# Neelam Makhija: wrongly suspected of being an Indian guru, he is two months in preventive prison

*On 10/09/18, by Jean-Luc Martin-Lagardette*

**Indo-Canadian engineer retired, Neelam Makhija, 71, spends two months in prison and is held against his will in France for two and a half years. His crime, being a friend of a coach who hosted, once a year, meditation seminars! Despite his acknowledged innocence before the court, he cannot obtain compensation (financial, moral) for the damages suffered.**



Neelam Makhija, 71, shares his life between Mumbai (India) and Toronto (Canada). Of Indian origin, he is also a Canadian citizen. An engineer in third cycle electronics (MSEE) and holder of a master of business administration (MBA), he founded and directed for 23 years in Canada a company specialized in high-tech electronic projects. Retired since 2006, he spends his time between Canada and India where his two daughters and grand-children live.

Neelam Makhija. He had the misfortune to have, for France, an Indian guru's head ...

Photo: JL ML

Between 2010 and 2014, he made several visits to France to see his Canadian friend Cécile Tousignant, whom he has known since 2007. She is a life coach and meditation teacher inspired by an Indian master [**[1]**](https://www.ouvertures.net/neelam-makhija-retenu-abusivement-deux-ans-en-france-par-la-justice-ne-peut-obtenir-reparation/#_ftn1) (in France and Quebec) . She invited him, her friend, to participate in three of her meditation courses lasting respectively 2, 4 and 7 days.



Cécile Tousignant.

 Photo: JL ML

**Descent of gendarmerie**

On November 24, 2014, Mr. Makhija is in Fontainebleau with a small group of 6-7 people, in meditation when a squad of gendarmerie arrive at 7am, at the private house where Cécile Tousignant animates an internship. They arrest Ms. Tousignant and her friend Mr. Makhija and two other participants. They intervened following the "signaling" complaint filed by the father of one of her former students. to the Center against Mental Manipulation (CCMM)

The gendarmes, about twenty, were all armed and behaved as if they have come to save the trainees from a serious imminent danger.

Ms. Tousignant and Mr. Makhija are separated and would have to stay separate for one year without the right of any contact between them or the permission to see each other.

After a few hours of interrogation (without the presence of a lawyer), the designated translator explained briefly the accusations to Mr. Makhija. They claimed that he had allegedly "used fraudulent means to manipulate minds of people in the state of psychological subjection and to scam them. He had used mental techniques and created a mysterious Indian atmosphere to influence these people who were in a situation of weakness. And he belonged to "the sect "of the guru (Indian spiritual master) Osho".

The defendants were kept in jail separately for eight weeks "because we were foreigners and because that the investigating judge was too busy to meet us, "says Neelam Makhija. "The gendarmes who arrested us told the prison authorities that we were part of the sect of Osho, the sex guru.

Then the judge met me: she wanted to know everything about me, my life, Osho and the Indian gurus and the Indian spirituality. For me, it was a shock because I was just a visitor! I did not have a client or work here. I do not even speak the French language. They said they had pages of criminal charges against me. But I was just a tourist for three weeks in France, with a return ticket to Bombay. I did not understand why they were attacking my culture! "[2]

Makhija had to return to India to his family, who were waiting for his arrival in ten days. Meanwhile, arrested, he asked his assigned lawyer to contact his family. The lawyer said that he was not allowed. Once in prison, he had to wait over two weeks before he could call his daughter: "My children and grandchildren were worried sick about what could have happened suddenly to their 70-year old father. Cut off from any communication, they thought I was sick or ...dead ".

**"They (Miviludes) have succeed in criminalizing the Hindu eternal law (Sanatana Dharma) of India"**

Neelam Makhija: "My forced stay in France gave me the opportunity to investigate the system in place. I could experience, first-hand, how cultural and religious discrimination is implemented by the government.

Applying lengthy and obscure judicial proceedings, bureaucratic rigidity, uncaring pompous judges and extended waits due to overloaded French court system, ordinary people, like myself, are harassed. All this, just to prevent (without much success, I could add) the influx in France of other ideas and visions of the world.

"Regarding the so-called new religious movements, I have seen that almost all Indian spiritual teachers (Gurus), eminent and highly respected in India, who have had or are followed by Western disciples, are on the list of the Miviludes (now hidden). They are classified as "sectarian excesses". This attitude of the government French, taken as a whole, succeeds in criminalizing the Indian "Sanatana Dharma" ("eternal law") and the well-established spiritual and cultural heritage of India!

Indian spiritual teachers with worldwide reputations at the United Nations, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and other European countries are on this list. Many of these spiritual teachers are dead and now their devotees and their practitioners are targeted and harassed. Even the yoga and meditation centers of mindfulness are viewed with criminal suspicion.

"All are susceptible to the wrath of the Miviludes [mission inter-ministerial responsible for alerting France on " sectarians deviations" and the About-Picard Act [2001 anti-sect law].

"I shared my findings about Indian spiritual teachers with the chief secretary general of the ministry. Foreign Affairs, asking him to bring this matter to the attention of Sri Modiji (Prime Minister) and Ms. Swarajji (Minister of External Affairs). I also disseminated my information to eminent teachers living in India and who have a wide presence in France, such as Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and Amma. I have contacted the Dalai Lama, well known and respected in France and sent him a list of Buddhist institutes regarded as " risk sectaire" by the Miviludes. "

After nearly two months in prison, without due process before a court, where he could have defended himself, and after having paid a deposit of 50,000 euros, Mr. Makhija was released but forbidden to leave the territory of France for two and a half years! ***A real sequestration.***

During this period, the investigating judge met him only once, on January 15, 2015. And on January 26, he was out of prison.

In March, the examining magistrate questions all the clients of Ms. Cécile Tousignant. They all declared that they have no problem with Neelam Makhija. Most say they did not know him and all say did not give him money.

However, when his lawyer, François St-Pierre (Lyon), repeatedly asks the judge for her permission for his client to leave France to take care of his business in Canada and visit his family in India, with the intention of returning in six weeks, the judge refuses.

The lawyer appeals the judge's decision. Three months later, the Court of Appeal dismisses the claim, arguing that there were pending criminal charges.

In July 2015, it becomes clear that none of the trainees, "who were in aggregate, highly educated and belonged to a higher socio-professional level, had no complaints against the Indo-Canadian. His lawyers therefore ask the judge to change his status to that of "assisted witness". This request is immediately rejected. Lawyers get to go to another court of appeal. After nine months of waiting, the decision of the investigating judge is confirmed by this second court. No reason is given.

Meanwhile, by the end of November 2015, one year after the arrest, all investigations have been completed, except a new audition of Cécile Tousignant which is scheduled for December 2015 but takes place in March 2016, which postpones the closure of the investigation to November 2016.

**Detained two and a half years against his will and without trial**

"So, I stayed in France nearly two and a half years after my arrest, without trial and without any opportunity to defend myself in court! exclaims Mr. Makhija. Such a right I would have had in any English-speaking country. Apparently, in France, there is no magna carta or habeas corpus and the presumption of innocence until proven guilty does not exist! ".

When the investigation is over, the prosecutor gives his observations to the judge. Big surprise: he says that the 29 victims of the mental manipulation are no longer victims because they have not filed a complaint. And asks her to drop the mental manipulation charges and all money laundering charges.

Instead, in the final report the investigation judge increases the number of victims to 41 and retains the money laundering charge, saying that even though Mr. Makhija had not taken any money, he had the potential of receiving Ms. Cecile’s money. So, Mr. Makhija is sent to trial and the other two French participants were released, even though they had more participation in Ms. Cecile’s work than Mr. Makhija.

**"Real false" victims**

Makhija has the support of Dr Susan Palmer, a professor of New Religious Movements at Concordia University and Dawson College in Montreal, Quebec. She wrote to him in these terms: *"It is absolutely scandalous! Investigating the case of Arnaud Mussy (the first application of the About-Picard law), I witnessed similar things. The "victims" had insisted on they were not victims. The Unadfi [anti-sect association] had nevertheless filed a complaint on their behalf, against their will or without their knowledge. The judge stated that the failure to realize that they had been brain-washed was the proof that they had been brain-washed! Looks like your investigating judge is distracted and does not bother doing her job. It's like being in never ending Kafka story! "*

**His "silent presence" is enough to manipulate trainees**

In December 2016, Neelam Makhija receives a text in English from the investigation magistrate. It's the first communication in his language he obtains from the French judicial system.

Finally, he can understand the content of the case. What he reads in this text seems incredible to him. The investigation judge says: while Mr. Makhija does not speak French, his "silent presence" was enough to "manipulate" the weak-minded people. She alleges, that the accused created a "mysterious atmosphere" to weaken the participants under cover of Indian philosophy. But all he did was turn off the lights, use candles, incense sticks and play the music given by the participants!

No proof is given for such an accusation. This whole thing is incomprehensible. Lawyers say they have never encountered a case like this.

The general hypothesis is that this charge of mental manipulation by the investigating judge was so weak that if Mr. Makhija was allowed to leave France, the complaint against Cécile Tousignant would also fall. All their efforts would have been lost, making them ridiculous in the eyes of their hierarchy. Especially when so much money and effort had been spent, investigating a fabricated story.

**The prosecutor abandons the charges.**

Finally, the trial takes place on June 2, 2017, after a "ride" of 30 months. The prosecutor says he gives up the charge of mentally manipulating people in a state of weakness because he has no evidence to support the accusations. He admits to the trial judge that in this case, the investigation judge was "a little enthusiastic" and that she took an inordinate amount of time to process the investigation. He also abandons the money laundering charges for he has no proof that Mr. Makhija received funds from Mrs. Tousignant.

The judges, eager to shorten this embarrassing affair, conclude quickly. They deliberate less than an hour and “whitewash” the accused, sentencing him to a symbolic fine for giving some advice by telephone to appease Cécile Tousignant [3], who was worried about the suspicions of hidden work against her.

**All that for this!**

"Anyway, everything that happened here in France made me lose years of life (November 28, 2014 - June 2, 2017 and several months until all is settled). An expensive loss of precious days at my age! The story was manufactured by the Caimades (gendarmerie specialized in "mental influence") sensitized by the Miviludes, with the complicity of the investigating judge and the psychiatrist working according to the views of the Miviludes.

They imagined that I was a great Indian guru, from the Osho movement, who would have shaped and exploited people like Cecile, who herself would have been manipulated by people like me. They spent two years to investigate, looking for evidence to justify their fantastic idea. Finally, having found nothing, they stuck together bits of information out of context to try to justify their conclusions.”

**"It's the gendarmes who manipulated us"**

"They gave the court an analysis of me done by a state paid psychiatrist one Dr. Danet and the opinion of an independent psychologist who had been invited to meet me at the demand of the defense lawyers. The lawyer points out to the judge that their assessments were totally contradictory, as if they had met two different people, and not the same Neelam, highlighting the subjective nature of these assessments. (This same Dr Danet had also done assessment of Ms. Tousignant and all of her clients who he claimed to be manipulated & weak minded).

"In court, five of Ms. Tousignant's trainees suggested to the judges that it was not her, but the gendarmes of the Caimades who tried to manipulate them, telling them lies about her.

"In its total ignorance, Miviludes and its allies denigrate Indian culture and spirituality. A culture with an uninterrupted wisdom of 15,000 years! "I hope that the political powers in place will look closely at the price paid by the degradation of the image of the France in the world because of its support for bodies like Miviludes. "

These two months in prison and Mr. Makhija's two-and-a-half-year ban on leaving French territory brutally cut him off. He was conducting business in Canada and India, resulting in economic losses. And to add to it his legal fees and the various other expenses occasioned by all these events.

**This loss exceeds € 600,000**

Mr. Makhija made the calculation: the amount of the damage exceeds 600 000 € !

And we do not talk about other non-financial consequences: years of life lost in old age; violation confidentiality of communications; undermining self-esteem and loss of credibility with and to the family (following these accusations, his children and grandchildren were deeply shocked and disturbed) and his professional associates; loss of privacy; high stress, loss of reputation, etc.

The Indo-Canadian seeks to obtain compensation in these two ways:

- Compensation for "abuse of criminal power" by Miviludes and the French State for moral damage and serious emotional trauma & anguish.

- Denouncing the "racketeering" of the Miviludes which allows them to use the public force in a malicious way to harass and cause harm, even before judgment, to persons whom it considers suspect all because of its subjective criteria of blacklisting ideas and inner wisdom from other cultures.

At first, his lawyer Francois St Pierre had at the end of the trial considered acting in these directions. Today, he tells Neelam Makhija, "I understand your anger but we cannot do anything about that which concerns the Miviludes” ...

***All these sufferings, all these prejudices, all these public expenses: all this for nothing!***

***Unfortunately, it is to be feared that the authors of these abuses, who officially work at the very heart of our institutions, will not be too worried or prevented from continuing to do harm.***

***When will France come out of its anti-spiritual racism? Who, apart from our magazine, will denounce the arbitrary machinery set up by the government, with its specialized police against the "different" approaches (Caimades), its organizations responsible for spreading unfounded rumors and scaring the French public (the Miviludes) and its state-sponsored witch-hunt incitement associations (here CCMM)?***

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[[1]](https://www.ouvertures.net/neelam-makhija-retenu-abusivement-deux-ans-en-france-par-la-justice-ne-peut-obtenir-reparation/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref) Like the majority of meditation techniques taught and practiced in the West today.

[[2]](https://www.ouvertures.net/neelam-makhija-retenu-abusivement-deux-ans-en-france-par-la-justice-ne-peut-obtenir-reparation/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref) Osho, Indian mystic, died in January 1990.. He is one of the many Indian spiritual figures who inspired Neelam Makhija and Cécile Aashti. “Osho had developed several meditation techniques throughout his life. "His techniques are available to everyone on the internet and in books around the world in more than 30 languages," says Neelam. The fact that I use his techniques for myself, has nothing to do with belonging to a movement. In Indian culture, this term 'movement' makes no sense. "

[[3]](https://www.ouvertures.net/neelam-makhija-retenu-abusivement-deux-ans-en-france-par-la-justice-ne-peut-obtenir-reparation/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref) The accusation of mental manipulation was also abandoned, for Cécile Tousignant, whose bank account was seized under the pretext of "unauthorized work".

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