

# Meditation at the United Nations



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## U THANT: DIVINITY'S SMILE AND HUMANITY'S CRY

*A programme of music and speech in tribute to the late Secretary-General U Thant took place 21 January in the ECOSOC Chamber, the day before what would have been his 68th birthday.*

*U Thant's daughter, Mrs. Aye Aye Myint-U, and her family were present as Ambassador Rossides of Cyprus, Ambassador Vinci of Italy and Deputy Under-Secretary-General Robert Muller spoke movingly about the ex-Secretary-General. Sri Chinmoy, Director of the United Nations Meditation Group, presented Dr. and Mrs. Myint-U with copies of his just published book, U Thant: Divinity's Smile and Humanity's Cry, which contains comments and essays about U Thant by United Nations and other international figures. The book is available in the U.N. Bookshop. News of the programme for U Thant was broadcast in Burma the following day.*



Sri Chinmoy plays the opening musical dedication on esraj.

*His Excellency Mr. Zenon Rossides  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Permanent Representative of Cyprus  
to the United Nations*

*Ambassador Rossides:* U Thant is a luminous ideal that moved among us as a human figure. His thoughts and actions had a transcendental quality. Because he was eminently a man of the spirit in the integrity of his mind, he transcended the adversities and limitations of the intellect.

U Thant had inherently the noblest Asian traditions of the spirit that enriched humanity with the higher ethics of religions, all of which originated from that one continent.

For it is the spirit that constitutes man's link with the flow of the Universal Mind that has been the origin of eminent men throughout history. And it is to this Source of eternal life and human virtue that we pay homage today in the name of U Thant.

Through his intrinsic dedication to the universality of man and his inspired leadership, he saved the United Nations and the world at the most critical junctures.

In the Congo crisis, through unswerving determination and moral courage he gave to the limited scope of U.N. Peace-keeping Operations in the area the meaning and content of a true U.N. peace-force in the service of freedom, international

security and peace. He thus preserved the directly threatened territorial integrity and independence of that small country.

In a second and most important occasion, that of the Cuban crisis, U Thant's inspirational initiative and prompt action saved the world from the holocaust of an impending nuclear confrontation. For indeed, it is the spirit that leads to the liberation from the self, which is the basis of great human achievement.

And this is what is needed in world leadership today, more especially among the nuclear powers, to save a sorely tested mankind from the engulfing dangers of a technological breakthrough that, in its misuse, is threatening the very survival of the human species.

The prophetic warning solemnly pronounced by U Thant in 1969 must no longer go unheeded.





Sri Chinmoy thanks Ambassador Rossides for his  
illuminating talk.

*His Excellency Mr. Piero Vinci  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Permanent Representative of Italy  
to the United Nations*





*Ambassador Vinci:* Dear friends, I was glad to accept the invitation so kindly conveyed to me to come and take part in this commemorative day. I think it is always very refreshing and inspiring to get together and to concentrate on the memory of a great man, a man whom we have known so well and to whom we had the good fortune to be so close. I hope you won't mind if I repeat some of the things I have said on the previous occasion about U Thant. In a case like this, when you repeat some strong convictions and some strong feeling, it is not a repetition really, but a confirmation of that belief and faith which this man has been able to inspire in many of us.

I said on that occasion, and I will repeat, that future historians will be in a better position to appraise the daily performance and the personal role which U Thant has played in the many international disputes which occurred in the nine years he held his high responsibility. But what I consider more important is the mark he has made on the world-stage by his philosophy and his political foresight. Because the two provide the true stature of the man we are commemorating today and the place he will occupy in the history of mankind. I say the history of mankind because I strongly feel that U Thant belongs to the whole world and not only to his country. At the same time, he is part of mankind as a whole.

As a matter of fact, he was one of the main in-

spiring forces, if not the main inspiring force, in drawing the attention of the governments and of the people throughout the world to all the difficult problems and challenges we are facing today. And I am not only speaking of the dangers of war, the dangers of competition between north and south. I am thinking also of some of these difficult problems we are facing today, which concern environment, health and the dangers of spiritual deterioration.

Now may I just also remember the unconditional dedication of U Thant to the United Nations. We saw this in his candor in public statements, in his contacts with representatives of different countries, in his integrity, his humility, his compassion. But perhaps this is less known, but I think the previous speaker, my dear friend and colleague Zenon Rossides, has mentioned also his strong religious belief and convictions. That's why I always saw in U Thant an extraordinary mixture and combination of religious strong convictions and ideal attachment—ideal attachment to some of the political ideas of today, and mainly socialism. Perhaps this is also less known, but U Thant in his early days was a student of socialism and followed very closely the movements of socialism in the world. I think this gives you a better knowledge of the man as he was.

To conclude, my dear friends, I think the best way we can pay tribute to U Thant is by keeping

alive his highly spiritual message which Ambassador Rossides has so eloquently conveyed to all of us. For me, the message is one that called for a radical change in our political thinking as well as in our moral approach to life and to the problems that we all face today. This is my humble plea and my humble dedication to the man we are commemorating today. I thank you.

*Mr. Robert G. Muller  
Director and Deputy  
to the Under-Secretary-General  
for Inter-Agency Affairs and Co-ordination*

*Mr. Muller:* I intended to speak about U Thant's influence on my personal life, but when I saw the beautiful title of this ceremony, which is also the title of Sri Chinmoy's new book: "U Thant, Divinity's Smile and Humanity's Cry", I felt that I should direct my thoughts to this theme.

U Thant was a great man because he was able to distill from the immense complexity of the surrounding world and from his observation of life, a few basic, deeply felt principles. These were always the same: that every human being had physical, mental, moral and spiritual qualities and needs. He established a hierarchy among these, as



if the whole evolution of mankind was directed to the achievement of the highest level, namely the spiritual level. This inspired his entire work.

I knew U Thant well and I have read assiduously much of what he has said and written. And everywhere I can find the expression or the influence of this simple, but so fundamental, classification of human attributes and needs. Therein lie the main cries of humanity. The cry to physical life, to start with. He was very clear about this. For example, in a speech on education in 1967, he said :

I have been trained all my life to regard human life as sacred. I abhor violence and violent death. I do not particularly worry much about my own life, but I do worry a great deal about the children of today. How they should be taught, how they should be brought up, what kind of life they should live and what values they should cherish. I do not particularly distinguish between the lives of my own children and the lives of the children of other people. Nor do I distinguish between Burmese lives and American lives and Russian lives and Chinese lives. It is life itself that is threatened.

U Thant always took an unequivocal stand for the sanctity of life. He condemned war and violence in all their forms. In his Toronto speech

you will find many beautiful statements on non-violence and on the universal law of love and compassion for all living beings. He was against war, against nuclear weapons, against all armaments, against poverty, against all human suffering, and he never hesitated one moment to express his full commitment to life and non-violence, often to the great annoyance of the powerful, armed and wealthy.

He also voiced humanity's cry for mental fulfilment. As you know, he was a teacher. Although he usually didn't resort to such extreme words, he began the above speech as follows: "I am going to speak with a feeling of trepidation because I am going to speak about something which is very close to my heart: education." What he saw foremost in education was the fulfilment of the human mind. There can be no conscious life if a human being does not receive a minimum of education. Otherwise, how can he understand life? He pleaded constantly for the education of the children of the poor and for the work of UNESCO. But for him education was even more: it was the preparation of a universal, human brotherhood. Therefrom arose his great love and support for the international schools and his dream of a United Nations University. He believed that only through proper education would we be able to build the world of peace and kindness mankind had been always dreaming of. He said it to me very often in our private conversations.

His third cry was for morality. Here U Thant had a long list of cravings: e.g., his craving for truthfulness between nations. He wanted nations to be true to each other, not to lie, not to exaggerate, not to cheat, not to start from those falsehoods called "bargaining positions" which make international diplomacy a primitive market place. He craved for understanding between nations, non-violence, generosity, live and let-live. He believed in the magic of love and compassion in international relations. All this you will find reflected in his statements on apartheid, racism, colonialism, violations of human rights and whatever else is reprehensible on this planet. He was not just repeating the political slogans of the day. He was speaking from a sound, all-out commitment to human life. U Thant's great strength, the alpha and omega of all his action and thinking were the supremacy and centrality of the human person. In an impromptu farewell speech at a party offered for him by Planetary Citizens on 17 December 1971, he said:

What was my basic approach to all problems? What was the "system" I employed? I would describe it as the human approach or the central importance of the human element in all problems: political, economic, social, colonial, racial, etc. And when I say the human approach, some of you are aware of



my philosophy, of my basic concept regarding the human community and the human situation.

And once more he outlined the four categories:

There are certain variations and priorities in values. In my view, an ideal man or an ideal woman is endowed with four virtues, four qualities: physical qualities, mental qualities, moral qualities, and above all, spiritual qualities.

And once more he discussed the hierarchy between these values.

Let us now turn to the smile from divinity. By choosing this term, Sri Chinmoy has understood that the reign of spirituality has not yet come on this planet. The smile of divinity is a confident premonition of the next stage of evolution, understood as yet only by a very few people. U Thant foresaw the advent of a moral and spiritual age of humanity. He believed that it alone would bring peace and justice on Earth. For him, spirituality was an inner harmony, a purity, the individual's deep consciousness of the cosmos, of the world, of his relations with all living beings and people. This was for him the highest level an individual and humanity could reach. It was simply the full realization of human nature. Once you find

harmony through love, through compassion, through right behaviour, through respect for life and through peaceful relations with others, then you have enlightenment. Then you are in peace, you are a serene, harmonious, happy cosmos of your own. He said it many times. Unfortunately we are still a far cry from this higher stage of evolution. The western world has succeeded tremendously in the physical, intellectual and scientific spheres, but it has not yet perceived the fathomless treasures of moral and spiritual fulfilment. The heart and soul of Western man has not followed his mind. As U Thant said in his speech to the Planetary Citizens:

I am in no sense anti-intellectual, but the stress of education in the schools of highly developed societies, as I have stated on many previous occasions, is primarily on the development of the intellect or in physical excellence. To me, moral and spiritual aspects of life are far more important than the physical and intellectual aspects of life.

In his kind and unobtrusive way, U Thant was far ahead of our time. He saw for the entire world what you have discovered for yourselves, namely that thought, meditation, prayer, contemplation, inner search and interrogation are the link between the miracle of human life and divinity. Good physical lives—respect for one's body; good mental

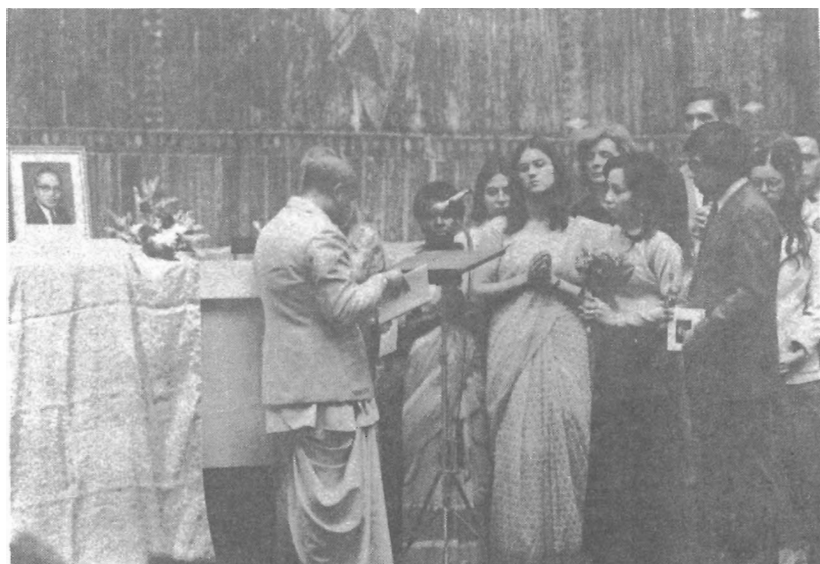
lives—the acquisition of knowledge; good moral lives—the practice of love; and good spiritual lives—the practice of prayer and meditation, merge individual life with divinity. This is the royal way to peace and happiness. This is the path the next phase of human evolution will take.

I would like to conclude by saying this: humanity is finding the right road, awkwardly but surely. Much has been achieved for the physical and mental improvement of human lives, but it has not yet reached the entire world since two to three billion brethren and sisters are still living in poverty and ignorance. But in a great part of the world life now is generally long, good and healthy, and a school child knows more than any king or emperor in the entire history of man. Good bodies and good minds bring us nearer to divinity. The same is true of morality and spirituality: they are a fundamental part of man's aggrandizement. But here we have much progress to make. There has been great corruption and immorality of late in many countries. It was good, therefore, to hear President Carter stress in his inaugural address the need for a moral and spiritual renaissance. The people are crying for these virtues without which there can be no true civilization.

And so we progress, physically, mentally, morally and spiritually towards a higher level of human consciousness, towards that smile of divinity which knows that someday the human race will be

able to re-establish paradise on Earth. There is no longer much difference between the political approach and this broader, richer concept of human fulfilment. Government, public service, international agencies and most firms and institutions are seeking to bring about a better life, an increase in the happiness and consciousness of the people. This is also the aim of religions, which go a step further and include the heart, the soul, eternity and infinity. There are many religions, there are beliefs in many Gods, and there are faiths without a God (for example, Buddhism). For many, God is the symbol of that fullest life, knowledge, love and soul-consciousness man has been seeking since the beginnings of time.

U Thant often spoke of the law of Karma, the principle that every action has a reaction, good or evil. I am grateful to him for having taught me this law. I am grateful for so much I have learned from him, and I try to be a good echo of his good thinking, feelings and actions. I hope that his message will continue to spread, that the law of Karma will operate and that more and more people will understand that in his heart and mind he held the keys to the future peace and happiness of our world.



*Above:* Sri Chinmoy presents a copy of his book *U Thant: Divinity's Smile and Humanity's Cry* to Dr. and Mrs. Myint-U.

*Below:* Sri Chinmoy thanks Dr. and Mrs. Myint-U for their gift to him of a colour photograph of U Thant.

