



# Mandala Yoga Ashram

## Code of Ethics

This Code of Ethics has been created in consultation with external advisors and in consultation with the Ashram Team and Board of Trustees. The purpose of the document is to:

- Outline fundamental principles, standards and guidelines that govern the conduct of the Ashram Director, Ashram Teachers, Visiting Teachers, Team members and Trustees.
- Ensure that everyone that stays at or visits the Ashram is treated with respect.
- Give clear pathways that show how to raise a concern.

The code of ethics is available via the Ashram website and available in the green Policies folder in the Ashram Conservatory.

### Background

The primary mission of the Ashram is to provide an environment conducive to inner growth and spiritual development in such a way that respects each person's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.

This Code is underpinned by both:

- guidance from the Charity Commission in Wales. Mandala Yoga Ashram is a U.K. charity 326847
- the ethical values of classical yoga.

The Code is divided into three broad areas:

- **Ethical responsibilities to all within the Ashram**
- **Ethical responsibilities to Ashram Team Members**
- **Ethical Responsibilities as Teachers of Yoga**

### Ethical Responsibilities to all within the Ashram

The Ashram upholds the following:

- To aspire to speak and act in ways that honour the dignity and value of every individual
- To respect and promote the rights of each person to be free from dogma or any beliefs imposed on them so that they can come to their own insight or deeper understanding
- To promote self-accountability and self-responsibility
- To respect each persons' right to privacy and confidentiality. Personal and emotional confidences can be shared with Ashram teachers and team members, and these are held in confidence. All verbal and written information about students is kept secure and private, as per GDPR and Data Protection regulations. Yet confidentiality may need to be broken in certain circumstances, i.e. the risk of significant harm to any individual(s); in such an instance, the Ashram safeguarding policy and procedure would be activated. Any material used on the Ashram blog, website or newsletters that arises from the work

of Ashram students work will be clearly identified, and only used with full consent of the student

- To demonstrate respect for the spiritual, religious, existential, and cultural values of all those who visit, refraining from imposing any personal values and beliefs on others
- To share, interact and teach with others free of any discrimination
- To use clear, respectful and transparent language in its interactions with others
- To maintain appropriate professional relationships with all visitors to the Ashram including tradespeople, without any exploitation whatsoever whether personally or collectively
- Physical contact with others should be engaged in only after respecting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern such physical contact
- To ensure that sexual harassment, both physical and verbal including misconduct, harassment, or assault, is strictly prohibited
- To ensure that any conflicts of interest, or appearance of conflicting interest(s), should be avoided or swiftly corrected.

## **Ethical Responsibilities to Ashram Team Members**

- a. Colleagues and their qualifications, views, and professional obligations should be treated with respect, regard, support, and confidentiality.
- b. Overt or subtle bullying and/or scapegoating will not be tolerated.
- c. When a decision raises ethical concerns, these are swiftly acted on.
- d. Understand the limits of one's individual expertise and make referrals to other team members when appropriate.
- e. **Relationships within the Ashram.** *The issue of a relationship between a teacher and a student on an Ashram course is covered below.*

While people join the Ashram team for the purpose of deepening their self-understanding, personal practice and inner growth, relationships can and do arise periodically between two team members, and between a team member and a guest.

The Ashram is committed to guiding its team members wisely in terms of potential relationships. Each new team member is given clear guidelines which outline the inherent power imbalance between team members of different levels of experience. Furthermore, each team member can talk if they wish with others within the Ashram, and/or their mentor, about these guidelines and any potential relationship that may ensue.

## **Ethical Responsibilities as Teachers of Yoga**

### **1. The Student-Teacher Interaction**

Traditionally valuable teachings, support and insights have been transmitted through this exchange, benefiting the student. Yet we also acknowledge that it usually contains a power imbalance in favour of the teacher.

This power imbalance can also be present within the Ashram generally as those who are seen to be of greater knowledge or experience are perceived as holding a certain status.

Therefore, every effort is made to ensure that any power imbalance is not used for personal gain, nor impose pressure on students in any way whatsoever overtly or covertly.

## **2. Honesty and Respect**

Ashram teachers teach according to their qualifications, experience and training only, without making any exaggerated claims whatsoever. We value and support the integrity and autonomy of our students and respect their decisions regarding their own spiritual life.

The Ashram strives to give clear guidelines for participation in Ashram residential and online courses and retreats including regarding the payment of fees, refunds and other financial arrangements. To comply with Copyright regulations, we acknowledge the sources of information and techniques used in Ashram courses.

## **3. Relationships/ Sexuality between teacher and student**

One of the most sensitive and painful aspects of a teacher student interaction is that of the potential breach of trust and boundaries, emotional and/or sexual. The power imbalance noted above is very easily broken if there is any misunderstanding or lack of awareness of this.

The Ashram requires its teachers to avoid all forms of sexual exploitation harassment and assault. This includes inappropriate gestures and touch, and comments of sexual innuendo. Any form of sexual relationship with a student on an Ashram course – long or short - is unacceptable, including when a student invites or consents to such behaviour.

An exception is an ongoing sexual relationship that predates the teacher-student relationship.

Also acknowledged is that we live in the real world, and relationships may potentially happen. Should this happen, the following applies:

- If a sexual relationship develops between a teacher and a student on an Ashram course, the teacher must end the teacher-student relationship immediately, withdraw from the course in question, and refer the student to another teacher. The one exception to this is when the Chair of Ashram trustees determines that the teacher's withdrawal is detrimental to the student group. In this case, the Chair would be responsible for finding the best solution which respects the needs of both the student group as a whole, and the particular student in question.
- The Ashram Director and/or Manager, or a senior person they delegate, meets with the teacher and the student individually. The purpose of the meeting would be firstly supporting the student primarily, and secondly ascertaining whether it is advisable for the relationship to pause for a period to gain some emotional objectivity and distance.

## **Breach of the Code of Ethics**

Clear guidelines for good practice are outlined above, yet it is recognised that issues around ethics are not always clear-cut; confusion can arise. People are encouraged to approach the Ashram Director, Manager, Trustee or chosen senior person for clarity around the ethics of a situation.

If guidelines for good practice are seen to be broken, firstly the Ashram Manager, Swami SatyaDaya, needs to be informed; alternatively, the Ashram Director and/or Chair of Trustees. All issues need to be dealt within 48 hours if possible.

If the breach is of a serious nature then the person accused should be suspended, especially if the breach pertains to a sexual or abusive nature. This suspension will be investigated by the Trustees. A process of investigation will include giving all parties involved the opportunity to share their narrative. This will be done in a way that protects all parties' right to a fair hearing. All parties will be able to bring external support if they require this.

The outcome of the investigation should be as soon as reasonably possible and the outcome communicated to all parties. It is advisable that the person investigating the complaint have no vested interests in the outcome of the complaint or any prior knowledge of the issue.

If the complaint is upheld, then the decision to permanently expel the person accused (depending on the seriousness of the breach) will be one of the options as a sanction. There are less punitive outcomes such as a period of suspension. The decision of the Trustees will be open to an appeal within 30 days

If the breach of trust is of a criminal nature, then the police need to be informed.

We encourage and support anyone who wants to raise concerns when the code of ethics has not been adhered to. We endeavour to give a considered and honest response to anyone who has a complaint, as per the Ashram's **Whistle Blowing Policy**.

To raise a concern or make a complaint you can contact the Ashram Manager, Swami SatyaDaya, in confidence whether in person, via phone 01558685358 or email nickedge@mandalayoga.net. Alternatively, or in addition, you can also contact in confidence Abhaya Rupa (Chair of Ashram Trustees), 07948609890, email: abhayarupa 44@hotmail.com

## **Reviewing this Code of Ethics**

This code of ethics will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as needed and annually.

Dated: June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020

1<sup>st</sup> review date:

Subsequent review date:

Subsequent review date:

Subsequent review date:

Subsequent review date: