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## DAKINI KALI SATYAGRAHA

### TESTIMONY FOR ANDREW BARNES

*Requested by Safe Mediation after Andrew Barnes 1 Year Accountability Process*

Upfront, I'd like to state I'm not an apologist for any teacher, body of work or spiritual lineage. I speak from my Totality Tantra orientation, from my direct experiences, and my personal views, which readers are welcome to resonate with – or not - depending on their own lived experiences and knowing.

I would also like to make the following *disclaimers* before giving a testimony for Andrew Barnes.

In my experience, Tantra is not a safe path. It is radical and takes no prisoners. It is not for everyone, and this is not a statement inferring a superior hierarchy of any kind. There are many valid spiritual paths to reach the same mountain top.

Furthermore, Tantra is very inclusive, and embraces a range of styles and lineages: I group them generally into 4 expressions in the west: Traditional Tantra, Totality Tantra, Neo Tantra, and Teenage Tantra (the latter being immature, distorted interpretations of Tantra which include our unconscious confusions around patriarchy, misogyny, body/beauty objectification, lack of trauma training, and sexual addiction). It is the responsibility of the adult seeker to do their homework and background-check teachers, find out about what a course entails, self-meditate on what they are truly interested in, and be as honest and conscious as possible about their own emotional maturity and capacity levels.

Tantra, especially when combined with sustained peak experiences in retreat or workshop spaces – can be overwhelming for a person's nervous system, particularly if that person has experienced some form of sexual / emotional / physical abuse or trauma in the past.

Having said that, facilitators and teachers should have a *duty of care* for their students, and I've long been an advocate for all Tantra teachers being properly trauma-informed and *going slow to go fast*.

Whilst teachers need to hold an energetic authority to create a strong, safe container, I also believe teachers and facilitators should mitigate against too great a power imbalance between student and teacher by:

- Having clear agreements upfront that help minimise the imbalance of power – in other words, there should be
  - An application process to sense check if students have the emotional maturity and capacity to participate in the practices – with absolutely no judgement on those who do not 'qualify' so to speak – in Tantra, there is no hierarchy, just what is
  - A healthy feedback loop between teacher and students
  - Peer to peer feedback
  - No teacher or peer pressure to force anyone to participate in something they are not ready for
  - Not engaging in sexual intercourse with students during group retreats or workshops
- Emphasising the importance of keeping discernment barometers turned on high
- Training students in the development of healthy boundaries and clear consent, and to fall in love with where the finger is pointing, and not the finger itself
- Having sufficient trauma-informed assistants to ensure some participants don't fall through the cracks

Having qualified my orientation, I will now speak to my personal experience with Andrew Barnes– as a student of his myself earlier on, as an assistant and colleague in Tantra later, and as a friend.

I met Andrew Barnes around 8 years ago, when I attended a lecture on de-armouring and full body orgasm, and subsequently, his orgasmic energy retreat in Tulbagh, South Africa.

Andrew began the retreat with very clear agreements, and mentioned his work is not best suited to those who may have suffered from sexual abuse in the past. He also said upfront that he works mostly with sexual energy, is a sexual being himself, and may have mutually consensual sexual relations with people on the retreat.

While I did not necessarily agree with teachers having sexual relations with clients / students, I felt Andrew had been clean and clear about his orientation towards his work and the spaces he holds, and I was happy to continue the retreat on that basis.

I personally gained a lot of benefit from Andrew's expertise in working with sexual energy, body de-armouring, raising the body/mind vibration, and his development of the Relationship Map, to mention but a few.

Andrew continued to visit South Africa annually, and I attended a few more of his lectures. I also attended a 10-day BlissDance Training retreat with Dr Shakti Malan, where I got to know him as both a friend and colleague.

During harsh lockdown, Andrew was trapped in South Africa, and stayed in my cottage for 6-weeks, where we got to know one another better (we have never been lovers except in the broader sense of being lovers of truth, and lovers of love).

It was at the time that the accountability process was being suggested, and so we spoke about the circumstances leading up to it, and I noticed Andrew was still a little puzzled as to why he'd been singled out for this, and perhaps a little in denial. I was pleasantly surprised when he agreed to undergo the process – not many Tantra teachers I know of would have had the grace to do so.

In 2022, Andrew asked me to assist in his Level 1 and 2 orgasmic energy retreats in South Africa, and I agreed to do so, curious as to how the accountability process may have influenced the spaces he holds.

I was suitably impressed. I've always felt Andrew has great depth of knowledge and experience, but this Andrew had something more: there was a softening about him, a willingness to slow down and include everyone, and even more clarity than before. He also overtly stated he would not have sexual intercourse with anyone for the duration of the retreat, which as far as I'm aware of, he stuck to.

Recently, Andrew shared some of what he'd learned from the accountability process, acknowledging he'd inadvertently caused some people harm in the past. He was genuinely contrite and willing to continue learning more about how to be better trauma informed.

Andrew has also put more checks and balances into his retreats, by sharing upfront clearer information around what to expect on retreat; that there's no pressure to participate in any practice at any time; while also having a detailed application process to ensure a participant is ready / suited to the work.

I support sex-positive spaces, and Andrew's work, and recommend individuals empower themselves with prior research, discernment, healthy boundaries, and self-awareness before embarking on any form of sexual healing or transformation.

Tantra requires a minimum level of maturity and capacity upfront. That way, a balance of power may be struck between teacher and seeker.

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