



Vishwaguru Mahamandaleshwar Paramhans Abunathswami Maheshwarananda Puriji and *Yoga in Daily Life* humanitarian activities in the UK

Swamiji's Activities in the UK

Swamiji's relationship with the UK goes back many years. Following a first, brief visit to London in 1970, he has worked tirelessly to serve the people of this country, spreading the light of Yoga and the message of peace through his many lectures and humanitarian activities. His inspiration led to the founding of the first Yoga in Daily Life Ashram in the UK, in London, which has been sharing the benefits of yoga and promoting social and environmental health in the community for over 10 years.



Since that first visit, Swamiji has inspired numerous humanitarian initiatives and activities in the UK, including outreach to schools and hospitals. These activities include -

- regular classes held in metropolitan venues and dedicated yoga centres – run as selfless service by volunteers
- sessions for retired and elderly people in their own homes (London, Edinburgh) and in Care Homes (Edinburgh) and in cultural Community Centres (Tamil Centre in London)
- relaxation and meditation sessions for people ill in hospital (Coventry, Edinburgh)
- workplace yoga for people suffering from corporate stress (London, Edinburgh)
- staff and teachers at state schools and universities (Edinburgh)
- free/by donation 'Community Yoga' classes for unemployed and pensioners (Edinburgh)
- co-operated with local ecological organisations to promote environmentally friendly lifestyle choices, eg. tree planting, Eco-Transition and Green groups (London, Birmingham)
- working with vegan and vegetarian organisations to promote healthy diet and animal welfare (Birmingham, London)
- supporting animal rescue shelters (London, Birmingham, Edinburgh)

In July 2014, Swamiji received the Lifetime Achievement Award Bharat Gaurav at the Houses of Parliament in London, in front of a large audience of respected dignitaries, invited guests, delegates, colleagues, and family members. HH Swamiji was part of a select group of renowned leaders of Indian origin who were recognized for their outstanding achievements.

History of Yoga in Daily Life in the UK

Many members of the British Indian community in London and Leicester were honoured to welcome Swamiji when he visited from the 1970's to 90's, including two special occasions with his beloved Holy Guruji. When the Thurston family, Czech disciples of Swamiji, moved to Poole, Dorset, Swamiji made several trips to their home, and held the first Yoga in Daily Life UK workshop at a local church hall in 1983.

The deep friendship that developed between Swamiji and Paul Thurston was a huge comfort to Paul when he became terminally ill in 1990. Swamiji's special visit, his love and compassion, inspired Paul to devote the last year of his life to meditation. During this trip, Swamiji and Paul meditated together and visited family; experiences that have continued to bring strength and peace to the Thurston family.



Swamiji with his Indian bhaktas in London

First Yoga in Daily Life Ashram in UK opened in London 2004

Swamiji's first public lecture took place in London in 2001, where he extended an invitation to Yoga in Daily Life teachers to start classes and find a property to open an Ashram, so that the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual benefits of yoga could be brought to as many people as possible. This led to the creation of a new charity, *Yoga in Daily Life Association UK*, in 2002 and the opening of *Sri Swami Madhavanandaji Ashram* in Queen's Park, London, in 2004, with the official opening ceremony blessed by Swamiji's presence.

Since then, Swamiji has led seminars in London on a further eight occasions, with hundreds of international delegates and local residents attending.

Swamiji's long-standing commitment to promote understanding and tolerance between people of different faiths, cultures and nationalities saw him invited as a guest of honour at an *Interfaith Meeting* at the London Interfaith Centre with representatives from the many faiths resident in NW London in 2006; following this event, he hosted Father Fergus Capie from London Interfaith Centre, at the World Peace Conference in Ljubljana as a guest speaker.



Swamiji's meeting in Interfaith Centre London 2006 Swamiji visits Sikh Temple in Birmingham 2010

In 2007 Swamiji organised the *Hindu Spirituality Conference* in Edinburgh with other esteemed international spiritual leaders as guest speakers. It was here that he invited teachers to start classes and find a property to open an Ashram in Edinburgh and form new charity *Yoga in Daily Life Scotland* (classes started the following January)

The first international seminar UK Tour took place in Edinburgh, Birmingham, London in 2008; the following year saw the opening of the *Mahaprabhu Deep Ashram* in Birmingham and in 2010, the opening of the *Mahaprabhu Deep Ashram* in Edinburgh during the second international seminar UK Tour.



Yoga in Daily Life Ashram in Edinburgh



Yoga in Daily Life Ashram in Birmingham

As part of Swamiji's mission to promote world peace and harmony, in 2010, World Peace Trees were planted in all three cities with interfaith and local government and community

representatives. These trees continue to stand as a symbol of peace, providing a place for prayer, meditation and reflection that is open to all.



Peace Tree planting in Edinburgh



Peace Tree planting in Birmingham



Peace Tree planting in London

International seminars in London and Edinburgh followed in 2012 and London in 2013.