

This sub-section, Physical Injury during Sex with Yogi Bhanan, meets the definition of sexual battery presented in Section 7.2.1. Eight Reporters alleged that Yogi Bhanan injured them during sex. We note that these Reporters "consented" to the sexual activities they described but also note that true consent is absent in cases where someone in a position of power employs that power to force their will onto another in a position of lesser power.<sup>41,42,43,44</sup> The allegations in this section refer to biting and sucking the Reporter's tongue, face or neck, nipples, and/or labia. Reporters claimed that the biting was painful and often left them bruised and bleeding. Because Yogi Bhanan allegedly did these things to several Reporters, they were able to recognize when it had happened to someone else. Representative quotations regarding physical injury during sex with Yogi Bhanan are below.

82: He [Yogi Bhanan] was rough. He bit my tongue, bit my nipples, left marks on my face from sucking, and pinched me. It was not fun.

86: He [Yogi Bhanan] bit my tongue. He sucked on my tongue and it turned blue. I cried but he would not let go until he finished. A staff member noticed my tongue was blue. The woman said, 'Where'd you get the blue tongue?' but she knew what it meant. It happened to her too. I was sleep deprived for 10 years. It got to the point where I dreaded and loathed the private time. He would bite me on my neck, ears, cheeks and I cried. He bit my privates. He showed no remorse for hurting me. I took pain pills like candy. [Before Yogi Bhanan's kidney transplant] he would 'go at me' for hours, biting, gripping, pinching -- like he was trying to get his life force back.

137: He bit my tongue and sucked it -- it was blue and bleeding. He would bite and grab hard. Yogi Bhanan was careful not to bite anything that would show. He clawed at my breasts. He would chew on my [labia] for half an hour. I could not walk afterwards -- I was bloody and swollen, my lower lips were swollen like prunes.

77: Yogi Bhanan and I had regular sexual relations. It was painful -- he bit my tongue and my lips were bruised. I tried to cover the bruises on my face with makeup. When it first happened to me, there was no conversation; just the act itself. Except that he told me to 'Just relax.' At no time did he ask me if I wanted to have sex with him. I left Yogi Bhanan's duty with my nervous system shattered.

134: His behavior started to include bruising the face and biting the tongue. I considered this so abusive and harmful that I withdrew. He was controlling us in this code of silence while

---

<sup>41</sup> Nolo, op. cit.

<sup>42</sup> Liberty, op. cit.

<sup>43</sup> Grenz & Bell, op. cit.

<sup>44</sup> Fortune, op.cit.

on the other hand marking our faces. . . . As staff we were obliged to keep his secret and save face for him while he ruined our faces.

When interviewees were asked if they had ever seen evidence of physical harm on Secretaries or staff, most said that they had not seen or do not remember seeing bruises or bites. One interviewee pointed out that not everyone who had bruises or bite marks was around in public every day; women would stay home claiming they were sick or had personal business to attend to. Another pointed out that the most egregious injuries were ordinarily covered by clothing or by keeping their mouths shut. However, seven other interviewees stated that they had seen bruises and bite marks on the women serving Yogi Bhajan. Examples appear below.

77: Yes, I saw bruises on faces and lips [of other women]. He bit my tongue, but that didn't show.

136: I saw bruises on [name] and [another name].

88: He liked to bite but did not bite me. I saw a bite on [name] cheek and [other name] showed me the damage to her body and private area.

175: I saw marks on [name's] neck and face bites on her cheeks. . . . There was a lecture Yogi Bhajan gave where he talked about leaving marks. He gave lectures on how to have sex. It was demeaning to women . . . telling them the positions they should take in order for men to have sex.

27: I knew he had begun to have sex with [name]. I had seen the bruises, the marks he often left upon his Secretaries.

174: We picked [name] up at the airport. She had bruises all over her face – she had a split lip, bruised cheek, and puffy eye. And she said she had bruises on her body. She did not want to tell us what had happened, but eventually she said she was kicked in the head by a horse. I did not believe she was kicked by a horse. We wanted to take her to a doctor, but she refused. We saw other things – the way she acted – and I felt something very bad was happening in her life.

## **B. Findings**

In public social media made available to us, we found no confirmation or disconfirmation of these allegations of physical injury during sex with Yogi Bhajan. We found one inconsistency when we tested the alignment of allegations of physical injury during sex with Yogi Bhajan in our private interviews. Reporter 73 denied that Yogi Bhajan bit her during sex while Reporter 175 (above) said specifically that Reporter 73 had marks on her neck and bite marks on her face. It is possible that Reporter 73 did not want to tell us about her injuries and it is also possible that Reporter 175 had an inaccurate memory of the person with bite marks. Therefore, after weighing the evidence, we cannot conclude that it is more likely than not that Reporter 73 experienced physical injury during sex with Yogi Bhajan. This Reporter is not included in the eight Reporters who alleged physical injury during sex with Yogi Bhajan.

An Investigation into Allegations of Yogi Bhanan's Sexual Misconduct

An Olive Branch Associates

August 10, 2020

After weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhanan injured eight women during sex with them.

We received no information or report that provided alternative explanations for the injuries. Furthermore, the fact that the allegations were confirmed by several observers adds to the credibility of the claims we received regarding physical injury during sex with Yogi Bhanan.



### 7.3.3. Unwanted Touching of Intimate Parts

#### A. Allegation

Allegations in this sub-section, Unwanted Touching of Intimate Parts, meet the definition of sexual battery presented in the sub-section 7.3.1 above. Sexual battery includes intentional touching of intimate parts: genitals, anus, groin, or breasts.<sup>45</sup> Nine Reporters stated that they experienced unwanted touching of intimate parts in interactions with Yogi Bhajan. The incidents reported in this section occurred outside the context of sexual intercourse and some of them took place in public settings.

Seven women reported unwanted touching of their breasts by Yogi Bhajan including two who were minors<sup>46</sup> at the time of the incidents. Representative quotations from women regarding unwanted touching of their breasts by Yogi Bhajan appear below.

39: During that time, he felt free to grab my boobs because he thought he owned me since I grew up in the Sikh faith under his reign and could do what he wanted with me, like I was a piece of commodity to him. Remember I was only 18 or 19 and still very influenced and guided by Yogi Bhajan.

169: At 15 . . . Yogi Bhajan came to our house for a visit. I went in to see him. He told me to come over [to him] and he pointed at my breasts and poked them.

46: When I was 17, I was doing dishes at Yogi Bhajan's place in LA, and he came up behind me and grabbed me. He grabbed my breasts and body and when I flinched, he said he was teaching me to be proud of my body and to stand up straight.

44: I was standing outside with other . . . people. Yogi Bhajan tweaked each breast and hit me between the legs . . . a pinch, a pinch, and then a whack between the legs.

4: [Name] opened the door [for me] like she was welcoming me into the fold. Yogi Bhajan told me to massage his feet. Then he began flexing his feet to palpate my breasts. Then he got up and motioned for me to follow him into a bedroom. I was on full alert ... I stood in the door jamb. He got on the bed and made kissy faces... he was 62 and I was 24.

Three other Reporters said they witnessed Yogi Bhajan touching the breasts of other women inappropriately. For example:

174: Yogi Bhajan stood up and touched [name of another woman] breasts, then made her turn around. He touched her bottom and her breasts and said [specific comment about them].

27: I felt like a failure [because Yogi Bhajan was having sex with other women]. I saw him playing with the breasts of women at a drafting table.

In addition, two Reporters said they had been directed by Yogi Bhajan to touch his genitals. Quotations regarding this type of sexual battery appear below.

---

<sup>45</sup> RAINN (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network); [https://apps.rainn.org/policy/policy-crime-definitions.cfm?state=California&group=3&\\_ga=2.2601648.1890062979.1595425993-906135526.1595425993](https://apps.rainn.org/policy/policy-crime-definitions.cfm?state=California&group=3&_ga=2.2601648.1890062979.1595425993-906135526.1595425993).

<sup>46</sup> These women were 15 and 17 respectively at the time of the incident. Presently their age places them beyond the age for mandatory reporting by An Olive Branch.

86: Yogi Bhajan was napping in his wife's bedroom. [He] called me in and told me to lock the door and lay down next to him. I was nervous and thought it was a test. He was large and scary. He asked me to hold his testicles through his clothes.

60: Yogi Bhajan told me, 'It seems like you have a fear of older men. I'm gonna help you get over your fear – come over here, put your head in my crotch.' It freaked me out. I kneeled and put my head in his crotch. My inside was screaming, 'No; I'm not doing this!' I lifted my head and stood up and said I felt uncomfortable. I told him, 'I never want to talk to you about sex again.'

## **B. Findings**

In public social media made available to us, we found no confirmation or disconfirmation of these allegations of unwanted touching of intimate parts. We also found no inconsistencies when we tested the alignment of allegations of unwanted touching of intimate parts from our private interviews with other information made available to us.

We have no specific information that refutes any of the claims made about Yogi Bhajan touching the intimate parts of women or having them touch his intimate parts. After weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhajan engaged in touching of intimate parts (their breasts or his genitals) with nine Reporters without their consent. The fact that the allegations of this type of behavior were confirmed by witnesses adds to their credibility.

### 7.3.4. Other Sexual Abuse: Unwanted Exposure to Pornography

#### A. Allegation

Following the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), unwanted exposure of a minor to pornography, falls within the broad category of sexual abuse but is not considered sexual battery because it does not involve bodily contact.<sup>47,48</sup> Two Reporters who were minors alleged they had experienced unwanted exposure to pornography by Yogi Bhajan. Quotations regarding this type of sexual abuse are below.

46: I was 17 when Yogi Bhajan said I should start coming to where he lived – in the evening after class – 9-10 pm. A lot of people were there. They watched Real Sex, an HBO series. It was very graphic. I was uncomfortable. I did not want to watch it with other people or with him. I put my head down, but he told me I had to watch. . . . I tried not to blush. He asked for my opinion about what was going on in the scene. I was the only virgin in the room. Others gave their opinions. It was strange and uncomfortable. . . . After that it was a couple of times a week when he was in town and had class. . . . They also watched the Playboy channel.

I don't remember anything ever being said about watching porn as a 'test' or a 'teaching', but I thought he was testing me. . . . When they were choosing what to watch on TV, I asked to watch Seinfeld. Yogi Bhajan said, 'Why not watch this [porn] – this is what you wanted to do.'

241: The SSS had a grouping of people, a small group of people, mostly men, who he considered very important, who were in his inner circle. . . . They had a TV in the room and often played sexually explicit and violent material. . . . They would watch this for hours at a time, day on end. . . . The other aspect is that these men would, this inner circle, would sit around talking about very inappropriate things. There was a lot of talk about sex. When the Secretaries would enter the room, many of the men would look them up and down, and enjoy their young, beautiful bodies, and when they would leave, that would be all they would talk about what they wanted to do to them. [I] heard it all. What that did in terms of my psychological understanding of what women are meant to be was beyond damaging.

One other Reporter, not a minor, explained their own experience of being shown pornography by Yogi Bhajan:

44: He had a Secretary bring me to the back room where he was watching TV – a movie called The Whore. He made me sit beside him. . . . He wanted me to watch it and learn. It was very offensive and awkward. There was nudity and sex in the movie. I did not want to be there.

Adding to the credibility of the allegations above, a few other Reporters described occasions in which they observed Yogi Bhajan and others watching pornography. They explained that viewing pornography typically occurred when men and women in Yogi Bhajan's inner circle gathered informally with him in a living room either in Los Angeles or Española, often after he

---

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/sexual-abuse>

<sup>48</sup> Under California Penal Code 288.2a.1&2 exposing a minor to pornography is illegal if they are under the age of 18. [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=PEN&division=&title=9.&part=1.&chapter=5.&article=.](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=PEN&division=&title=9.&part=1.&chapter=5.&article=)

had been teaching yoga. Two witnessed Yogi Bhanan viewing pornography with others; two other Reporters commented on Yogi Bhanan's practice of viewing pornography:

88: One day, two people came to visit. Yogi Bhanan had me put on very risqué channel and they watched it for 5-10 minutes. They were dear friends.

3: [At a Winter Solstice in the late 1970s] I sought out Yogi Bhanan to ask questions about yoga. When I entered the room [at the ashram], I saw the people watching porn on the TV. . . . The heads of the ashram were there and Yogi Bhanan's staff, about 12-15 women and men. Yogi Bhanan had a running commentary about what they were seeing, pointing out different things about the show. He did not live up to what I thought a yoga teacher should be like. I did not talk with him that night; I just left the room.

169: [Grooming for sex with Yogi Bhanan] started with getting girls to watch porn with him. He would get them used to talking about sexual activity. Then have them be a part of his night staff. Then be alone in his room.

175: I heard Yogi Bhanan speak to [name and position in the organization] discussing porn they were watching on his TV.

## B. Findings

In public social media made available to us, we found no confirmation or disconfirmation of these allegations of unwanted exposure to pornography. However, one Supporter offered an alternative explanation for Yogi Bhanan's intentions in showing pornography to young women. This person confirmed that Yogi Bhanan was indeed periodically watching pornography with them and [other community members] while others were also in the room. This Supporter (#145 below) portrayed Yogi Bhanan's intentions in a different light, suggesting, as a Reporter (#44 above) did -- that Yogi Bhanan was using pornography for "teaching" purposes.

145: I sat there with many people in the room and he would turn on the Playboy Channel and say, 'Don't get caught up on this. This is how the world looks at women. Is this what you want for your life?' I've sat there watching it with [name]. In the living room with people coming and going. I remember [name] and I laughing about it. Kind of like your dad teaching you things. . . . I understood the context of it. [Name] and I would laugh about it. I only remember one time in the middle of the day. He's showing us, 'Can you believe this is the society?' All of a sudden [a Secretary] came to the door so he jokingly said, 'Quick, quick' [she] can't see this because [reason].

The joking behavior reported by #145 above, is consistent with another account:

46: One time [when Yogi Bhanan and others were watching pornography] the [title of a person] of 3HO was approaching – loudly. Yogi Bhanan threw the remote to me and ordered, 'Change the channel!' When I switched to the Discovery channel, everyone giggled.



## An Investigation into Allegations of Yogi Bhanjan's Sexual Misconduct

An Olive Branch Associates

August 10, 2020

Regardless of Yogi Bhanjan's intentions, however, California law makes showing pornography to a minor (under the age of 18) a criminal offense.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, both the National Institute of Justice<sup>50</sup> and the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control consider undesired exposure to pornography regardless of age as a form of sexual abuse.<sup>51</sup>

We note that some close male associates of Yogi Bhanjan who supported him, adamantly denied that he ever watched pornography while four Supporters (one of whom is quoted above) said that he did. Some Reporters also said they did not see Yogi Bhanjan watching pornography. However, the seven Reporters (three claimants plus some of the witnesses) found these occasions uncomfortable, unwanted, embarrassing, and/or were confused about their purpose.

Consequently, after weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhanjan had two women, who were under the age of 18, watch pornography with him and that he showed pornography to one other who was not a minor.

---

<sup>49</sup> California Penal Code.

[https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=PEN&division=&title=9.&part=1.&chapter=5.&article=](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=PEN&division=&title=9.&part=1.&chapter=5.&article=)

<sup>50</sup> National Institute of Justice, <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/overview-rape-and-sexual-violence>; CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Uniform Definitions for Sexual Violence, [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv\\_surveillance\\_definitions1-2009-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv_surveillance_definitions1-2009-a.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> CDC Center for Injury Prevention and Control. <http://www.cdc.gov>

## 7.4. Allegations of Sexual Harassment

### 7.4.1. Exposure to Sexually Offensive Language

#### A. Allegation

Seventeen Reporters experienced being a target for Yogi Bhajan's sexually offensive language: six reported offensive use of the word "fuck"; four experienced being called a whore, prostitute, or other obscene name; and seven were subjected to both types of language. Some Reporters attested that he used both types of sexually offensive language in group settings.

Representative quotations regarding this type of sexual harassment appear below.

39: I went to Yogi Bhajan and said I couldn't do it [marry the man he had told her to marry]. That's when I was slut shamed, told that I was a whore and that no one would want to fuck me. He said this at the ranch in front of a lot of people. . . . He said I would be working corners as a whore – that I would not get money because I'm not worth it. He slapped me and left a mark on my face. There was a week of berating: whore; slut; that I disappointed him.

206: After graduating high school in [year], I went to see Yogi Bhajan to give him my life plan – I had a scholarship to college. . . . He said I could not go to college. He said I would be a prostitute – that I'd get fucked by everyone and should go work for him [instead of going to college]. . . . Yogi Bhajan told me I would be a whore. He told people that all the time. . . . He told me I would grow up to be a whore and prostitute like [name].

46: We were in the main living room; Yogi Bhajan asked me what I wanted to do with life. I said [a type of work] that I had always wanted. There were lots of people around. He said I'd be fucked by every guy and left by the side of the road. I accepted everything as if I was in class – but I was shaking and crying. Everyone in the room accepted it.

35: The ultimate act of betrayal came when I was called back to the ranch. Yogi Bhajan was in his chair with no shoes, and he screamed at me, called me a bitch, a cunt, and said, 'You'll be nothing more than a prostitute lying in the gutter.' Staff was in the room – [name]. Yogi Bhajan told me to get the fuck out of his face.

44: He said inappropriate things to me [about my boyfriend] . . . 'Why do you want to fuck little boys when I could be your boyfriend? . . . I might have a mile-long penis.'

250: [Speaking to a man about marrying a specific woman Yogi Bhajan had chosen for him] Yogi Bhajan said, 'You can do whatever you want and you can have what you want on the side – you can fuck her in the ass.'

83: Yogi Bhajan said some pretty awful things to me. He did my numerology one evening and said to me, 'Stop fucking around.' When I said that I did not fuck around, he said, 'The numbers don't lie.'

170: [Having been called into a meeting with Yogi Bhajan] I nervously walked into the living room at the 'ranch' in Española, NM. It was pretty late at night. I was determined to hold my head up high and just be brave and tell the truth. Yogi Bhajan was sitting on a throne. One Secretary was combing his hair, another was massaging his feet. There was an audience of assorted people in the room. He said, 'SOOOO [my name]! . . . I heard you want to get fucked in the butt.' This is how my spiritual teacher talked to me! I was still so young and vulnerable.

Four Reporters also witnessed Yogi Bhajan directing sexually offensive language at others:

175: Yogi Bhajan called women whores and prostitutes. Especially when they were leaving [the community], he said stuff about their sex lives; how perverted they were. It was horrendous stuff. No one could say it was not true or they would suffer the consequences.

141: When women left – Yogi Bhajan would say they would become prostitutes. . . . [Another time] when my friend was questioning his own sexuality, Yogi Bhajan said, 'So I hear you want to get fucked up the ass.'

41: Yogi Bhajan referred to [name] and her love of male genitalia. He said she was a whore. I was disgusted. If something was said at Yogi Bhajan's house, within hours everyone heard.

289: There were times of traveling with Yogiji abroad and the profound love and admiration I felt for him for so long ran deep. Being chosen to travel with him abroad was considered a great honor. It was on one of the trips to Europe in [year], we were in [city] or [city] when Yogiji came out of his rooms in the morning and joined us traveling with him for breakfast that he said as he entered the room, '[Name] is mad at me because I didn't fuck her this morning.' He said it to everyone there in his normal, loud projected voice. Some laughed it off as a joke and Yogiji simply said nothing more and sat down with us to eat.

## B. Findings

In public social media made available to us, we found no confirmation or disconfirmation of these allegations of the use of sexually offensive language by Yogi Bhajan. We also found no inconsistencies when we tested the alignment of allegations of Yogi Bhajan's use of offensive language between the private interviews we conducted and information in other forms that was made available to us.

The only alternative explanation for Yogi Bhajan's use of sexually offensive language was his image of himself as a Saturn teacher. As two Supporters noted, (#69 and #181) not everyone responded favorably to this style of teaching that he used to dislodge people from their egos. Another Supporter noted, "He would use his voice to penetrate. He tolerated no bullshit/nonsense" (#117). Another commented on the repercussions of his approach, "People would hate him for the rest of his life" (#163). Another observed, "His usual manners were not always popular and could be downright verbally inappropriate" (#266). Still other Supporters (#69 and #92) noted that people who couldn't take his style of teaching left the community.

Finally, some Supporters asserted that Yogi Bhajan's manner of speaking may reflect the Punjabi culture of his upbringing, which was often evident in his Saturn-style teaching, that they found effective. Nonetheless, while this may explain his behavior, it doesn't excuse the sexually harassing impact this language had on some of Yogi Bhajan's students.

Consequently, after weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhajan used sexually offensive language with 17 Reporters. Further, the fact that the alleged behavior was confirmed by several witnesses adds further to the credibility of these allegations.

#### **7.4.2. Directing Women to Shave Their Pubic Hair**

##### **A. Allegation**

Six Reporters stated that they had been directed to shave their pubic hair for Yogi Bhajan. Quotations regarding this type of sexual harassment are below.

137: [Name] initiated me. She told me to shave my pubic hair; she told me what Yogi Bhajan liked and did not like in sex.

86: Yogi Bhajan asked me to shave my pubic hair – 'Mow the lawn,' he said. [Name] brought an electric razor to my door.

77: Yes, we definitely shaved our pubic hair. We were told that the hair hurt him. When I was brought onto the staff, I was taken to a bathroom, was handed a razor, and told to shave.

2: I came up for [body] inspection again, but this time the inspection was only the lower half of my body. My pubic hairs were supposed to have been shaven off, revealing a 'clean' pubic area. At first, I responded to the command by cutting the hairs with scissors; after all, Sikhs don't shave or use razors and I didn't fully understand what SSS was asking. After a failed inspection, I was given a proper explanation of what was requested. All pubic hairs needed to be removed, completely shaven off. On a regular basis. On a daily basis.

He requested I shave my legs and underarms as well, but I refused. A compromise was made with the pubic hairs. When I failed to execute my discipline properly, another staff member was assigned to help me purchase a man's razor, shaving cream and Old Spice Aftershave. In time I found out that all SSS staff shaved but I didn't know at that point. SSS told me that shaving the pubic hairs clean erased the karma from the 2nd chakra. I thought it was necessary for spiritual celibacy. My pubic hairs came off.

68: I had been there ten months. I had never had any inkling of anything sexual until Yogi Bhajan said, 'I am going to fuck you.' He showed me the soft part of his arm – he wanted me to take all my [pubic] hair off. . . . I was shocked that it came from him, a holy man. There were guidelines around sex -- once a month, a ritual. Yogi Bhajan's teachings were very specific about sex. He put himself up as pure. Anyone saying he wanted to have sex with them would get written off as crazy and be shown the door. . . . I did shave, and had sex with him some weeks later.

##### **B. Findings**

In public social media made available to us, we found no confirmation or disconfirmation of these allegations that Yogi Bhajan directed women to shave their pubic hair. We also found no inconsistencies when we tested the alignment of allegations of being required to shave one's pubic hair between our private interviews and other information made available to us.

After weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhajan directed six Reporters to shave their pubic hair.



### 7.4.3. Sexual Propositioning and Coaching

#### A. Allegation

Four Reporters said they had been subjected to unwanted sexual propositioning and coaching by Yogi Bhanjan. Quotations from their interviews regarding this type of sexual harassment appear below.

2: Yogi Bhanjan said that if I fucked him, I would become the Mahan Tantric.

88: I was [name of a profession]. Yogi Bhanjan told me, 'If you want to do that [continue her profession], sleep with me.'

78: During my marriage, Yogi Bhanjan started to test the waters to see if the marriage wasn't going to work out with me and my husband. Yogi Bhanjan tested me to see if I would become his next [sexual partner]. Yogi Bhanjan had me visit him in the dome, at night, come sit by his bed, and he talked. I don't remember what he said, I just remember the feelings and main intentions. He kept saying, 'Do you love me? If you love me, kiss me.' No amount of 'He's my teacher' in my mind allowed me to kiss him. He said, 'If you love me, then you can do this with your husband,' taking the position that if I could do it with him, I could succeed in my marriage. He showed me his penis. He meant for me to look at it – nothing to be scared about; there was no erection. I felt caught – he knew I was stubborn and would not do it [have sex with him]. I couldn't make myself. I was paralyzed.

Another time, Yogi Bhanjan had me come to the dome; there were a few staff members around. It was under the guise of helping me with my marriage; to make intimacy with my husband better. He made me lie on his bed face down next to him without my clothes. He had someone massage me to relax...wanted me to feel aroused maybe. I buried my face and did not know what to do. He got up to use the bathroom and had a staff start a bath . . . turn on the jets . . . and had me step into the bath. . . . I went from the bedroom to the tub. Yogi Bhanjan sat in the tub too and said I could use one of the jets to relax and arouse myself.

46: All of a sudden: Yogi Bhanjan said, 'Come get in bed with me.' My mind froze. When I was a child, there were whispers; I heard accusations [regarding Yogi Bhanjan's sexual behavior]. . . . I thought, 'OMG it's all true. He can't be this – he is not this.' I pretended I didn't hear. He repeated it and I started shaking -- trying to understand. He said, 'Stop being shy. This is what all my wives do. . . . I'm going to teach you how to do this. Let's make out like we are in love.' I thought to myself, 'Please don't be this person'. It was confusing and weird.

#### B. Findings

In public social media made available to us, we found no confirmation or disconfirmation of these two allegations that Yogi Bhanjan propositioned and/or coached women for sex. We also found no inconsistencies when we tested the alignment of allegations of Yogi Bhanjan's propositioning or coaching women for sex between our private interviews and other information made available to us.

While there were a few generalized refutations regarding the credibility of Reporter #46, these refutations were offset by others speaking in favor of her credibility. After weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhanjan propositioned and/or coached four Reporters.

#### **7.4.4. Asking Women to Describe Their Sexual Experiences with Others**

##### **A. Allegation**

Three Reporters said they had been subjected to Yogi Bhajan's unwanted requests for information about their sexual experiences with others. Quotations from their interviews regarding this type of sexual harassment appear below.

60: While I was standing there, he started asking me about sexual positions I had experienced. I was shy, insecure – I don't talk about that stuff even with friends. Yogi Bhajan asked explicit questions about positions. He said, 'Did you ever do it standing up? If you did, do you know how damaging that can be for your organs?'

44: Yogi Bhajan made me tell what sexual positions I had had. He said he wanted to know because 'It's possible you have internal damage.' I did not want to talk about it.

Another woman (#137) recounted that Yogi Bhajan would ask, "How are you?" and then say, "OK, go see [another woman for sex] tonight." The next morning, while they were in a business meeting, he would covertly ask her about the sexual encounter of the night before.

Reporter #35 below, commented on Yogi Bhajan's practice of asking women about their sex lives.

35: Yogi Bhajan married young beautiful women to older men. He always asked them how their sex life was. Women were hesitant but did not say 'Its private.' Rather, they froze and gave soft-boiled answers until he let up.

##### **B. Findings**

In public social media made available to us, we found no confirmation or disconfirmation of these allegations that Yogi Bhajan asked women to describe their sexual experiences with others to him. When we tested the alignment of these allegations of sexual harassment between our private interviews and other information made available to us, we also found no inconsistencies.

After weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhajan asked three Reporters to tell him about their sexual experiences with others and that they experienced these requests as inappropriate. Additionally, another Reporter (#35, above) recounted observing this kind of behavior which adds to the credibility of the first three reports.

## 7.5. Allegations of Unethical Behavior

### 7.5.1. Non-celibate Behavior by Yogi Bhanjan

#### A. Allegations

Spiritual leaders' practice of celibacy offers benefits for the communities they serve. When a spiritual leader is celibate, they are free to redirect their time and sexual vitality toward nurturing the development of their students and toward service in general.<sup>52</sup> By remaining celibate, they also "Free their students (and everyone else) from the potential frustration, disappointment, fear, clinging projections, jealousy, etc. that often attend sexual involvement."<sup>53</sup>

As indicated in Section 7.2.3, allegations about Yogi Bhanjan's behavior include many activities that, if true, would violate the Sikh ethical standards he preached and that are clearly delineated in Vow #14 of the Sikh vows. This vow promises celibacy before marriage and prohibits sex out of wedlock. Supporters of Yogi Bhanjan as well as Reporters of harm pointed out that celibacy is what he taught and claimed that he, himself, was celibate.

One Supporter confirmed this by noting that Yogi Bhanjan told him he had become celibate when he left India and the Supporter "never had any reason to think otherwise" (#18). According to a second Supporter (#242), Yogi Bhanjan told him that the last time he had sex was when his youngest child was born. Another explained,

42: He [Yogi Bhanjan] lived a celibate life. He lived in his own house (the 'Dome') on the ranch. He had a complete celibate life since he came to the U.S. She [his wife] lived in India for 6 months. She and the children moved to the U.S. in 1970. She lived with children in the house (on the ranch in Española). It is not uncommon for spiritual teachers in India to be celibate and separate from their wives.

In the words of one Reporter,

235: I was raised to believe sex was a negative thing, that only the weak did it, certainly no sex out of wedlock was allowed, and homosexuality was wrong. Yogi Bhanjan said everyone was celibate. He said he was. He said he was so hurt that they said he had sex – he was a holy man and took a vow of celibacy. He didn't even have sex with his wife.

Yogi Bhanjan also offered many teachings about the sanctity of sex within marriage or when a person is engaged. One man (#146) told a story about being unfaithful to his fiancé. Yogi Bhanjan found out and called him in to chastise him, "I hear you have been causing some hanky-panky. I personally engaged you. You do not want to do this" and explained to the man "what it is to be an ethical man." Another (#253) plainly stated, "We don't engage in sexual activity outside of marriage."

The Sikh ethical standards and Yogi Bhanjan's claims about celibacy contrast markedly, however, with the stories of 12 Reporters who claim that Yogi Bhanjan had sex with them repeatedly over the course of several years. Additionally, several of those 12 Reporters named a number of other women with whom Yogi Bhanjan was having sex, but those women did not participate in this investigation. Representative quotations detailing the 12 women's sexual relations with Yogi Bhanjan appear below.

---

<sup>52</sup> Edelstein, S. (2011). *Sex and the Spiritual Teacher*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

77: I was 25 years old when I moved to LA. I was told that working for Yogi Bhanjan meant sexual relations. I thought that it was difficult for Yogi Bhanjan to reach the earth – that sex made him able to be more grounded. I was 26, he was 52. . . . Yogi Bhanjan and I had regular sexual relations. At no time did he ask me if I wanted to have sex with him. . . . Sometimes there was a second woman in the sex activity.

2: I had sex with him when he wanted it. . . . Two months had passed; we were in Florida for Winter Solstice and Khalsa Council meetings. The news was out - I had had sex with another man; someone outside SSS system. It was not allowed. Only he [Yogi Bhanjan] was permitted to have sex with whomever he wanted. I as his Secretary could have no such privilege. I was just a pawn. He was the one and only master. . . . He was fuming.

27: The total number [of women having sex with Yogi Bhanjan] I would say is about 12 during the time that I was still there. . . . I didn't have sex with him very much after those first three years. I did get pregnant a second time and had a second abortion.

86: Others [besides me] having sex with Yogi Bhanjan were [seven names].

134: I was looking forward to talking to Yogi Bhanjan when I heard he wanted to talk to me. After I arrived in his room, to my surprise, I don't think we spoke very much. I do remember having an impersonal sexual interaction with him that left me shocked and confused. This [sexual] relationship continued for a decade. I was [age]. He was 44 when it started. Within that decade the harmful sexual practices became more complex.

137: The sex [with Yogi Bhanjan] started in [year] and ended in [year]. It was for the nine or ten years [that] I was on the staff.

## B. Findings

In our search of the public social media that were made available to us, we found one confirmation of #27's allegation of non-celibate behavior by Yogi Bhanjan. Additionally, nothing in social media made available to us provided convincing disconfirmation of any of these allegations of non-celibate behavior by Yogi Bhanjan. When we tested the alignment of allegations of non-celibate behavior with other sources of information we had, we found one inconsistency between our private interviews and other information made available to us: In a media interview conducted in January 1987 with #308, when asked if Yogi Bhanjan had sex with any of those who worked for him, the interviewee denied that Yogi Bhanjan engaged in any sexual behavior with any of his students:

308: This is so ridiculous, it's almost humorous. . . . It's so absurd and so far from the truth and so far from anything that ever went on, that it's hard for me to comprehend how they [people who have left the community] have the nerve and the gall to create stuff like this that's based on nothing. However, in the American culture, if a woman spends the night with a man in her room, the only way we have to interpret it is he's with his wife or they're sleeping together.

There is reason to question the credibility of this statement, however, since the speaker was being interviewed in 1987 by a media reporter and may not have been truthful in the interest of protecting Yogi Bhanjan and others with whom he allegedly had sex.



As reported earlier in Section 7.1, Supporters' interviews and statements also offered general refutations that questioned why Yogi Bhajan, as an evolved human being, would want or need to engage in sexual relations with his students and that they themselves had never witnessed such behavior by their teacher.

We also want to note that we did not include the sexual relationships reported in this section as rape for two reasons: 1) the Reporters themselves did not allege rape; and 2) these accounts represent long-term sexual relationships that appear consensual at first blush but, in fact, fit the pattern of abuse of power present in cases of clergy misconduct (see Section 7.2.4) and reflects a breach of Sikh vows.

After weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that, in spite of his teachings to the contrary, Yogi Bhajan had recurring sexual relationships with 12 Reporters - relationships that continued over the period from 1969 to close to his death in 2004.

Finally, we reach this finding despite assertions by many Supporters that Yogi Bhajan could not participate in sexual activity during the later years of his life because of his various illnesses. Some Reporters said that at various times, Yogi Bhajan did not or could not have an erection but that factor did not limit his requests for fellatio (for example, #86, #88, and #137). Our conclusion that Yogi Bhajan was not celibate stands, regardless of his age at the time he engaged in sexual activity.

## 7.5.2. Sex with Multiple Partners

### A. Allegation

Seven interviewees reported being part of group sex with Yogi Bhajan. As in the previous section, since Yogi Bhajan had made a commitment to be celibate, engaging in group sex would not be consistent with that commitment. Sometimes the activity was ménage à trois; on other occasions more than three people reportedly participated. Representative quotations regarding this type of unethical behavior appear below.

86: It was straightforward orgy stuff. One person next to him, the other would be downstairs doing that, then switch . . . a classic harem set up.

137: Yogi Bhajan had sex with both of us at the same time. I straddled his face; he would chew on my [labia] while [name] gave him a blow job.

68: What he did that was so hard for me was that five or six others were all having sex with him – they were [six names]. Sometimes two or three at once. I noticed that younger women were involved. . . . He wanted some distasteful things such as play with his anus. . . . Digital was ok but when he wanted oral, I said, 'No.'

88: I was told to come in and I saw Yogi Bhajan with [name] and they were sexually involved and she was on top of him with her vagina in his face. He was chewing on her. . . . [Later] I was told to be the third person in that scenario and suck him. That was my role. . . . It was repeated ad infinitum – many, many times – [name] and me. It could have been other people too.

### B. Findings

In public social media made available to us, we found no confirmation or disconfirmation of these allegations of sex with multiple partners. We also found nothing in the information from other credible sources made available to us to confirm or disconfirm what we learned from the private interviews containing allegations of sex with multiple partners.

When queried about whether Yogi Bhajan had sex with multiple partners, no Supporters said they had observed or heard of this behavior. We note it would be difficult for other community members to have the opportunity to observe these events since access to Yogi Bhajan's bedroom required passing through several doors, access was controlled by a staff person or Secretary, and the internal door could be locked from inside. However, without floor plans and room dimensions (which we requested but only partially received), we could not evaluate claims that there was not space in Yogi Bhajan's bedroom for many people to participate in group sexual activities.

After weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhajan had seven women engage sexually with him simultaneously with other women. Contributing to our finding is the fact that many of these separate incidents were experienced by the same women whose stories corroborated one another and comprised a pattern of sexual behavior that, in many cases, was said to have been repeated frequently over several years.

### **7.5.3. Directing Women to have Sex with Other Women**

#### **A. Allegation**

Eleven Reporters stated that Yogi Bhajan directed them to have sex with other women, which most of them were not inclined to do. Representative quotations appear below.

77: Yogi Bhajan directed, expected, pressured, and managed women having sex with other women. With some, the sex was more frequent than with others. It was more than 'once in a while.' . . . I had sex with other women and sex with other women with Yogi Bhajan. It was never initiated by me. . . . At no time did he ask me if I wanted to have sex with him.

2: There was a ring that were being fucked. Multiples with him at any time and with each other. I called it the 'Secretary gig' – I was pimped out to others and to his women. . . . [After a particular incident] I was pimped out more.

134: Yogi Bhajan would ask that his staff have sex with each other. I thought it was to make positive relationships. On the one hand he pushed this but then would not allow us to form a relationship so it was clear that this was not his motive. It was corrupt debauchery. It was his way of binding us in a web of silence with one another.

60: Yogi Bhajan told me that I should start a lesbian relationship with one of the Secretaries. He asked me, 'Who would you want to have a sexual relationship with?'

27: Yogi Bhajan pushed women into relationships with one another.

86: Yogi Bhajan put me with [name] – she was bisexual. I had no inclinations to this. Yogi Bhajan said I would like it more than being with him; that it would satisfy my need for someone to be gentle with me. . . . Then he put me with [different name]. He did that [paired up women] with all female staff except the women who took care of him in the day.

#### **B. Findings**

In public social media made available to us, we found no confirmation or disconfirmation of these allegations that Yogi Bhajan directed women to have sex with other women. We also found no inconsistencies, when we tested the alignment of allegations of directing women to have sex with other women, between our private interviews and other information made available to us.

After weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhajan directed 11 women to have sex with other women. Furthermore, this practice was experienced by several women and comprised a pattern of sexual behavior that, in many cases, was repeated frequently over several years.

## 7.6. Environment that Enabled Sexual and Related Misconduct

### 7.6.1. Organizational Practices that Subjugated Students

#### A. Information from Reporters

The foregoing sections of this report presented allegations regarding Yogi Bhanan's overt sexual or sex-related misconduct experienced directly by Reporters of harm or witnessed by others. This section presents information Reporters shared about conditions and practices that kept them subjugated and that created an environment that facilitated Yogi Bhanan's sexual and related misconduct.

The insights provided in this section paint a picture of how Yogi Bhanan controlled information, how students felt subjugated and caught, and why simply leaving the community was not a viable alternative. They reported experiencing Yogi Bhanan's tight control of information, feeling that 3HO/Sikh Dharma was a cult or cult-like, being taught to see Yogi Bhanan as God, being inhibited from speaking out, and suffering Yogi Bhanan's control of their major life decisions. We received 73 reports of various ways through which Yogi Bhanan exercised control over his students. Many Reporters told about more than one way that Yogi Bhanan controlled their environment. Representative quotations regarding each of these conditions and practices appear below.

#### Control of Information through Compartmentalization

Eleven individuals explained why most people in the community did not know about Yogi Bhanan's sexual misconduct. They said that he kept secrets and kept people in the dark about many aspects of his life and the organizations he operated. Examples of how Yogi Bhanan controlled information in this way are below.

27: Yogi Bhanan was a narcissistic sociopath. He knew how to compartmentalize. I was only aware of what he wanted me to be aware of. He made people complicit; his method was to 'divide and conquer' – he divided us [Secretaries] against one another.

3: Yogi Bhanan kept things compartmentalized. You could be around for decades and not see a thing.

209: Most of the people in the organization are innocent. Yogi Bhanan created a compartmentalized, segmented world. People believed him. He created a maze that a western mind wouldn't understand. A large number of people were oblivious. Others willfully looked the other way, a few were complicit.

106: The degree to which we were all willing to let this man do whatever he wanted and to veil it all in 'spiritual growth' is hard to understand. I was in love with him, most of us were, and we saw what we wanted to see. We believed whatever he told us. We wanted so much for it to be true. He was also a master at silo-ing us so that we only saw what he wanted us to see. There were many people very close to him who really, authentically did not know. We can say now, 'Oh come on; how could they not know?' But so much we never dared talk about for fear of rejection or losing that special bond with him. People did not know. He was a master at that.

55: [From a letter to Yogi Bhanan] I never understood the seemingly feudal system of the organization in which most of the temporal affairs of the Dharma seemed controlled by you



with little input or consensus participation from the rest of us . . . . The constitutional by-laws of Sikh Dharma very clearly institutionalize this one-person rule in your hands.

2: Everyone had a different story. Everyone was pitted against each other. No one knew the whole picture.

### **Cult-like Environment**

Without being questioned about this topic, fourteen Reporters voluntarily stated that 3HO/Sikh Dharma was a cult or they felt they had been in a cult.

27: It was ingrained into us – 'don't listen to the negativity.' Now I think it was a cult. We were mind-controlled into cult behavior . . . . Women felt privileged to have sex with the Master.

54: If you left, for any reason, you would be scapegoated, scourged, and [told you would] go to hell for lifetimes of bad incarnations. The message was to 'Toe the line or we will destroy your character.' It became cult-like versus a spiritual organization.

60: My father put me in it [3HO] . . . . It is a cult. People put Yogi Bhanan above their own children . . . . After I left, it was hard. I felt that I had come out of a cult.

4: We were fed belief systems. It was a cult mentality.

237: It was a cult. We were told that if people left, we should not talk with them because it would pollute our consciousness.

68: Being in a cult for 15 years in the prime of my life deprived me of a normal life. Re-entering the world [after I left] was a difficult adjustment.

214: My [child] was adopted into this cult at 16 years old with an enormous amount of perks, high level jobs, jewelry, travel, etc. and separated by the Sikhs in Española from [our] entire family. I have not seen nor heard from [my child] in 28 years. Tomorrow is [my child's] birthday. No one in the Sikh Cult will tell me where [my child] is or how to reach out to [my child]. I have grieved for [my child] her beyond words. My heart has been broken. My family was destroyed by this Cult.

### **Seeing Yogi Bhanan as God**

Seven Reporters said they understood that Yogi Bhanan was God, or had been raised to see him that way. This view led them to compromise their own agency in service of someone they saw as all-powerful. As we presented earlier, this perception of Yogi Bhanan was also held by several supporters (See Section 7.1).

134: I could ask 'Why didn't I leave?' or 'Why didn't I apply my love to a [different] man? Why were we so loyal?' It is more of a love for God. I seemed so tied into my mission and my commitment to him as a spiritual teacher that I did not have the consciousness to see it for what it was—as predatory abuse. Now I do.

137: I was born and raised to believe Yogi Bhanan is God, and my parents said to do everything he said without questions.

44: I was born into 3HO; Yogi Bhanan named me. I was taught that his word was god-spoke.

86: I was a devoted student. Yogi Bhajan was God to me.

158: Little kids were told, 'This is God.'

### **Culture Inhibited Speaking Out**

Nine Reporters commented that they were inhibited from speaking out by Yogi Bhajan because they feared the consequences of doing so. They had observed that those who did speak out were usually shunned, shamed, or driven from the community.

78: The first 30+ years of my life I lived and breathed what I was taught and told to do . . . . It was not an option to say no. I saw how he treated others who said no: Yogi Bhajan yelled at them or lost interest in them. . . . This culture is also why so many of us rationalized our assault experiences – that Yogi Bhajan was challenging us for our own good.

239: It was a culture of covering things up and not believing anyone who spoke against Yogi Bhajan. It was the culture we grew up in. We all were terrified about speaking against Yogi Bhajan. People would destroy you at all costs [if you did].

103: In the 3HO community there has been a culture that does not allow people to speak their truth. It's a fixation on being the ideal perfect Sikh: an unrelenting acceptance of all the teachings as the rule of the land, a shaming if you went out of line, and more than anything, a silencing of any pain or hurt that would rock the boat. Airing any grievances over the years has never been welcomed, and when I experienced first-hand abuse and manipulation there was never any safe place to talk about it.

215: We were silenced by the fear of being ostracized, attacked, and disowned by our spiritual family.

39: The fear of saying anything was overwhelming. I had seen others humiliated and degraded [for speaking out].

### **Direction of Major Life Decisions**

Thirty-two Reporters provided accounts of Yogi Bhajan exercising damaging control over their major life decisions – decisions about their education, marriage, children, and procreation. Additionally, four other Reporters witnessed Yogi Bhajan's control of others' life decisions. While this control was secondary to the direct, overt sexual misconduct described earlier in this report, it contributed to the overall hold Yogi Bhajan had over these Reporters and produced life-changing impacts on them. Quotations that illustrate Yogi Bhajan's control of the major life decisions of some of his followers appear below.

Education: Seven Reporters said they wanted a college education but were denied one in favor of working in one of Yogi Bhajan's companies.

78: I wanted to go to college, but Yogi Bhajan said, 'No' and that working for the companies would be the best education I could get.

39: My mom wanted me to go to college, but Yogi Bhajan did not want me to further my education. He wanted me to work for the 3HO businesses. I went to [name of college] anyway. When he found out, he met with me and said I should stop college and work for him.

46: I asked to go to college, but Yogi Bhanan said, 'No' and that I should trust him. My husband and I put our faith into the (3HO) businesses and community and, when Yogi Bhanan died, we were fired. We had no skills. No education. No experience. No Community. . . I saw people on staff who got to go to college and had high positions. They all were women who went along with Yogi Bhanan and had [sexual] relationships with him.

Marriage: Seven Reporters told of the damage they experienced because Yogi Bhanan directed their decisions about whom to marry. One individual provided their thoughts about Yogi Bhanan's motive for marrying people who did not know one another.

39: Yogi Bhanan called me in and said he wanted me to get married. He asked if I wanted to and I said, 'No.' I was 19 years old. I was scared. My peers had a lot of arranged marriages to way older men – 22-23 years older. They were like gifts to men with money or were business starters. We were like tokens.

47: Yogi Bhanan told me to marry my boyfriend. I didn't want to, but I did. . . . [Later] I wrote to Yogi Bhanan, saying . . . I wanted a divorce. [Then] . . . I went to LA to see Yogi Bhanan. . . . he tore me apart. He shredded me to ribbons on every level. . . . I filed for divorce and Yogi Bhanan called and threatened me.

54: You had to circle your whole life around Yogi Bhanan. When he said, 'Sneeze,' you sneezed. When he said, 'Get divorced,' you did it. It was all a loyalty requirement.

235: I was very traumatized by my arranged marriage. . . I saw so many girls getting married to a terrible person.

One Reporter stated their understanding of Yogi Bhanan's motive for marrying strangers to one another:

175: Yogi Bhanan would have people stand up [in public gatherings] and he would say, 'You are getting married tomorrow morning.' One of his favorite methods of manipulating his students was to intentionally marry people who were ill-suited for each other so they would both be more loyal to him than to each other.

Children: Eight Reporters explained the harm inflicted on them and their children by Yogi Bhanan's practice of separating children from their parents. Examples follow.

198: A huge area of damage is the destruction of families that was endemic in 3HO. . . . When my son was 3, we were advised to send him to a large ashram because he 'wasn't in group consciousness' and didn't know his full name . . . . I was bereft. This longed-for child was gone, inaccessible to me . . . . Bless bless bless our children. They are the real victims in this whole wreckage.

35: I was seven years old. Yogi Bhanan instructed my parents and others to have their children sent to a different set of parents and child swap. My older sister and I were sent to [location]. There were derelict trailers. We lived with [description of the family]. I was traumatized, neglected, abused, wore dirty clothes, dirty everything.

158: My mother converted when I was four or five years old. When I was six, Yogi Bhanan told my mom that parents are terrible for children. I lived in [state] with five different families.

54: [Yogi Bhanan wanted couples to] have children and then send them to India because parents don't know how to raise children. You curried favor by sending your child to India at

five years old. That freed you up to work full time in the organization and you were also raising a child in a better way because all American schools are messed up. But it also cut the cord between yourself and your child.

Control over procreation: Ten Reporters experienced Yogi Bhajan's control over their reproductive decisions. The control, however, was inconsistent. In some cases, he ordered an abortion. In other cases, he denied an abortion. In other cases, he told women they could not have children. Additionally, three Reporters commented more generally that they observed Yogi Bhajan's control over women's reproductive lives. Representative quotations for Reporters experiencing or observing control of reproductive decisions are below.

77: In [year] I was his nighttime attendant which meant we had regular sexual relations. Three or four years into my service I got pregnant – Yogi Bhajan directed me to have an abortion.

63: I was pregnant at [age] and the man I was dating was [age]. I went and spoke to Yogi Bhajan to tell him, and he said, 'Don't tell anybody, don't worry about it. We have a doctor; we'll take care of it.' Yogi Bhajan had me speak to a staff member to organize a trip to LA where I got an abortion.

158: I was a security guard at first, then a bodyguard, and then became pregnant – I was going to have an abortion . . . Yogi Bhajan would not let me get an abortion. Nothing happened without his permission . . . he said sex is to have a child and serve your husband.

46: During my marriage, Yogi Bhajan said I should not get pregnant . . . He would call every year in January to tell me he did not want me to get pregnant.

54. Yogi Bhajan told married people to get abortions – even married women. He framed it as 'Simply a medical procedure.'

## B. Findings

We recognize that not all individuals experience an organization in the same way. What is cult-like for some may not be cult-like for others who experience the same setting differently. Nonetheless, 14 Reporters' expressed their sense of living in an atmosphere they regarded as a cult. Their experiences conform to what authoritative sources<sup>54</sup> list as characteristics of cults and how people are impacted in cult-like organizations.

After weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhajan instituted practices that created an environment that was harmful to Reporters and that these practices facilitated his sexual misconduct and unethical behavior. Specifically, he subjugated students through fear of punishment and dictated many of their important life decisions, such as whether they had his permission to go college; whether, whom, and when to marry; and whether or not to have children. The net effect was to increase their dependence on him and limited the scope of their lives.

As reported in Section 7.1, many Supporters made positive statements in support of Yogi Bhajan. Many of those making such statements said they could not accept that the allegations of

---

<sup>54</sup> For example, see Tilgner L., Dowie T.K., and Denning N. Recovery from church, institutional, and cult abuse, *Integrative Psychology*, July 2015, page 8 and Freedom of Mind Resource Center <https://freedomofmind.com/bite-model/>.



sexual misconduct on the part of Yogi Bhanjan might be accurate. Their reasons included that they themselves never saw any inappropriate behavior, thought everything he did was for the benefit of the students, and/or did not believe such a holy person could do the things that the Reporters alleged.

It is possible that these Supporters simply were not aware of the various methods that Yogi Bhanjan employed to manipulate the behavior of those in close association with him. As noted by Reporter #209, above, most members of the community were oblivious to what was going on behind the scenes. A relatively small number of people had more access to the inner workings of 3HO/Sikh Dharma than the vast majority of Yogi Bhanjan's students had and even those who had access were not able to see the whole picture or to easily extricate themselves from his influence. The abuses within his inner circle were also facilitated by this large, adoring population of Supporters who believed that Yogi Bhanjan could not and would not engage in the subjugating practices described here by some Reporters.

## 7.6.2. Methods Employed by Yogi Bhajan to Control Students

### A. Information from Reports

As noted in the previous section, Yogi Bhajan instituted several general, *organizational practices* that created an environment that enabled sexual and related misconduct. In addition to those organizational practices, in this section, we present statements about specific methods he employed to control *individuals* as well as a description of why some Reporters stayed in painful relationships with him.

Over all of the following categories below are 42 reports; this number is higher than the number of Reporters because individuals told about more than one way in which Yogi Bhajan controlled their behavior. Representative quotations regarding each of Yogi Bhajan's methods of controlling individual students appear below.

### Quid Pro Quo Statements

Eight individuals reported that Yogi Bhajan controlled them through the use of quid pro quo statements: 'If this, then that.' Examples of such statements appear below.

54: Yogi Bhajan said, 'If you go to grad school, you cannot marry the man you love. You have to make a choice.'

169: He [Yogi Bhajan] said, 'If you cut your hair, I will slit your throat.'

250: Yogi Bhajan's first agenda was, 'What can I get out of this?' Financial, emotional, sexually, structurally – his fingers were entwined in everything. He told me, 'If you are going to be my follower, do what I tell you to do, or I will never talk to you again.'

137: Yogi Bhajan publicly shamed us [#137 and her partner]. He said, 'If you go with him, I will ostracize you and your families.'

65: Yogi Bhajan would say, 'If you stick with me you will be rich and taken care of.'

Seven Reporters witnessed Yogi Bhajan using quid pro quo statements. Representative quotations appear below.

46: [Speaking about a married couple] I saw [name] and [name] come to see Yogi Bhajan at a Khalsa Council meeting. They walked in and Yogi Bhajan said to [the husband], 'You are not making enough money [for the company]. If you don't make enough money, I will cut off [your wife's] breasts. They all laughed. He said, '[wife's name] has to lose weight. If she doesn't lose weight and you don't make more money, I will make her divorce you and make her mine.'

234: [Speaking about a woman in the community who had had an affair that became public.] Yogi Bhajan used that affair to bring [woman's name] onto his staff. He said to her that 'You have to choose him or me. If you choose him, then I and everyone you know will have nothing to do with you.'

284: The room was always filled with people. Yogi Bhajan would curse and scream at people. He would yell, 'If you leave you will be a whore in the street. If your kid does x, then y will happen.' . . . When he said these things, the consequence was always complete and utter failure.

### Promises

Four individuals reported that Yogi Bhanjan controlled them through the use of promises. They said that none of the promises were kept. Examples follow.

44: He promised me that I could [fulfill a personal goal] and that I would be a great healer if I served him. I understood that he was saying, 'If you are mine, then . . . [you can have] anything you want.'

137: He told me I would be the next Mahan Tantric. He told me I was a saint. He made me feel special.

### Threats

Nine Reporters stated that Yogi Bhanjan controlled them through the use of threats. Examples of threats they experienced follow.

2: I wanted out. . . . He said he could arrange for me to be in a car that would go over a cliff and no one would know. . . . Death threats feel real. As long as he was alive, I thought he would kill me.

124: [From the mother of a 15 year old daughter] In an upscale hotel in Santa Fe, Yogi Bhanjan immediately blasted [our daughter] unmercifully and publicly in front of his entire entourage and several hotel guests, calling her disparaging names and specifically threatening to send her to [another nation] where she could at least charge for her services as a prostitute. [Later he told the parents] 'You better keep her away from that boy or I'll have her sold into white slavery.'

167: Upon hearing of our intervention [on behalf of two minor teenage girls who were having private sessions with Yogi Bhanjan], Yogi Bhanjan became enraged at both of us and threatened our livelihoods, careers, and reputations, and proceeded to slander both of us for the next 15 years post leaving the group shortly after confronting him. He referred to me in public as a lying homo and to my former wife as a betraying slut.

Five other Reporters spoke of witnessing Yogi Bhanjan threatening his students. Examples follow.

175: I spent many afternoons in Bhanjan's living room during [dates] and was a first-hand witness to his manipulation of dozens of students who came to him for advice, or whom he called in for a dressing down. He would often try to frighten people into obeying him with spiritual threats, such as, 'If you leave 3HO I don't know how long my prayers can continue to protect you.'

188: After we had lost all our money [doing things Yogi Bhanjan ordered], Yogi Bhanjan began a cruel campaign of shunning, shaming, and humiliating [my husband]. Others joined in, maybe ordered to do so, maybe just out of cruelty. Every time Yogi Bhanjan saw [my husband] in public he would blast him and humiliate him, threatening physical violence, calling him vile names, and saying he was a traitor. He also sent threatening messages to [my husband] through community members. Once, at the airport, Yogi Bhanjan screamed [a specific, violent threat]. Another time the abuse was so bad that [my husband] passed out and fell at Yogi Bhanjan's feet, who kicked at him, calling him names. These things happened in private and at public events in Santa Fe... Others joined in as Yogi Bhanjan's mouthpieces,

cornering [my husband] at Sunday services or after yoga classes to lecture him and humiliate him. This went on for at least a year. It broke my husband.

170: Once I heard him [Yogi Bhanan] screaming in Punjabi on the phone, which I understand thanks to eight years in India, 'I have only to make one call and your dead body will be floating down the Ganges river! You sister fucker!'

### **Slander**

Four Reporters stated that Yogi Bhanan used slander, banishment from the community, and public shaming to control them personally. Examples follow.

2: People who ran were blackmailed. I had an affair and, when it was public, it was a big scene. He then did a different scam – a smear campaign.

3: I was not threatened but I was demonized. Yogi Bhanan spread rumors about something he said I had done – it was something horrible that I didn't do but I was banished from the community anyway.

41: [In year] Yogi Bhanan called everyone who was my friend and said, 'You can either be my student or be [name of #41] friend because he is a bad man.' Then he called me and said, 'Did you see what I did to you today? What did you think?' I said, 'You saved me a lot of money on Christmas cards.'

Five other individuals said they witnessed Yogi Bhanan using slander to control his students. Examples follow.

86: Everyone knew that if anyone talked, then bad things would happen to them. They would be married off quickly, banished, or painted as crazy. I had a constant feeling of being threatened.

65: No one felt comfortable doing anything – we did not trust each other. If anyone said anything, Yogi Bhanan would say it was not true and call them a slanderer. A slut.

282: I was conditioned by him to believe the slander he spread to cover his illicit behavior. His slander and smearing of others made him appear innocent in the eyes of the community at large. It was different than the direct abuse many survivors are telling their story of. His indirect abuse is important to highlight because it facilitated his direct abuse to continue. . . . While slander trickled down from Harbhajan at the top for abuses he covered up, his rejected students were in flight, abruptly leaving their friends and, at times, their families far behind. I understand why and how he got away with so much abuse. He slandered those who questioned his actions -- smearing their reputations while convincing us of his innocence. He deceived me with lies to look in another direction outside of his abuses and crimes while manipulating me to pity him. . . . All the while, his abuses went unrecognized, dismissed, or minimized by the community -- a community in denial of a teacher who could do no wrong.

### **Harassing Phone Calls**

Five Reporters stated that they experienced harassing phone calls from Yogi Bhanan. Representative quotations appear below.



46: Yogi Bhanan told me he would call on my honeymoon. I was to use the code, 'Everything's fine' to mean that we had sex. He announced to a gathering that we had sex. It was embarrassing. . . . When I married, Yogi Bhanan was against it. He said, 'You could have had me, but you chose him. I could have given you the world, he can give you nothing.'

78: When Yogi Bhanan married me to that man, he expected that we would consummate that night. I was a virgin – 20 years old. I had never dated. The culture was that you didn't date unless you intended to marry. Yogi Bhanan expected sex. I did not. He told the whole room, 'You guys are going to do this' [have sex on your wedding night]. There were always a lot of people around -- 15-20. After we left the reception, Yogi Bhanan and a group went to the El Dorado hotel. He called me to see if I had done it. I said, 'No.' . . . I was terrified. . . . We flew to [state] for our honeymoon and tried to consummate there. Yogi Bhanan called every day. Sex for me was horrible – painful. Now I see myself as a sexual assault survivor – Yogi Bhanan made me have sex with [the man he had chosen for me].

158: I grew up a fanatic Sikh. I was a good soldier. When Yogi Bhanan told me to get married, I did. I had an arranged marriage at 20 to a man I did not like. I was a virgin. Yogi Bhanan called every night and asked, 'Did you do it yet?'

One other individual said they witnessed a person being harassed by Yogi Bhanan's phone calls:

174: [Name] was nervous and upset. Yogi Bhanan called 2-3 times a day to talk to her. [Name] said she did not feel like talking to us about what was happening. . . . She did not feel safe talking to us because she was afraid he [Yogi Bhanan] would find out. [Name] was 19 or 20.

### **Guarding Others to Monitor their Movements**

One Reporter stated that Yogi Bhanan had assigned them to guard a young woman. Another Reporter said they were with someone who was being accompanied by an armed guard.

51: At a Winter Solstice in the 1980s, I was asked to guard [name]. I was guarding a 19-20-year-old and reporting back any movement. . . . Yogi Bhanan was afraid she would escape. . . . Another time, I was guarding her cabin. My job was to be awake and let Yogi Bhanan know if she left. I was told not to prevent it but to report to [him]. It was 1-2 days. Then something shifted and she went somewhere else. I felt like something fishy was going on that no one wanted to let me in on. I was to report to [name], the guy in charge.

235: I remember that [name] was always under guard. There was an armed guard around her at all times if she was not at Yogi Bhanan's side. On a walk with her at the Ranch in Española, . . . an armed guard was with us. . . . Yogi Bhanan asked [her] to take me for a walk and talk to me about what life would be like if I left. . . . There was an armed guard with us at all times.

### **Yogi Bhanan Telling a Woman she was his Wife**

Four Reporters said that Yogi Bhanan told them they were his wife. At the time, he was already married and had three children. Telling a woman that she was his wife was a method Yogi Bhanan used to hold a woman in a close, special relationship. Representative quotations regarding this type of control are below.

46: One morning I got a call from a staff person saying, 'Yogi Bhanan wants to give you a wedding ring and he wants you to wear it.' I put it on chain around my neck. I didn't want to wear it but I still wanted to honor the gift. He saw it on the chain and said, 'All my wives wear wedding rings.' I thought I was too young. Yogi Bhanan said, 'It means you are taken' – he liked that. . . . When I was alone with him at night in his room for night duty when I was 18 and he asked me to get in bed with him and make out with him, he said that all his wives do this.

86: They picked me up at the airport and we went to a fitness club for lunch with the whole entourage. Yogi Bhanan turned to [name] and said, 'You are my [adjective] wife' and then he said to me, 'You are my [adjective] wife.'

Another individual provided a description of Yogi Bhanan's method for securing sexual favors:

271: Yogi Bhanan surrounded himself with multiple 'wives' as he would call them. In his later years, he moved into a mode of operation when at some point he decided that he would like younger wives who were not attracted to him physically in the way that women were when he was younger. Some young women got out early, and some didn't.

Here was his basic goal: Obtain young wives who would have sex with him, and then who would stand by quietly as they understood that others were having sex with him, keep loyal to him, and never tell anyone. His methods were sexual assault, physical abuse, sexual touching and language, verbal abuse, manipulation, porn, and others that I probably don't know about. Throughout the years, he employed these methods, reading different women and adjusting to meet his goals, with no concern for these women in their physical or mental well-being.

### **Reasons Why Women Stayed in Relationships with Yogi Bhanan**

Although Reporters experienced painful and/or degrading experiences with Yogi Bhanan, many stayed in the relationship. A variety of reasons for staying were given; among them were obedience to their teacher, a desire to protect his reputation, a feeling that they were special, and wanting to please him. Without being asked in the interview about their reasons for staying with Yogi Bhanan, six Reporters reflected on their rationale. Representative quotations appear below:

2: I was honored and yet devastated and shocked [when Yogi Bhanan gave me a ring and said I was his wife]. How could I be married to him?! How could that be? He was already married. He had a wife, three children, and numerous grandchildren. And today? I thought, 'I got married to my spiritual teacher, no less. This is crazy.' But I didn't dispute him. What he said and did was for my benefit, for my growth, towards my spiritual destiny. Even though I was confused, I felt ecstatic. It was quite a feeling. All that day, I kept watching to see if anyone would notice the ring on my finger. Did they see that SSS had put this ring on my finger? Did my face look different? I certainly felt different. No one noticed, except to say that I looked perky and beautiful that day. My secret was mine alone. It was magic. It was [date].

86: I was eager to please [Yogi Bhanan] -- to show him I could do things. . . . [Later] I was angry when I found out that he was having sex with other women. I thought I was the only one. . . . Why was he doing this to me? But I would not confront him about things; it was heretical to question him. I did whatever he said so I would look good in his eyes.

77: I was filled with anger and shame – mine was not an appropriate relation of teacher to student. I could not come forward. I did not want to betray my teacher. And I worried about the impact on the community. [Sex with Yogi Bhajan] had nothing to do with being a Sikh. It was a student to a teacher. My understanding was that no matter what a spiritual teacher asked of a student, the student should obey even if the teacher said to jump off a bridge. That a student obeys a teacher no matter what he asked. I had been told that Yogi Bhajan tests people. It was part of me wanting to be loved and accepted.

68: It [sex with Yogi Bhajan] was a very heady experience. I felt special; it was quite an honor. He was married . . . but I trusted him, my spiritual teacher.

## **B. Findings**

In public social media made available to us, we found no confirmation or disconfirmation of these allegations of methods Yogi Bhajan used to control individual students' behavior. We also found no inconsistencies when we tested the alignment of allegations of methods of control and other information made available to us.

After weighing all of the relevant information available to us, we have sufficient evidence to conclude it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhajan employed a variety of methods to control his students including compartmentalization, quid pro quo, promises, threats, slander, phone calls, guarding, and/or telling women they were his wife. The credibility of our conclusion is strengthened by the fact that 20 individuals witnessed Yogi Bhajan employing one or more method to control others.

### **7.7. Summary of Findings from Reports of Harm**

We have noted elsewhere in this report that many members of the 3HO/ Sikh Dharma community did not have damaging experiences with Yogi Bhanan. Rather, they stated several types of uplifting encounters (see Section 7.1). Since Yogi Bhanan's followers were distributed around the globe, it is to be expected that, even though many attended various gatherings to receive his teachings, not everyone was in his immediate, daily environment and so did not experience the proximity that the Reporters experienced. Further, even those who said they were in Yogi Bhanan's immediate environment – on guard duty, preparing and serving food, driving him to different locations, etc. – were not present behind closed doors where the most egregious harms allegedly were perpetrated.

This section of the report summarizes the number of claims of harm reported in the previous Sections, 7.2 – 7.6; see Table 2 on the following page. While the investigation included 36 individuals who were Reporters of harm, each individual experienced more than one type of harm during and often long after their tenure with Yogi Bhanan. It should be noted that the length of time that Reporters were serving him varied from one year to 26 years, allowing for multiple opportunities for Yogi Bhanan to interact with any particular individual. Therefore, the number of claims of harm is greater than the number of individual Reporters.



Table 2, below, summarizes the number of claims within each type of claim.

**Table 2**

<b>Type of Claim</b>	<b>Number of Claims</b>
<b>Allegations of Sexual Battery and Sexual Abuse</b>	<b>24 Total</b>
Non-consensual Sex	4
Physical Injury during Sex with Yogi Bhajan	8
Unwanted Touching of Intimate Parts	9
Unwanted Exposure to Pornography	3
<b>Allegations of Sexual Harassment</b>	<b>30 Total</b>
Exposure to Sexually Offensive Language	17
Directing Women to Shave their Pubic Hair	6
Sexual Propositioning and Coaching	4
Asking Women to Describe Their Sexual Behavior with Others	3
<b>Allegations of Unethical Behavior</b>	<b>30 Total</b>
Non-celibate Behavior by Yogi Bhajan	12
Sex with Multiple Partners	7
Directing Women to have Sex with Other Women	11
<b>Factors that Enabled Misconduct</b>	<b>Number of Claims</b>
<b>Environment that Enabled Sexual and Related Misconduct</b>	<b>115 Total</b>
Organizational Practices that Subjugated Students	73
Methods employed by Yogi Bhajan to Control Students	42

## 8. Conclusion

### Holding Multiple Realities

In most cases of alleged or proven sexual misconduct on the part of a spiritual leader, the community fractures.<sup>55</sup> There are those who side with the leader and say, among other things, that the individual(s) speaking out are lying, that they seduced the leader, and/or that the relationship was simply an affair between consenting adults. Others believe the individual(s) claiming to have been harmed and do not excuse the leader's behavior. Yet others simply leave the community, taking their energy and financial support with them.

When a spiritual teacher is accused of engaging in misconduct, some paint them with a negative brush, overlooking or denying the good they may have offered to their followers. Yogi Bhanan is no different. In their reports of support for him, Yogi Bhanan's Supporters made it clear that he touched many people deeply and offered a path forward in their lives that was uplifting if not redemptive. Conclusions about the likelihood of his misconduct need not deny or erase the good that he extended to many who overcame destructive habits in their lives and/or found a pathway to a deeper relationship with God. The fact that he offered these gifts to some followers cannot and need not be denied.

Nonetheless, the reports of harm present a different and troubling perspective. Based on reports of harm from 36 people, the investigation concludes that it is more likely than not that Yogi Bhanan engaged in several types of sexual misconduct and abused his power as a spiritual leader. The specific sexual misconduct included various forms of sexual battery, sexual assault, and sexual harassment as well as conduct judged to be unethical according to the Sikh vows and inconsistent with Yogi Bhanan's own teachings. We also conclude that by behaving in such a way, he abused the power entrusted to him as a spiritual leader.

Furthermore, Yogi Bhanan's opportunity to engage in sexual misconduct was facilitated by his creation of an organizational environment characterized by secrecy, threats, and other practices. Additionally, he used various methods of control to manipulate specific individuals (many of them his Secretaries) to fulfill his own sexual desires, as well as his perceived organizational needs, often reportedly to help these individuals attain spiritual fulfillment.

We acknowledge that it is likely that not all individuals who had been harmed by Yogi Bhanan came forward to participate in this investigation. There are various reasons they may not have done so. These include the possibility that they left the community long ago, have moved on from their experiences, and do not wish to revisit the traumatic experience from years ago. Sexual abuse typically has lingering effects long after the abusive events and psychological recovery efforts.<sup>56</sup> The potential for re-traumatization in inquiries of this sort is clearly possible<sup>57</sup> so non-participants' caution is justified. Others may resist participating in an investigation out of the concern that they

---

<sup>55</sup> Frampton, E. L. (2006). Conflict Management: Selecting the right tools in B. A. Gaede (Ed.), *When a Congregation is Betrayed: Responding to clergy misconduct* (p. 30). Durham, NC: Alban Institute.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

might be identified, experience unwanted scrutiny of their behavior, or be subjected to ridicule or derision from past associates.

Finally, although some of the Reporters of harm may appear to have remained willingly in sexual relationships with Yogi Bhanan for several years, the student's consent cannot be assumed because of the power differential between a spiritual teacher and their students.<sup>58</sup> "Misconduct is not merely a sexual transgression. It involves a violation of power."<sup>59</sup>

### **Organizational Consequences of Misconduct**

For organizations in which sexual misconduct is acknowledged, organizational as well as individual level consequences to Reporters of Harm, occur. Among the typical organizational consequences are conflict within the community, anger or grief over loss of members, confusion about ethical norms, members being forced to reexamine the basis for their beliefs, damage to (and the need to repair) long-term relationships, and a vacuum of leadership. To recover from these traumatic shocks, considerable repair work is needed to restore a strong sense of community identity and solidarity.<sup>60</sup> Within 3HO/Sikh Dharma at this time, members are clearly divided, and much pain is evident.

### **Moving Forward**

Our findings of this investigation conclude that, more likely than not, Yogi Bhanan engaged in sexual and related misconduct. Our findings also shed light on the multiple realities perceived by members of 3HO/Sikh Dharma. In this report, we have acknowledged the convictions of Yogi Bhanan's Supporters as accurate representations of their beliefs about Yogi Bhanan as a teacher and have also acknowledged the legitimacy of the Reporters' experiences as well.

We suggest that success in holding both of these perspectives in the same container will require members to discern and enact the organization's collective purpose going forward. A key question for the community will be how to identify, restore, preserve, and take forward what is of core value to the community as a whole. Some Supporters said they view this moment in a historical context, noting the need for the organization to purge itself every thirty years or so. Others have suggested that the teachings can now prevail without the shadow of duplicity that has hung over the community for many years.

We offer a few additional questions for consideration: How could the voices of multiple women who allege sexual misconduct and abuse of power at the hands of Yogi Bhanan go unheeded for such a long time in a community rooted in compassion? Is such secrecy beneficial to the overall goals of

---

<sup>58</sup> Liberty, op cit.

<sup>59</sup> Grenz & Bell, 2001, op cit, p. 87.

<sup>60</sup> An Olive Branch, white paper on Clergy Misconduct and the Misuse of Power, 2017, <https://www.an-olive-branch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/An-Olive-Branch-White-Paper-on-Clergy-Misconduct-and-the-Misuse-of-Power.pdf>; Fortune, M. Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A handbook. Faith Trust Institute, 2009.

## An Investigation into Allegations of Yogi Bhanan's Sexual Misconduct

An Olive Branch Associates

August 10, 2020

3HO/Sikh Dharma? Going forward, can the community rally around Yogi Bhanan's own advice to "Follow the teachings, not the teacher?"

Finally, we understand that accepting the findings of this report, that is, the likelihood that Yogi Bhanan engaged in sexual misconduct, will continue to be difficult for some individuals in the community. Nonetheless, we respectfully suggest that reconciling with this likely truth and the damage it has done to some of its own may be a way for 3HO/Sikh Dharma to move forward.