



***Review of the decades of endeavour and accomplishments in Slovenia
on the occasion of the “Bharat Gauram Award”***

presented to our beloved and respected

Sri Vishwaguru Mahamandaleshwar Paramhans Abunathswami Maheshwaranandaji

As in many parts of the world, we in Slovenia, have become accustomed to referring to Sri Vishwaguru Mahamandaleshwar Paramhans Swami Maheshwaranand Puriji, as simply Swamiji, a name and title very dear to our hearts and so easy for us to pronounce. It was with greatest happiness and with the deep regards that we came to hear of the recognition bestowed on Swamiji in the form of the esteemed “Bharat Gauram Award” for Lifetime Achievements following decades of His remarkable endeavours throughout the world.

We, in Slovenia have received so much from Swamiji’s long years of work and efforts, and in this text we are trying to briefly review His accomplishments in Slovenia. This is not an easy task, since Swamiji’s is always acting with remarkable energy and tirelessness. He has profound ability to touch upon the lives of all people who cross his path, be they spiritual seekers, yoga practitioners and other common people or spiritual, religious, political, academic or even business leaders in our community. The main tool for Swamiji’s systematic engagement with humanity is the system of Yoga in Daily Life, which He has authored to develop physical, mental, social and spiritual health, and which has been widely accepted and acknowledged by the general public and institutions in Slovenia. It has been shown to be an effective method for achieving well-being and a happy life, as well as an excellent platform to present and promote humanitarian values and projects.

Swamiji very often quotes Gandhiji’s thought that “an ounce of practice is worth more than tons of preaching”, as well as Benjamin Franklin’s favourite quote that “you can achieve anything you set your mind to”, so it is not really surprising that all His endeavours in Slovenia can be viewed as a lesson on how we can achieve something great, even when starting out from very modest means. Such were also the beginnings of Swamiji’s activities in Slovenia. The first visits to Slovenia in the late 1980’s quickly developed into massive public lectures in Ljubljana, Maribor and other cities in 1990 and 1991. The seed of Yoga in Daily Life, planted in those initial visits, quickly grew into a huge tree, which is now integrated into the daily life of thousands of yoga practitioners in Slovenia. Today, Yoga in Daily Life is practiced systematically and with great dedication in practically every town in Slovenia, as well as in hundreds of villages across the country. Rigorous research work in the subject has confirmed the overall benefits of the practice for the physical, mental and social health of people. In the recent years Yoga in Daily Life has been taught and integrated into the educational programs of the Faculty of Education at the University of Maribor and influenced the education at the Faculty of Sports at the University of Ljubljana. These activities are fully recognized in our society, so much so that individual Yoga in Daily Life centres have attained the official status of societies acting in the public interest in the area of health.

Swamiji did not just bring these techniques and knowledge to Slovenia, and work out exactly how to integrate them into the daily life of people, he also insisted that Yoga in Daily Life had to be available to all people who wish to practice it, regardless of their social or economic standing. A strong humanitarian note has always been present in his teachings, and for this reason there was always much emphasis on making the practices available to all groups of disadvantaged people, be it through free classes in nature, working with people with disabilities, classes for the elderly in retirement homes and even a program for prisoners. Children also have much to benefit, as good and healthy habits, set out and encouraged at an early age, are an excellent foundation for successful studies and a happy adult life.



Kranj, 2010, children’s program, led by Swamiji



Kranj, 2006 Joga in Retirement Home with Swamiji



Free Summer Yoga classes – Maribor 2007



Satsang with Swamiji in Ljubljana YIDL center, 2007

The free summer programs proved to be extremely popular with many people, as they were mainly held in open public parks, where people could just drop in without prior arrangements. Dozens of parks are used for this purpose every year and thousands of people attend these events.

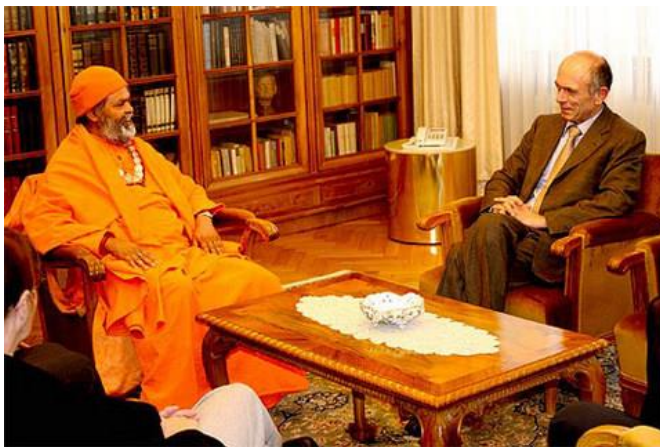
Swamiji teaches the ancient philosophy of Karma Yoga, or working for the community without any expectation of reward. His whole life is a shining example of this philosophy put into practice and he has initiated many such activities in our country. This fits in nicely with the currently modern trend of voluntary work. So, it is not surprising that some of the humanitarian activities initiated by Swamiji and carried out by Yoga in Daily Life in Slovenia were also awarded titles such as “Volunteer of the Year Award” in 2005 and “Volunteer Project of the Year Award” in 2007, with awards presented by the President of the Republic.

Such widespread humanitarian and volunteer activities naturally came to the attention of Slovenian officials, political leaders, representatives of other humanitarian societies, who acknowledged the benefits of Yoga in Daily Life in the domains of educational, health and spiritual development. This recognition in turn led to many meetings with our leaders at all levels of government. After meeting

with Swamiji in 2000, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Mr. Milan Kučan personally encouraged the publication of the Slovene language version of the book *The System Yoga in Daily Life*. In 2001, then Prime Minister dr. Janez Drnovšek acknowledged Swamiji's contribution with a reception on the occasion of the Peace Tour in Slovenia. After this first visit, the reception with an exchange of experience ideas turned traditional, and was repeated several times, included receptions at the highest official level in 2004 and 2005.



Meeting with Mr Milan Kučan 2002



Meeting with Mr Janez Drnovšek 2005

An important tenet of *Yoga in Daily Life* is participation in the life and development of the local community. This is part of Swamiji's "grass roots" efforts to establish a healthy regard for the environment, respect for all creatures and peace in the whole world. Mayors of many cities in Slovenia have shown much appreciation for these humanitarian efforts, as well as for the positive benefits of *Yoga in Daily Life* to their constituents, so that Swamiji's visits to mayors and the planting of peace trees became a cherished tradition, starting with the cities of Kranj – with Mayor Mohor Bogataj and Ljubljana – with Mayor Danica Simšič in 2006. Mayor Zoran Jankovič at the Meeting of Mayors of EU Capitals in 2008 and 2010. In 2008, we celebrated 20 years of *Yoga in Daily Life* in Slovenia so peace trees were planted in Novo Mesto – with Mayor Alojzij Muhič, in Domžale – with three mayors, the Mayor of Domžale Mr. Toni Dragan, Mayor of Trzin – Mr. Anton Persak and Mayor of Moravče – Mr. Martin Rebolj, in Portorož – with Mayor Tomaž Gantar and in Celje – with Mayor Bojan Šrot. In 2009, a peace tree was planted in Maribor – with Mayor Franc Kangler, And two more peace trees where planted in Nova Gorica – with Deputy Mayor Darinka Kozinc and in Zagorje – with Mayor Matjaž Švagan in 2010.



Kranj, Peace tree, 12.10.2006



Ljubljana, Peace tree, 14.10.2006



Danica Simčič and Swamiji with dove



Novo Mesto, town hall, 3.5.2008



Novo Mesto, peace tree, 3.5.2008



Domžale, meeting with mayors, 6.5.2008



Domžale, peace tree, 6. maj 2008



Piran, meeting with Mayor Tomaž Gantar



Portorož, peace tree, 7.5. 2008



Celje, Mayor Bojan Šrot, town hall



Celje, peace tree, 8.5.2008



Maribor, Mayor Franc Kangler 2008



Maribor, peace tree, 21.5.2009



Zagorje, peace tree, 17.6.2010

To round up this wonderful symbolism of the tree as a representation of nature, the protection it offers to all beings and peace through “unity in diversity”, at Swamiji’s initiative, two parks were established in Slovenia: the first was set up by the Slovene-Indian Friendship Society in the beginning of December 2012, when volunteers and their family members planted 150 organic Topaz apple trees, the fruits of which are to be available in a few years, free of charge to anyone strolling by.

Yoga in Daily Life Kranj, at the celebration of its 20 years of activities, in cooperation with Municipality Kranj, also set up a Peace Park consisting of 12 trees on a cleared municipal land adjacent to the school center. On September 20th, 2013 the Peace Park was opened by Swamiji’s high representatives Mahamandaleshwar Swami Vivek Puri and Mahamandaleshwar Gyaneshwar

Puri – along with Deputy Mayors Nada Mihajlović and Darko Jarc, and the representatives of the local community.



Ljubljana, Peace Park, 1.12. 2012



Kranj, Peace Park 20.9.2013

Care for the environment and all living beings is a permanent component in Swamiji’s program and message throughout the world. In our own country, this message was most prominently brought to the attention of the public during the Slovenia Tour in May 2008 resulting in a meeting with the Minister of the Environment Dr. Janez Podobnik and participation, at the invitation of the Mayor of Ljubljana Mr. Zoran Jankovič at the Meeting of Mayors of European Capital Cities.



Dr Janez Podobnik, 7. may 2008



Ljubljana Mayor Zoran Jankovič



Meeting of the mayors of European capitals

The event most noted by the media, is certainly the 5th International World Peace Summit – subtitled “The Message of Sri Swami Madhavananda and Mahatma Gandhi” – which was organized in the premier national location, the Cankarjev Dom Ljubljana in 2006. It was a huge success with 15 hundred visitors, an art competition for children and other important initiatives that were so widely accepted by Slovenian public and political leaders that the project was awarded the “Volunteer Project of the Year Award”. The summit had significant impact and influenced the development of humanitarian initiatives in Slovenia and internationally, as it involved many international important personalities, such as Mr. Bawa Jain, Secretary General - World Council of Religious Leaders of the Millennium World Peace Summit, Mr. Ramu Damodaran, Chief of Civil Society Service, United Nations Department of Public information, Mr. Panabaka Lakshmi, Minister of Health & Family Welfare, India, Mr. Budimir Loncar, Special Consultant to the Croatian President, Mr. Dave Laxmi Narayan, Minister of Forest, Environment & Mines, Government of Rajasthan, India, Mr. Kataria Gulab Chand, Minister of Home Affairs & Civil Defence, Government of Rajasthan, India, and many other esteemed guests. This has also helped us become one of the first NGOs to be admitted into HEPA Europe, the World Health Organization’s European network for the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity.



5th WPS, CD Ljubljana, 14.10.2006



5th WPS, Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana, 14.10. 2006

During these visits, Swamiji has always fostered a spirit of inclusion, a multicultural approach that brings together people from all walks of life and all faiths in order to promote peace and respect for the environment. For this reason there were many meetings with representatives of different religious communities in Slovenia, most especially in the organization of multi-religious prayers for peace, such as was held in Ljubljana main city park, and in the evening on Congress Square .



Ljubljana, Multi religious peace prayer, 14.10.2004



Ljubljana, evening peace prayer at Congress Square, 14.10.2006

As recipients of all these blessings, we can only express our thanks and gratitude, as well as our sincere appreciation that this esteemed award, so well deserved with untiring, selfless humanitarian and spiritual service to all humanity, and all the endeavours at steering people in the direction of physical, mental, social and spiritual health, the betterment of society, and achieving peace and harmony on Earth has been so propitiously awarded.

India has once again recognized these important efforts in preserving and spreading the treasures of Vedic culture and the Sanatan Dharma, awakening spirituality, love and compassion in the global community of humankind. This award has deservedly been delivered into the hands of the true “Pride of India” and we are all grateful for it.

Representatives of Slovenian Yoga in Daily Life Centres and
Yoga Union of Slovenia