

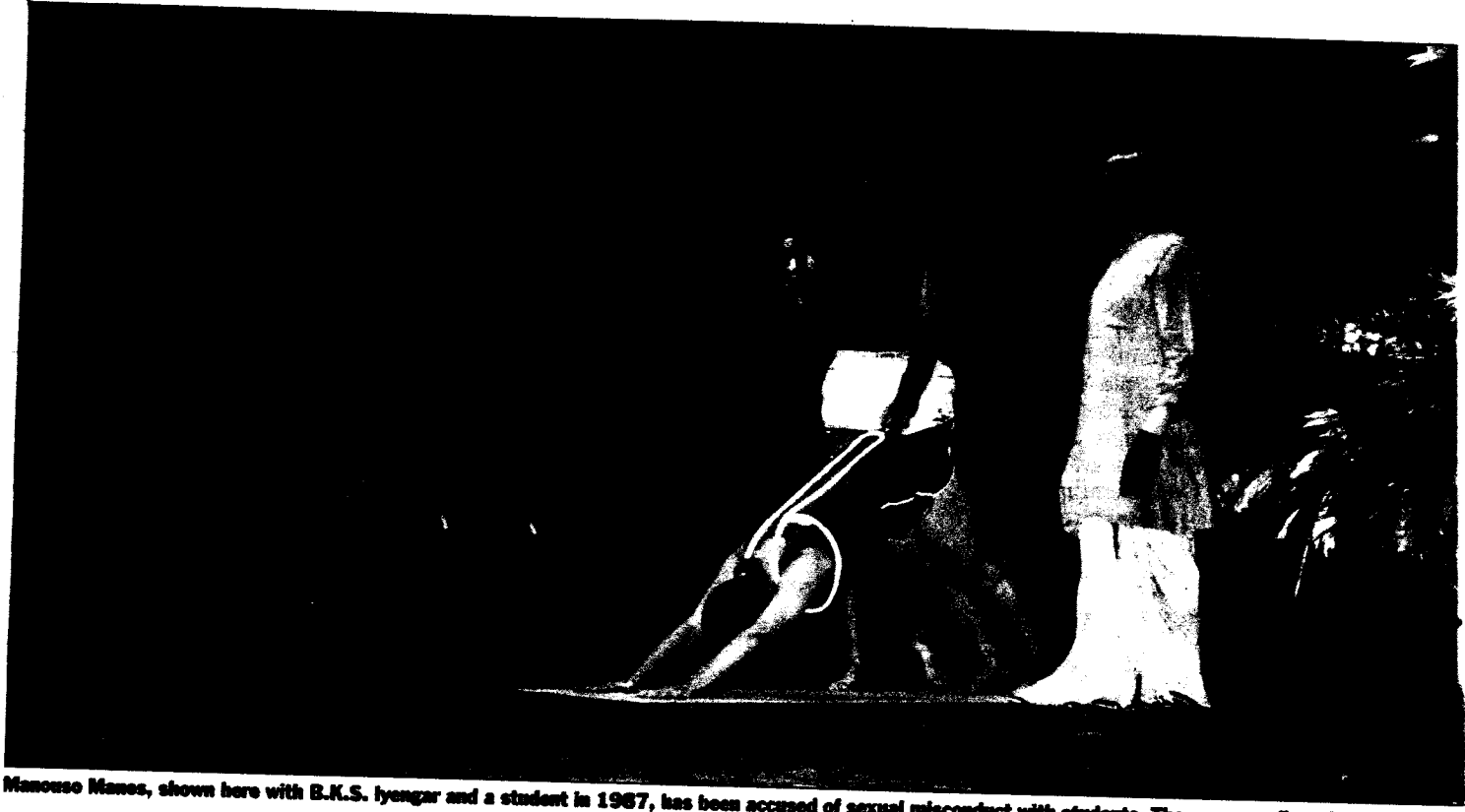
Secrets of the Santa Cruz Mountains

**Yoga promises
a healing
of both body
and spirit.**

**But a sex scandal
has caused strife
among its
practitioners.**

OLD TEMPTATIONS IN THE NEW AGE

BETRAYAL



Manouse Manes, shown here with B.K.S. Iyengar and a student in 1987, has been accused of sexual misconduct with students. There are no allegations against Iye

of
TRUST

YOGA IS THE MOST POWERFUL force in the universe, according to the most prominent yoga teacher world, B.K.S. Iyengar of India.

the purely physical plane, devotees say, yoga can energize personal energy, reduce stress and ease such problems as back pain. A deeper yoga practice can be profound therapy, a serious investigation of life as Freudian or Jungian

as. e's how the therapeutic process might unfold. A prospective student, watching a yoga program on Channel 9, decides to get out of the chair and learn a few yoga poses, known as "asanas." There are about 200 asanas in yoga. The point of doing asanas is to relax and balance the

range in difficulty from apparently simple triangle pose, which involves spreading the legs and twisting the trunk; to more intricate headstand; to poses that take years even to attempt, where the arms point to the torso twists south and the legs fly off toward Bombay.

After a few weeks of watching the TV teacher and attending a local class or taking a private session. A live teacher is vital.

Teachers are trained to help each individual body adapt to the demands of a pose. Often, a feeling of safety develops between teacher and student; this contributes significantly to the learning process. The first months of yoga can be a wonderful time; after years of stress, students begin to feel it is to have a relaxed, balanced, flexible body. It's exciting, not scary, because the possibility of a lifetime is being lived. The personal guidance of a teacher can help focus the student and allay the fear.

Stress usually slows after the first few months. The process of relaxing and unfolding becomes subtle and gradual. Some

students get discouraged and quit; many others level off their practice and are content with feeling better. But some students stick with the discipline, and for them, the teacher becomes indispensable—keeping their spirits up over the difficult years of daily practice, teaching the seemingly infinite subtleties of relaxing and opening, demonstrating a belief that one's true self, one's core self, is OK. Demonstrating, in short, the value of trust.

SOMETIMES THINGS GO wrong. Occasionally, the relationship between teacher and student is betrayed.

A leading teacher at the Bay Area's foremost yoga school has admitted publicly that he engaged in sexual misconduct with female students. Among several allegations against the teacher, Manouso Manos, 39, are charges that he fondled female students during classes. Manos said at a yoga convention last June that he had "disgraced" himself.

The case has been kept under wraps by the yoga community; this article is the first disclosure of it to the general public. Some yoga teachers and students are outraged not only by the sexual misconduct, but also by the subsequent unwillingness of the yoga world to disclose the case to the general public. They question the decision made last October by the school, the Iyengar Yoga Institute of San Francisco, to allow Manos back to teach classes open to members of the public who have no knowledge of his alleged misbehavior.

"I was sexually abused by my father as a small child," says Stephanie Lawrence, 46, an artist and yoga student living in Mill Valley. "I came to the San Francisco Iyengar institute six years ago to heal those wounds. Fortunately, I did not study with Manouso when I first came to the institute; had I been molested in a yoga class, it could have easily re-enacted the molestation I suf-

fered as a child, and the result could have been psychically disastrous."

Some observers believe this case also points up fundamental flaws in the Iyengar style of teaching yoga. That style, following the ideas of B.K.S. Iyengar, is the leading instructional method for yoga in the United States today, with about 500 teachers. There are some 100 Iyengar schools around the country.

The allegations against Manos are also a reminder that a series of sex scandals has plagued the spiritual/New Age community in the United States in recent years. They raise again the question of what constitutes appropriate behavior between men in positions of power or influence, such as teachers, therapists and gurus, and women who are their students, patients and followers.

SINCE OCTOBER, AT LEAST five teachers at the Iyengar Yoga Institute of San Francisco have resigned to protest the school's handling of the Manos case.

The school, located on 27th Avenue in the city's Sunset District, is the Harvard University of yoga, home base for many of America's leading instructors and a mecca for students from around the world. The school's showpiece is its respected teacher-training program. The non-profit institute is licensed by the state of California as a vocational school.

Manos has for years taught well-attended classes at the school, and conducted workshops around the country.

Allegations of sexual improprieties caused the institute to suspend him as a teacher in October 1989. Sources say that "many" allegations against Manos have been reported in letters and phone calls to the institute in the last two years. The charges have been reviewed by at least a dozen people at the institute. The misconduct is said to have occurred both at the institute and in yoga workshops

**Spiritual
force
encounters
human passions
as a sex scandal
erupts in
yet another
New Age
community.**

By Bob Frost

WHAT IS YOGA?

THE SHORT ANSWER IS THAT yoga is a series of physical exercises—twists, balances and stretches—designed to help people feel better. The long answer is too long to go very far into in this space.

Yoga developed as part of the Hindu faith; it has many branches, each with its own esoteric liturgy that requires many pages to explain.

The branch concerned with twists, balances and stretches, as well as meditation—the branch that interests many Americans who get into yoga—is hatha yoga.

Yoga came into being in India over the course of centuries.

According to *Yoga: The Technology of Ecstasy*, by Georg Feuerstein, the discipline has roots in the northern Indian peninsula, at least 2,000 years ago, when priests did complicated ritual chants, which needed to be done with absolute accu-

cy if the gods were to hear and respond. Techniques for breathing and concentration came out of the need for precision.

The goal of hatha yoga students is physical well-being and/or spiritual grace. Many yoga books, such as the recent one by actress Raquel Welch, put almost all their emphasis on physical improvements.

Some students report that physical improvements lead to a deeper feeling for spiritual things. A few people plunge all the way into yoga, pursuing, sometimes for decades, its ultimate promise—transcendence; an intense feeling, writes Feuerstein, of "God-realization, or Self-realization."

The most eloquent description of yoga written in this century is the 600-word foreword to violinist Yehudi Menuhin did for B.K.S. Iyengar's book *Light on Yoga*. Menuhin writes, "The practice of Yoga induces a primary sense of measure and proportion. Reduced to our own body, our first instrument, we learn to play it, drawing from it maximum resonance and harmony. With unflagging patience we refine and animate every cell as we return daily to the attack, unlocking and liberating capacities otherwise condemned to frustration and death. . . . Whoever has had the privilege of receiving Mr. Iyengar's attention, or of witnessing the precision, refinement and beauty of his art, is introduced to that vision of perfection and innocence which is man as first created." Iyengar has codified a school of thought about how best to teach and perform hatha yoga. He focuses on extremely precise movements of muscle and bone; emphasizes strength, stamina, stability and balance; places considerable importance on several standing poses; and uses specially designed props, such



B.K.S. Iyengar's *Light on Yoga* made yoga popular in America.

as benches and ropes.

There are many other schools of thought today created by other gurus. Within the yoga community, differences in these approaches are discussed with some of the fervor of 11th century Christians debating the existence of the Trinity, or SDS factions seeking the true path to revolution in dorm rooms at Columbia in the spring of '68.

To the layperson, distinctions between yoga schools might appear confusing and unimportant; yoga teachers are aware of this, and there have been efforts toward ecumenism. Some other styles of instruction are Integral Yoga; Viniyoga, the style followed by respected Marin County teacher Richard Miller; and Divine Life, the Chidananda branch of which is followed by popular TV teacher Liliya Folan.

The overall health and image of yoga in America today appears to be robust and shock-proof, judging from steady, often increasing numbers of students at many schools; consistent sales of numerous books; and daily yoga TV shows.

The circulation of the bi-monthly magazine *Yoga Journal*, based in Berkeley, has steadily grown from 300 when it was launched in 1975 to 60,000 today.

Despite celebrity followers and daily TV shows, the yoga community sees itself as outside the mainstream of American life, and therefore treads carefully. It worries, for example, about attacks and criticisms by some Christian groups. Some fundamentalists consider yoga a branch of Satanism or a "doorway for Satan," according to the religious tract *Prepare for War*, by Rebecca Brown, M.D. And in December 1989, the Vatican told Catholics they should not substitute things like yoga and Zen for Christian prayer.

—B.F.

Some yoga students say physical improvement leads to a deeper feeling for spiritual things.



A pose for meditation is demonstrated for a Saratoga class by Ramanand Patel, one of yoga's most respected teachers.

Manos has given around country. No police charges lawsuits have been filed against Manos.

According to three separate sources familiar with the case, all of whom insisted on anonymity, Manos allegedly rubbed his pelvis against women students in a sexually provocative way; the women were doing yoga poses, touched them in private places during classes under guise of pose adjustments, asked certain women students individually into an institute classroom after group class where, behind closed doors, performed sexually charged physical manipulations, and had intercourse.

When he was informed of the specific allegations made against him would be cited in this article, Manos declined comment other than this written statement: "Though there are inaccuracies in the statement made in this article I do recognize the gravity of the subject matter. I urge anyone who is involved in a relationship that may be inappropriate (incest, employer-employee, minister-rabbi-parishioner, therapist-patient, teacher-student) to seek outside help and guidance."

The director of the institute, Mary Peirce, did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Accusations of sexual contact between Manos and students first surfaced in 1987. Confronted with them, Manos promised an institute representative he would not repeat the offense. In the late summer and fall of 1989, instances of sexual contact were again reported, and he was suspended as a teacher in October.

In the course of meetings and interviews about the case, Manos apparently never declared that he was innocent of charges of sexual misconduct. The master and mentor of the San Francisco Iyengar school, B.K.S. Iyengar, reviewed the allegations last year and discussed them with Manos. Iyengar, who had the authority to lift Manos' teacher certification or impose other restrictions, decided a suspension was not warranted and asked the yoga community to forgive Manos. The school

board voted to reinstate him in October 1990.

One of the leading yoga teachers in the United States, Judith Lasater, then resigned from the institute's board of directors because, she says, "I did not want to be associated professionally with such behavior." At least four other teachers—Jennie Arndt, Toni Montez, Donald Moyer and Mary Lou Weprin—resigned in protest from the school's teacher training faculty.

A STUDENT WHO MADE AN allegation against Manos agreed to describe her experience on the condition that she remain anonymous. The incident, she says, took place in 1986 in a city where Manos had gone to give a workshop.

"He had been very flirtatious with women in the class—touching women he didn't know well, putting his arm around their waist and so on. This bothered me a little; it set a strange tone for the class.

"At the end of the class we all lay down in Savasana." (This is the traditional last pose of Iyengar sessions. Students lie on their backs, close their eyes, breathe in a measured way, and deeply relax for about 10 minutes.) "He came by and put a block under my shoulders." (A standard yoga procedure to elevate and open the chest.) "After about three minutes he came by and put his hand inside my leotard and, basically, gave me a breast massage.

"It made me feel horrible. I didn't know what to do. It scared me. I didn't know if I had done something to bring this on; all the victim's guilt and shame, Am I responsible? Am I at fault?"

"These thoughts went on for two minutes. I then said, 'That's enough.' He said, 'Oh, sorry' and walked away. I didn't talk about it to him afterwards. I felt ashamed and embarrassed—mortified, actually.

"I carried guilt around for a long time, and the feeling that I should have stopped it immediately, and maybe I had done something to cause it—but I hadn't.

"One of the reasons it was so hard to accept was that it had been done in the context of

yoga. Yoga is a thing we turn to in order to begin opening our bodies; there needs to be that element of trust there because it can be a very vulnerable experience.

"It went on for two minutes because I was in shock, basically. It took me that long to realize what was happening and to realize it was wrong—I had crazy thoughts like, 'Oh, this is the way they do yoga in California, where he's from, and if I react he'll think I'm uptight about my body.' He was the teacher, after all; students really abdicate a lot of power to teachers. I've had many thoughts since then about what I should have done—instantly get up and say, 'Get your hands off me, you pig!'

"I didn't report it right away because I was ashamed and embarrassed, and felt guilty, thinking I would be judged and not believed. It was easier to go on and forget about it. And it wasn't as if I had been raped.

"I felt like I was the only one

Iyengar said he views the Manos case as an opportunity to "teach one and all" the importance of high ethical conduct in yoga: "This is a stepping stone for others to follow. I see it from this angle, as a learning experience." When he was asked if, as some sources claim, he believes Manos was seduced by some of the women, Iyengar said, "Yes, naturally. Unless a woman shows willingness, the man will not act."

it had happened to; when I heard that it had happened to others I thought I could come forward and be believed."

MANOUSO MANOS, WHO lives in San Francisco, is a native of the United States. He became prominent as a yoga teacher in 1984 after successfully organizing and managing the first national Iyengar convention, in San Francisco. He is perceived as B.K.S. Iyengar's "right-hand man" in America and as one of the master's "star teachers."

As a forceful advocate for Iyengar's yoga and organizational ideas, Manos came into serious conflict with others in the Iyengar circle who were more inclined to a flexible approach. The conflict also colored the institute's handling of the allegations against Manos, according to one teacher. "When we spoke out against the school's handling of the sexual misconduct matter, we were accused by some people of waging a personal vendetta against Manos," the teacher says. "Our objections to his conduct were discounted on the grounds that we had personal grudges."

Iyengar, 72, is "widely regarded as the world's leading exponent of hatha yoga," according to *Yoga Journal*. (There are several branches of yoga; hatha yoga is the branch concerned with physical poses. In addition, hatha yoga students learn meditation and various breathing exercises.) Iyengar's *Light on Yoga*, published in the mid-

Reached by phone in India and asked if he believed the allegations against Manos by the woman quoted above, Iyengar replied, "No. That is an old, old story. I doubt its truth. I do not believe past things when they are kept quiet for so long."

Asked if he thought perhaps the woman had been too embarrassed or ashamed to report the incident, he said, "I do not believe that."

Did he question Manos about whether the woman's charge was true? "He did not say," Iyengar replied. "Why should I ask him? I don't want to listen to hearsay. When a report is fresh, immediate, then it is more likely to be true. When reported later it is all dexterous words."

The fact that no charges or lawsuits have been filed against Manos has helped keep the case contained within the yoga community. But there are other reasons for the community's silence on the matter. Yoga teachers don't know how Iyengar will react to presentation of the case to a broader public. Teachers do not take lightly the prospect of displeasing Iyengar. The Iyengar institute may also be concerned about losing students, especially because it has experienced financial problems in the past year.

Iyengar said he does not believe some of the charges against Manos, but insisted that Manos has become a "changed man" who will not repeat his previous actions. Manos is "not the same person" today as a year or two ago; he is "transformed," Iyengar said.

Asked how he was able to judge this, Iyengar replied, "I trust him. I trust his words. I have taken an oath from him. He told me he had lost so many others but he did not want to lose me. I told him that I can forgive once but not twice."

But is he not in fact forgiving Manos twice, because of allegations that were reported in 1987, followed by the surfacing of allegations in '89?

"No," Iyengar said. "I never knew about 1987. Nobody told me in 1987. I was only informed later."

Iyengar said he views the Manos case as an opportunity to "teach one and all" the impor-

tance of high ethical conduct in yoga: "This is a stepping stone for others to follow. I see it from this angle, as a learning experience." Ethical conduct, he continued, is a paramount concern of his.

When he was asked if, as some sources claim, he believes Manos was seduced by some of the women, Iyengar said, "Yes, naturally. Unless a woman shows willingness, the man will not act."

Does even strong temptation excuse such behavior on the part of a yoga teacher?

"Man is weak; forgiveness is what is important. Did not Christ forgive many people?"

When she was told of Iyengar's doubts about her veracity, the student whose allegations are quoted above said, "Well . . . I'm sitting here trying not to scream or cry. It makes me want to forget about ever doing Iyengar yoga again."

"I BEAR MANOUSO NO ILL WILL," SAYS Linda Cogozzo, managing editor of *Yoga Journal* magazine and an 11-year student of Iyengar yoga. "But thus far there has been no attention paid by the yoga community to what I believe are the key issues in this situation: the misuse of power and the betrayal of a student's trust by a teacher."

"The emphasis in the community, from Iyengar on down, has been on forgiving Manouso. No one has talked at all about the women involved. And this makes me wonder what representation and value I, as a woman, have in the Iyengar community. I'm thinking not much."

Others in the yoga community feel the case has been dealt with properly. Lolly Font, owner/director of the California Yoga Center in Palo Alto, says the situation "has been a very good thing for Manouso. I think he's learned an awful lot from having to come clear and admit to what he's done." Font said she takes classes regularly from Manos and considers his teaching on par with the best she has experienced.

Betty Eiler, owner of Yoga Fitness in San Jose, considers the Manos case "water over the dam." She adds, "Nobody, really, has a completely clean slate in their lives. Manouso has suffered greatly over this; he's paid his dues."

But many agree with the teacher who says, "I'm disgusted and disillusioned. This event is like a festering wound that has never been cleaned out. It's still dividing the yoga community in the Bay Area, and since this area is the center of yoga for the United States, it's dividing the community nationally, and in fact internationally."

Although many teachers say Iyengar should not be blamed for Manos' alleged misconduct, others, probably a minority, believe he must share in the responsibility. An experienced teacher said, "Mr. Iyengar can be physically abusive when teaching.

He sometimes slaps students, or hits them in the head or kicks them, as a way of 'creating awareness,' of saying, 'Hey, wake up!' And he can be verbally abusive, calling people 'stupid.' Not all people, and not all the time. I have come to view Iyengar's physical abuse as related to Manos' sexual abuse. If Iyengar doesn't respect people's physical integrity, if he crosses physical boundaries, it creates a climate where sexual abuse can occur."

Larry Hatlett, co-director of the Yoga Center of Palo Alto, disagrees. He does not see how Iyengar's style could have led to Manos' alleged misbehavior. "I think it's Manouso, period," Hatlett says.

For his part, Iyengar denies that he is aggressive. "I do not think that word is accurate. I am intense. I am intense because it is important, the work that we do. Why waste time?"

THE WORD "GURU" HAS ROOTS IN HINDU-ism. In the strictest sense of the word, a guru is someone "enlightened," profoundly spiritual and close to God; today, the word is often used by various disciplines to describe any revered teacher/leader/guide.

The very first Indian guru to get widespread attention in the Western mainstream press, the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, got caught up in charges of taking advantage of the guru-devotee relationship.

Several Beatles biographies say the group got fed up with the Maharishi in 1968 because they felt he was conducting an illicit romance with one of his female disciples. The Maharishi has apparently never commented on the matter. The Beatles did make a comment—their bitter song "Sexy Sadie" was originally titled "Maharishi."

Sexual misbehavior is an extremely delicate topic in the U.S. spiritual/New Age

"This event," one yoga teacher says, "is like a festering wound that has never been cleaned out. It's still dividing the yoga community . . . nationally, and in fact internationally."

community—in part because it seems to occur so often, especially among American devotees of Eastern religions. In the November/December 1990 issue of *Yoga Journal*, Katharine Webster writes, "Sexual contact between gurus and their American disciples is not a new or rare phenomenon. Over the past 15 or 20 years, numerous spiritual teachers have admitted to, or been charged with, having sexually exploitative relationships with their female students."

In the 1980s, the Zen Center of San Francisco was hit hard by a sex scandal involv-

ing its leader, Richard Baker. The center has rectified its problems. Also in the '80s, revelations about the sexual conduct of Swami Muktananda and Eknath Easwaran, among others, generated controversy.

One of the latest cases involves Swami Rama, guru of the Himalayan Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy. The institute, a huge enterprise based in Pennsylvania, is a hub for East Coast spiritual seekers, with a publishing company, scientific lab, yoga teacher-training program and health clinic. Writing in *Yoga Journal*, Katharine Webster describes allegations of numerous instances of sexual misconduct by Swami Rama. The Himalayan Institute has not publicly responded to the charges.

Dr. Peter Rutter, a prominent San Francisco psychiatrist and Jungian analyst, said when interviewed for this article, that he knows personally and "conservatively" about 250 victims of sexual misbehavior in U.S. and British communities that study and practice Eastern religions. These 250 include his patients, people who have attended his workshops and people who have written to him.

In his well-regarded book *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*, Rutter discusses the issue of sex between men in positions of power or influence and women who come to them seeking guidance.

"The forbidden zone," he writes, "is a condition of relationship in which sexual behavior is prohibited because a man holds in trust the intimate, wounded, vulnerable or undeveloped parts of a woman. The trust derives from the professional role of the man as doctor, therapist, lawyer, clergy, teacher or mentor, and it creates an expectation that whatever parts of herself the woman entrusts to him (her property, body, mind or spirit) must be used solely to advance her interests and will not be used to his advantage, sexual or otherwise."

"Under these conditions," Rutter continues, "sexual behavior is always wrong no matter who initiates it, no matter how willing the participants say they are. In the forbidden zone the factors of power, trust and dependency remove the possibility of a woman freely giving consent to sexual contact. Put another way, the dynamics of the forbidden zone can render a woman unable to withhold consent, and because the man has the greater power, the responsibility is his to guard the forbidden boundary against sexual contact no matter how provocative the woman."

The four major "talking" therapy groups—psychiatrists; psychologists; marriage, family and child counselors; licensed clinical social workers—all forbid relationships between therapist and patient/client. And in January 1990, California enacted a law making it illegal for a psychological therapist to have sex with a patient. Seven states currently have such laws. Yoga teaching, while

considered by many a therapy, does not fall into the framework of the laws.

As noted, no charges or lawsuits have been filed in the Manos case. "It's difficult for women to come out with these charges publicly," Rutter says. "It's a terrible ordeal, requiring them to make public the most personal, intimate aspects of their lives, which they would not have to undergo had there not been a violation of the relationship in the first place."

"There's tremendous risk for them. If they speak out they're often punished within a community, or blamed. People in the community might say initially that a charismatic man 'couldn't possibly have done such a thing.' The next step in the denial process is 'Well, he may have done it, but he was seduced.'"

As Katharine Webster writes in *Yoga Journal*, "The followers of 'enlightened' men are usually reluctant to find fault with them, since to do so could invalidate the students' own years of study and devotion. Instead they deny the experience of the 'unenlightened' women who are the guru's victims."

"Personally," Rutter says, "I am in favor of women going public with such charges. I think they have more to gain than lose if they do."

Rutter adds that today, within some professions, such as therapy, there is "universal" condemnation of sexual contact. In other professions, such as teaching, there is only "a gradually growing awareness of the problem." A number of universities have passed internal rules making teacher-student sexual contact illegal. The model rule in the academic world, Rutter says, is a University of Iowa edict that states in part, "Voluntary consent by the student in such a relationship is suspect, given the fundamentally asymmetrical nature of the relationship."

WHY DO SEX SCANDALS KEEP HAPPENING in the spiritual/New Age community?

There is, of course, sexual misbehavior in corporations, volunteer organizations, mainstream religious groups, professional and collegiate athletics. And many spiritual/New Age gurus and teachers conduct themselves impeccably, without a breath of impropriety.

But in this community—especially among Western followers of classical Eastern religions—there are unique and potentially volatile dynamics at work. These have to do with the exalted status of the guru/spiritual teacher, and the spiritual hunger of many people in the West.

Followers sometimes initiate, or welcome, sex with gurus and teachers because they believe that sex under such circumstances is an especially life-enhancing thing to do, a way to be

The volatile dynamics at work among Western followers of Eastern religions have to do with the exalted status of the guru/teacher, and the spiritual hunger of many in the West.

permeated with the guru's enlightened essence.

"A woman might try to see it as a positive experience," Peter Rutter says, "but in 99 percent of cases, that veil of illusion sooner or later falls away and the woman realizes she has been terribly abused and exploited. This might happen five minutes later or 20 years later."

A central reason the woman eventually feels exploited, Rutter believes, is that the experience is a reinforcement of one of the most degrading things she's heard (directly or indirectly) about herself: "Sex is all you're good for." When such a message comes from a trusted guru or spiritual teacher in the form of a sexual episode, Rutter says, it is especially painful and damaging—"it strikes at the heart of her psyche and soul."

Ganga White, president of the White Lotus Yoga Foundation in Santa Barbara, identifies "an amazing spiritual gullibility among those of us in the West." Westerners may have a hard time differentiating authentic spiritual leaders from those prone to exploitation, he says, because we have a different way of judging things—a way of judgment based on materialism. "Maybe we see spirituality as an accumulation of things—accumulation of merit, knowledge, power—rather than what it really is: a subtle

process of inner opening and understanding. "The question," he continues, "is not why so many spiritual leaders have fallen; the question is, who says they had risen to a state of true enlightenment in the first place? Somebody can be the head of a big organization and write books and have a lot of centers, but they may not be any more evolved than you or I. We're duped or mesmerized by a person's possessions—possessions of knowledge, charisma and so forth. These are not necessarily indications of a higher awareness."

There doesn't appear to be any easy, sure-fire way to find authentic spiritual guides not prone to sexual, financial or philosophical exploitation. Indicators of authenticity, says White, are "love and compassion, and an absence of the 'Me'—an absence of ego and self-centeredness. What I suggest to people is, accept teachers who start setting you free right from the beginning, not ones who ask you to sit at their feet. There's a difference."

Donald Moyer, one of the teachers who resigned from the San Francisco Iyengar institute, says, "The question is, how do we take a practice like yoga, from a culture, India, accustomed to hierarchy and dealing with power in a different way, and bring it to the West, and avoid lapsing into some sort of patriarchal throwback? Westerners, when they first are attracted to Eastern thought, sometimes tend to put down all Western attitudes. We need to be able to see the value of our own contributions—democratic values, psychological understandings, and developing a sense of personal responsibility for our actions."

"The problem is not yoga," says yoga teacher Arthur Kilmurray. "Yoga is a process of purification that stirs things up within a person. How those stirred-up issues are dealt with is a function of such things as the culture, the times we live in and how an individual is able to deal with the issues."

Stephanie Lawrence of Mill Valley says that she is doing yoga exclusively at home these days. She quit going to classes because of what she terms a "humbling attitude" exhibited by some male yoga teachers. "The cumulative effect of many years of studying yoga led me to feel that I had handed some integral part of myself over to some of the teachers, that I had allowed myself to be humbled by them, and forgotten that I was my own best teacher."

"I think that climate may be due to a kind of passivity among women that's confused with surrendering, a word that is often used in yoga. When women can't stand up for themselves, are passive in that particular way, then that passivity is almost handing the power to the teacher to do what he wants with them."

BOB FROST is a contributing writer for West.

Manos' videotape, a popular introduction to yoga, features remarks by Iyengar.

