

Swami stresses yoga's role in world peace at UN

Special to
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United Nations: A global yoga guru has stressed the importance of world peace and stated that yoga can help ensure that.

"Peace endeavors can only be successful in combination with inner transformation," Vishwaguru Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda said last week. "Yoga can provide the power for such a positive change."

The Swami, a native of Rajasthan, addressed a conference titled "Yoga and World Peace" at the UN on March 7 as part of his US visit that took him to New York and other American cities.

The conference was organized by the Sri Swami Madhavananda World Peace Council, based in the Austrian capital of Vienna. It was held to commemorate nonviolence and yoga, aside from marking the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Two other bodies – the International Day of Yoga Committee and the UN Staff Recreation Council Enlightenment Society – also sponsored the event.

Quoting Mahatma Gandhi's appeal "Be the Change You Want to See in the World," the Swami pointed out that inner peace is the necessary path to world peace.

The UN conference was the highlight of the Swami's world peace tour, which began in India with a meeting with President Ramnath Kovind in January. That



Swami Maheshwarananda speaking at the conference "Yoga and World Peace" at the UN on March 7.



Peace endeavors can only be successful in combination with inner transformation -- Swami Maheshwarananda

meeting was followed by visits to New Zealand, Fiji, Canada and the US. The tour will take the Swami this week to Europe.

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood," the Swami said, quoting the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Many international delegates heard the Swami and other spiritual leaders as well as political dignitaries, artists and academics.

The participants agreed on the importance of fostering peace and nonviolence as a way to make the world a better place, according to a press release issued by the council. Personal and spiritual development of humans is a key factor in achieving such goals, the council says. Among the international objectives of the council are protection of the environment, constant dialogue between various denominations and nationalities, and respect among all religions.

World Peace Council is a non-profit humanitarian organization, which is in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc) of the UN.

Indians will soon embrace their ancient values: Swami Maheshwarananda

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New York: Swami Maheshwarananda predicts that Indians will soon embrace their ancient culture and promote worldwide its values, including the already-popular yoga practice. Asked by this

writer in an interview whether South Asians, particularly Indians, will discard western maladies that have afflicted their societies in recent decades, the yoga guru sounded positive.

The phone interview on March 8 was conducted during his two-week tour of North America that took him to several US and Canadian cities.

"Time will come for our people to come back to our culture, including yoga," he said. "Our people are now in love with money and they will have to re-adopt their ancient culture sooner than later for their own good and tension-free lives."

The Swami, who is 73, learned at an early age yoga and other age-old values from his maternal uncle. He was also taught by his father during that time.

Aside from Hindi and Sanskrit, the Swami speaks English and German fluently. Sri Swami Madhavananda World Peace Council, he named for his guru



Swami Maheshwarananda with international delegates from Sri Swami Madhavananda World Peace Council, founded by him, at the UN headquarters.

and established in Vienna, Austria. Swami Madhavananda passed away in 2003 and the full responsibility to propagate yoga, peace, brotherhood and unity fell upon Maheshwarananda.

In the interview the Swami spoke in Hindi and English.

"Yoga Manushya Ko Yogya Banaata Hai. Manushya Nirog Ban Jaata Hai (Yoga makes one skilful. He or she will become disease-free," the Swami noted. "Yoga Se Man Mein Shanti Milegee (it brings peace to one's mind.)"

The Swami made it clear that anyone belonging to any religion can practice it, as yoga is not restricted only to Hinduism and its followers. At the same time, he emphasized the importance of "satvik" (easily digestible vegetarian) food as it would ensure peace and happiness. "If you kill one animal, it is nothing but the equivalent of killing a human," the Swami remarked.

More than 90% of his millions of global followers are non-Indians.

A boy from Rajasthan transforms into a global guru

Swami Maheshwarananda's 'Yoga in Daily Life' system has spread all over the world from its headquarters in Vienna, Austria. Based on yoga tradition, it is specially directed to the situation and needs of modern civilization.

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New York: Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda, who hails from Rajasthan but is now based in the Austrian capital of Vienna, left New York late last week for Europe after his North America visit.

The Swami had several programs in the Big Apple, especially his UN event at which he addressed a peace-and-yoga conference.

According to details offered by Denis Lucil (Kripadevi), manager of the New York 'Yoga in Daily Life' center, the Swami was given a grand welcome by his followers as he arrived in the city.

The guru stated that yoga, which essentially means union in Sanskrit, can be practiced by people of all religions. At the world body, the Swami's speech was well received. "As a river divides into separate channels, then comes together again, so the religions must recognize that all paths lead to the same destination – the Supreme," he noted.



The Swami visited houses of worship in the outer New York boroughs such as the Ganesh temple and Shiv Shakti Peeth.

He was born on August 15, 1945 at Rupawas village in Pali revenue district of Rajasthan. His religious and devout parents named him Mangilal. Even as a young child,

he spent much of his time for prayer and meditation. When he was a teenager, Mangilal Garg was ordained as the Swami by his guru Madhavananda. He spent several years with the guru, performing strict anushthana, or spiritual practices.

He went to Europe in 1970. The Swami came to know the modern needs of a man and decided to combine the ancient yogic practices with the findings of modern science. He created an integral system -- an internationally acclaimed one of practices called "Yoga in Daily Life," which has spread from its European base, Vienna, to several parts of the world. The Swami's system has benefited benefitted and inspired millions.

In the last 45 years, the Swami has extensively traveled the world, giving lectures on Sanatana Dharma and yoga. His message is simple: understanding, respect and tolerance between nations, cultures and religions; nonviolence; protection of the environment; and a vegetarian lifestyle.

At the cusp of the millennium, the

Parliament of World Religions gave him the title "Saarvabhauma Sanatana Dharma Jagadguru." In 2001, on the occasion of Maha Kumbh Mela, the Swami was given the Vishwaguru honor. For his services to the ancient discipline, he was given the titles of Doctor of Yoga and Professor of the Spiritual Science of Yoga.

His principles and ideas drew widespread praise in Eastern Europe even during the communist rule. Czech and Croatian presidents acknowledged his services.

In India, his homeland, the Swami initiated several humanitarian and charitable works. His Gyan Putra project supports the children of impoverished families and through the project attendance at schools went up significantly. Ongoing projects in the country include the construction of hospitals and schools for girls in rural areas as well as establishing a university for ayurveda, naturopathy and yoga. Building an Om Ashram in Jadan in Pali revenue district is also an ambitious project.