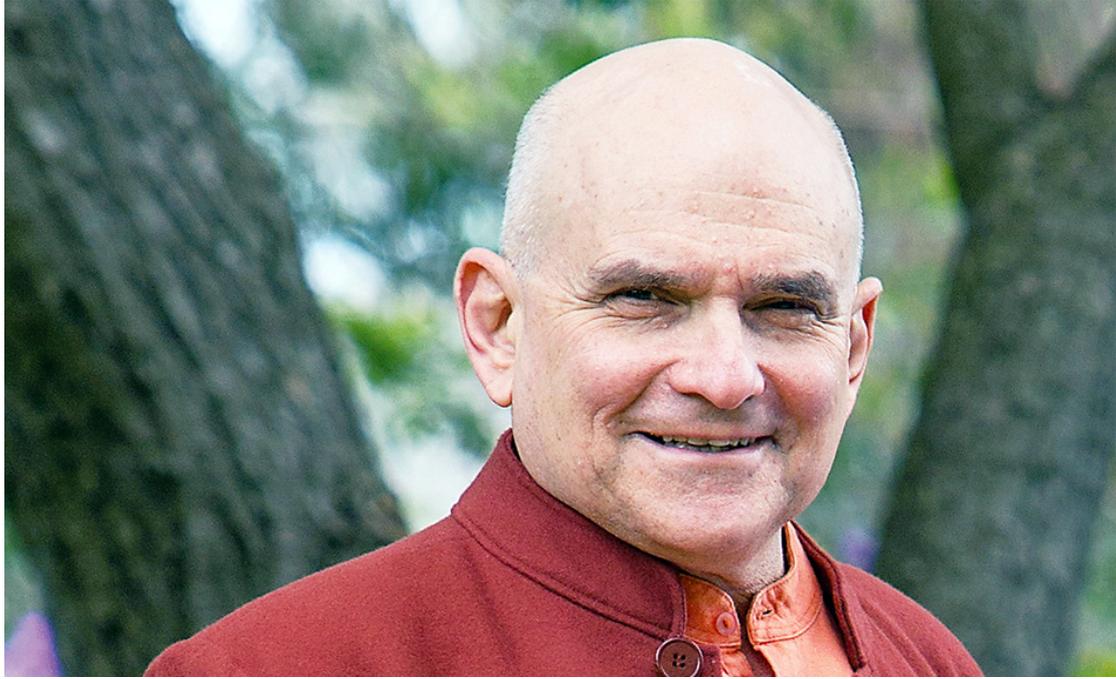


‘High priestess’ defends swami’s actions

January 26, 2015 - [Keith Platt](#)



Mediation: The Shiva School of Meditation and Yoga in Mt Eliza has appointed a mediator to restore calm after being rocked by claims of sexual impropriety by its spiritual leader, Swami Shankarananda. Picture: Gary Sissons

A LOYAL disciple of Mt Eliza-based guru Swami Shankarananda has defended criticism of his self-admitted sexual impropriety as being “a publicity stunt from those that would bring him down”.

The “high priestess” Rhonda “Vilasini” Reukers says one of the swami’s former disciples “is trying to destroy his credibility because he wants to be a guru himself”.

However, Callum Campbell, CEO of the Australian Mediation Association has been appointed to come up with a solution to the crisis enveloping the Shiva School of Meditation and Yoga in Tower Rd.

Swami Shankarananda has apologised to his followers for his actions and the school’s board of directors, while leaving him as spiritual director, has set up a sub-committee to write a code of conduct. ([‘Secret sex shakes yoga school’](#))

The statement issued by the ashram’s management committee said “many people are hurt, angry and confused”.

Ms Reukers – writing from Seminyak, Bali, where she and daughter Cindy run a yoga and meditation school – says she has been a disciple of Swami Shankarananda for 35 years.

“He [the disaffected former disciple] has exaggerated the numbers unbelievably high about the tantra [sexual] partners Swamiji has had over the years, who were all willing participants and now Swamiji is trying to protect them from the ordeal of being involved in a court case.”

Ms Reukers states that the truth about the claims of women being hurt at the Mt Eliza ashram “will come out in a court of law”.

The Siva school, through a spokesman, said it had received legal advice to the effect that no criminal laws had been broken and it was “an internal matter and we have not been contacted by the police”.

“It is unethical to publish something that is not the truth. Just a weapon against Swamiji who I see as the true victim,” Ms Reukers stated.

“I have been Swamiji’s disciple for 35 years and I know that this is not who he is. I have held every position around him. He is a loving, caring and constantly giving person. Who asks for very little. He never asks for money from his devotees. He used his inheritance to build the ashram. “Swami Shankarananda – also known as Swamiji (formerly known as Russell Kruckman) – has distributed a letter to attendees of the Shiva School of Meditation and Yoga apologising “to the community and to anyone who has been hurt by my actions or even by hearing of my actions”.

Meanwhile, the Shiva school is offering free counselling to “anyone who needs assistance” and a sub-committee has been appointed to write a code of conduct for everyone working for the ashram, including Swami Shankarananda.

The management committee of the residential ashram in Tower Rd said Swami Shankarananda – although never claiming to be “a sexual renunciant” or demanding celibacy from any of his students – had admitted it was inappropriate to keep “aspects of the teaching and his personal activities secret”.

“I know people are disappointed and upset. I apologise to them and ask their forgiveness,” Swami Shankarananda stated.

He said his “tantric activities have been the only blemish” during his more than 20 years as head of the Shiva school.

“As I have said, I have stopped them. When peace returns, perhaps I will speak and write about what is to be learned.

“I am open to a dialogue about the role of the guru and sannyasa in the modern west and also the place of sexuality in spiritual life – and other matters. We are pioneers, after all, and getting it all right isn’t easy.

“I don’t know how I could have been this stupid ... but I was. I beg your forgiveness.”

Ms Reukers using the name Vilasini has published a book, *Girl on Fire – Journey beyond madness*, which has been praised by Swami Shankarananda who advises readers to be “ready for a ride quite unlike any other. Rarely has the spiritual process been painted so colourfully and so directly”.

Part of the book’s blurb reads: “One major significant yogic thing happened on the last morning. As I went into the bathroom I suddenly felt that I was going to faint. I slid to the floor which was tiled and cool to the touch. In an instant; my whole genital area felt like it was on fire. I sat there amazed... God and I knew that the goddess Kundalini herself was working magic within this being called Vilas.”

There is one anonymous review on Amazon online bookstore: The story is a heart-warming experience of the author's journey dealing with her initiation into yoga (kundalini awakening) where her symptoms get misunderstood as a psychiatric condition. She fights for her dignity and freedom to have her experience. It was the old battle of good overcoming evil. It was also eat pray love without the eat. I couldn't put it down."

Bali Shiva Yoga, run by Ms Reukers and her daughter Cindy, is based in busy beachside Seminyak and offers to "teach meditation, read the Tarot and meet for Satsang. We also do our Retreats at a wonderful resort in Ubud".

The centre's website says "people wrongly think tantra is a sexual cult" but explains that "Kashmir Shaivism does include sexuality but not as an exclusion of everything else. It is just another tool to reach the divine experience".

Swamiji also has contributed to the unfolding of yoga in the West through a dynamic form of self-inquiry called the Shiva Process, "a practical and easy methodology to improve relationships, achieve personal freedom and improve the quality of everyday life".

As well as teaching yoga and meditation, the centre in Bali being run by Ms Reukers and her daughter is promoting the Cindy Soul Collection.

The "unique products" being sold under the party plan concept include "Italian jewellery, yoga inspired clothing, quality make-up and so much more".

The book by Vilasini is also being re-launched. A sanskrit dictionary defines the word vilasini as: wife; mistress; charming or lively or coquettish woman.