

# DIWALI ON TRAFALGAR SQUARE

28<sup>th</sup> October 2018

London

1-7pm

## BK SERVICE REPORT

*'Londoners celebrated Diwali, the Hindu, Sikh and Jain Festival of Lights, in Trafalgar Square today. The event saw the public and performers dancing in the Square, amongst other festivities. Even an unexpected heavy hailstorm didn't dampen the spirit!' Newsflare*

*'Trafalgar Square looks amazing lit up for Diwali 2018, celebrating in the heart of London. With an exciting line-up of music and dance, plus workshops, foods and crafts for the whole family, it was a fantastic day out for everyone'. Visitor*



For the first time celebrations began on the Square with a traditional **Rajasthani Ghoomar dance**, involving over 150 dancers. It was a spectacular performance and the square was transformed for 20 mins into a beautiful swirl of harmony and colour, followed by an energetic Garba dance involving the developing crowd as the afternoon's Diwali celebrations



In collaboration with 12 other Hindu organisations, known as the **Diwali in London Committee**, **Brahma Kumaris** have been working with the **Mayor of London's office** to deliver Diwali celebrations at Trafalgar Square for 17 years. Each year it attracts thousands of people from many backgrounds and this year was broadcast live by Aastha TV to a global audience. The BK representation was once again led by **Sister Jaymini Patel**. This year there was an atmosphere of real tranquillity and the event ran seamlessly.....even in the biting cold

On the large video screen before the opening ceremony **Dadi Janki's video message** wished everyone a Happy Diwali, and reminded everyone to remember *'I am a soul, and God is mine... and it doesn't matter what other language we speak. She also reminded everyone 'to remain ever happy is to be fortunate'.*

Two conch shell players sounded everyone to the official opening of the main stage programme. They also heralded a hailstorm, which was taken as a very auspicious start! With **Nil Kumar** MC'ing, **Nitin Palan** opened proceedings with a Gyatri Mantra, as Chair of the Diwali in London Committee for 2018. He is also a founding member and driver of Diwali in Trafalgar Square since its inception in London in 2001. **Sister Jaymini**, representing **Brahma Kumaris UK** and also a founding member, invited **Dr Mayank**, **Trustee of BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir**, Neasden; along with fellow Diwali in London committee members **Harsha Trivedi**, representing BSNL, inviting **Jatinder Birdi**, **Vice Chair of Interfaith Network UK** and **Ranu Mehta**, representing **Sai School**, inviting **Varshaben Shah** from **Oshwal Association UK** to give greetings.

For 2018 there was an extra focus on recognising the immense effort and sacrifice of Indian soldiers to WW1. This 'remembrance moment' happened midway through the afternoon, and was led by **Nitin Palan who invited the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan; Lord Gadhia; Robert Lee, Assistant Director of Remembrance, Royal British Legion and Catherine Davies, Head of Remembrance , Royal British Legion.**



After each had spoken, **The Mayor** led a minute's silence for all those who had died in the First World War followed by songs by a children's group **The Trench Brothers** singing: *It's a long way to Rawalpindi* and an adult soloist sang about *Manta Singh*. **Sheena Bhattessa**, British Indian actress then invited the **Mayor of London** to speak to the crowd gathered. He once again emphasised the greatness of Diwali and its universal message of light and unity and encouraged everyone to keep standing for these values in London, which stands as a beacon of inclusion and diversity across the world, and that would continue to be so.



The stage show was as always filled with live music and dance from a wide range of Indian cultural groups and dance academies performing classical to Bollywood with great energy and enthusiasm. There was fusion of many different styles, overflowing with colour, movement and positive sounds of celebration.



**The BK contribution** was, as each year, highly valued and significant, with over 50 **BK volunteers** energetically donating their time and energy in various different areas of the festival including:

- management of the main stage show and backstage;
- organising and packing food for over 200 volunteers and 50 BK volunteers;
- coordinating and decorating the Yoga & Meditation Marquee, which this year celebrated many different yoga practices as well as a slot for Raja Yoga.



- A BK slot at the Dance Marquee
- Two talks by **Sister Jaymini** and **Sister Bhavna** (of New Zealand) at the Diwali in London unity zone.



And there was the special Brahma Kumaris initiative; **Glimpses of the Goddess Marquee**, offering 4 different creative activities for people to benefit from:

- Invoking the shakti within by spinning the shakti wheel
- Taking drishti from the goddesses in situ.
- Experiencing the 'goddess within' by applying a tilak and crown
- Treasuring your divinity by taking a selfie with the above!



This year, after dark, Sister Jaymini again led 2 mins of YOGA MOMENTS at the centre of the stage with four younger BK's sitting in meditation on stage. A large image of the Supreme Soul was displayed on the screen.



The event finished as night had closed in, with a wonderful Aarti and Kirtan led by BAPS Swaminarayan, and including the Diwali in London Team. The Square, still full of people, was lit up with everyone's mobile phones, so from the stage there was sea of lights and Nelson's Column lit up to make it a dramatic closing to a wonderful day full of happiness.

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