

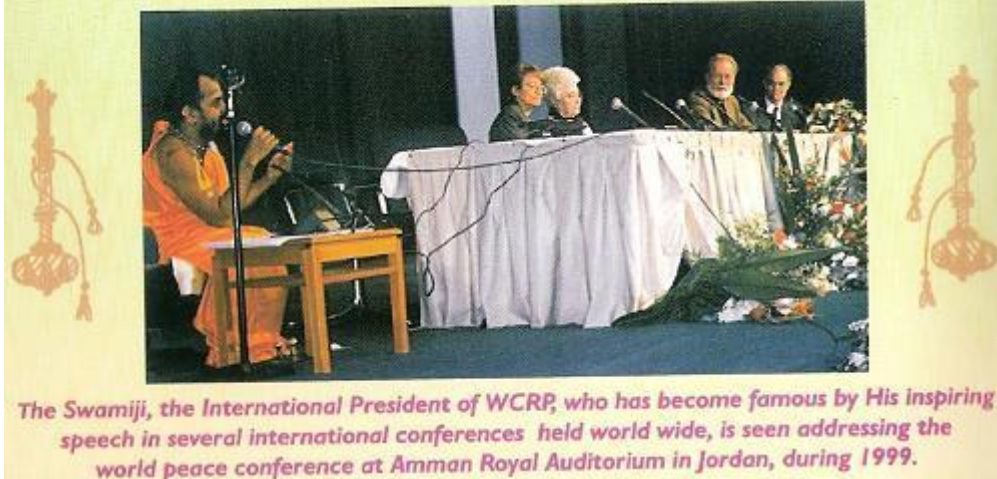
The Doyen of World Peace: Sri Sri Sugunendra Theertha Swamiji

His Holiness Sri Sri Sugunendra Theertha Swamiji's crusade to the west happened almost 11 years ago. It was because of the strong desire and the quest for Madhva philosophy of the members of Cyber Madhva Sangha, which eventually became Vishwa Madhva Sangha, which motivated His Holiness to take this revolutionary step. He became a source of knowledge for some dedicated Madhva devotees. Swamiji's accessibility to all devotees was easily realized because of the advent of internet and mobile phone. Very quickly Swamiji's name and fame spread even outside the Madhva circle.

Sometime during the early 1999, an International Multifaith Organization called 'Religions for Peace' (formally known as World Conference on Religions for Peace' -WCRP) invited His Holiness to join the interreligious community and work for World Peace through interfaith peace dialogue. Swamiji was formally introduced to this global platform in November 1999 in Jordan, Amman, where He addressed the 7th World Assembly of Religions for Peace as a senior Hindu Religious Leader. During the same occasion, He was elected to the governing body of Religions for Peace as one of the International Presidents, representing Hindu Community. Thus Swamiji became the 'Hindu face' and 'Hindu Voice' of Religions for Peace.

Religions for Peace facilitate connection among its affiliates across National, Regional and International levels to foster creative multireligious solutions to challenging problems. From sharing lessons learned between countries to building action alliances among its affiliates, the Religions for Peace demonstrate the unique power of a coordinated global approach. Sharing information and experiences, Conflict transformation, Peace Building through interfaith dialogue and building alliances are some of the key features of Religions for Peace. The Worldwide network of Religions for Peace can be seen in the picture below:





Here is the essence of Swamiji's address during the closing ceremony of 7th World Assembly in Jordan, the theme of which was 'Historically Rooted spirituality for Common Living':

Religions are like flowers. Each religion is having its own nectar. A bee shouldn't miss the nectar from different flowers. One should act like a bee, which collects and stores the essence from different flowers, and makes its own special honey. Like that, each one should study all religions and all philosophies, digest them properly, prepare his own philosophy according to his conscience and practice it throughout his lifetime. But the more important thing is, the bee should have its own freedom to wander wherever it wants. Like that, each one should have the freedom of thinking, practicing, and preaching whatever he believes. Like a bee which does not damage the flower, he should not harm any religion. At the same time, he should not be threatened or tempted to restrict his thinking or wandering. This is the essence of Hinduism and also Shreemad Bhagavad Geethaa, which is in dire need for the time. In Geethaa, Lord Shree Krishna preached extensively to Arjuna about the pros and cons of his options, and left the decision to his conscience. "Vimrushaithadasheshena Yatheechnasi Thathaa Kuru." He said, "It is left up to you to make a decision." We are very glad to notice that this philosophy is behind this conference."

Jordan World Assembly was a good a beginning for His Holiness to foyer himself to the global interfaith community.

Swamiji was eventually invited to address several such international events in places like Nairobi (Kenya), Istanbul (Turkey), Madrid (Spain), Moscow (Russia), Asthana (Kazakasthan), Manila (Philiphines) and Kyoto (Japan). In all these places Sri Sri Sugunendra Theertha Swamiji left a unique footprint with his inimitable style and dignity.

During His recent address in Kyoto in a public ceremony organized by Japan Council of Interreligious Leaders to mark the 20th anniversary of World Peace Prayers in Mt. Heie, His Holiness highlighted the message of the Vedas that "live like a guest in this world, use minimum and give maximum". He further recalled the famous non-violence message from India through Bhagavan Buddha to the whole world. The Pontiff called on the worldwide delegates to preserve global environment by promoting green revolution.



Photo: His Holiness presenting a memento for Rev. Nichiko Niwano of Japan in Kyoto



Photo: Sri Sri Sugunendra Theertha Swamiji delivering a keynote speech during the panel discussion on Harmony and sustainable living with nature, in Kyoto, Japan.

Being a close disciple of His Holiness, I had the privilege of coordinating most of His International tours since past 10 years. It was my responsibility to make sure that a proper arrangement is made to enable Swamiji to perform Daily Pooja and traditional rituals. Availability of a guest house with kitchen facility or a Madhva host house in some countries was possible by the graceful help of Indian Embassies and high commissions. Swamiji was never interested in sight seeing in any of these countries. His utmost priority was His daily 'Japa-Tapa-Anustana' followed by graceful address in the intended meetings.

In the nutshell 'Sri Sri Sugunendra Theertha Swamiji' and 'Religions for Peace' can be looked as a mutually complementing combination. 'Religions for Peace' is a global platform for Swamiji to spread the peace message of Acharya Madhva. Swamiji is a strong Hindu voice for peace building and global harmony for the 'Religions for Peace'

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