

# UNICEF STAFF NEWS

Double Issue Two/Three, 1996



**Toward a Mother- and Baby-Friendly UNICEF**



# CONTENTS

*Issue Number Two/Three, 1996*

**3** *Letters to the Editor*

**4** *Toward a Mother- and Baby-Friendly UNICEF*

**6** *The Division of Human Resources Responds to 'General Service Women Speak Out'*

**8** *Soul-Searching and Management Excellence in Africa's Country Offices*

**10** *Staff Participation and the New Country, Regional and Global Management Teams*

**12** *Reuniting the Child*

**13** *An Interview with David J. Halliday*

**16** *UNICEF'S First Mass Email Debate*

**18** *Toastmasters in UNICEF: Multiplying Your Communication and Leadership Skills*

**20** *Starting the Journey: The UNICEF Harare Staff Retreat*

**22** *Sri Chinmoy: The Peace Meditation at the UN - A UNICEF Presence*

**27** *Around UNICEF*

**32** *Staff News Announces Special 50th Anniversary Issue*

## UNICEF Staff News

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## **Sri Chinmoy: The Peace Meditation at the United Nations - A UNICEF Presence**

Who climbs icy cliffs, runs marathons, competes in the Inter-Agency Games, directs a Fitness Centre, hosts concerts and caters banquets? Collectively, it's the UNICEF staff members of Sri Chinmoy: The Peace Meditation at the United Nations. The Peace Meditation is attended by a number of our UNICEF colleagues, several of whom have been serving the agency for over 20 years.

Sri Chinmoy has been leader of the Peace Meditation at the United Nations since 1970, when a group of Secretariat staff members invited him to conduct meditations at UN headquarters to focus on the ideals on which the organization was founded. The late Secretary-General U Thant, himself a devoted practitioner of meditation, warmly encouraged Sri Chinmoy's endeavours.

### **From the Village to the World**

Sri Chinmoy was born in Bengal, India in 1931, into a devout family. After the passing of his parents, he joined his elder brothers and sisters at a spiritual community in South India, where he lived from the ages of 12 to 32. There he excelled in sports, mastered English rhyme and metre, sang and composed songs - and, most importantly, practised meditation and other

spiritual disciplines for hours each day. Heeding an inner call to be of service to peace-seekers in the Western world, this sheltered soul left his native shores in 1964 for New York. With the assistance of kind friends, he secured a junior clerical position at the Indian consulate. In the evenings he began holding meditations for a widening circle of spiritual aspirants.

The universality of Sri Chinmoy's philosophy has touched seekers throughout the world - people of all nationalities, races, faiths and cultures. He harmonizes the goals of individual peace and world peace with his message of unity in diversity, teaching the importance of prayer, meditation, discipline, self-giving and the feeling of oneness with the highest and its multifarious manifestations on earth. Most importantly, he emphasizes that living a spiritual life is both possible and practical in today's world.

### **United Nations, The Heart-Home of the World Body**

During the past quarter-century, Sri Chinmoy has continued to offer meditations for world peace twice weekly at UN headquarters. He has also spoken and written extensively about the spiritual role of the United

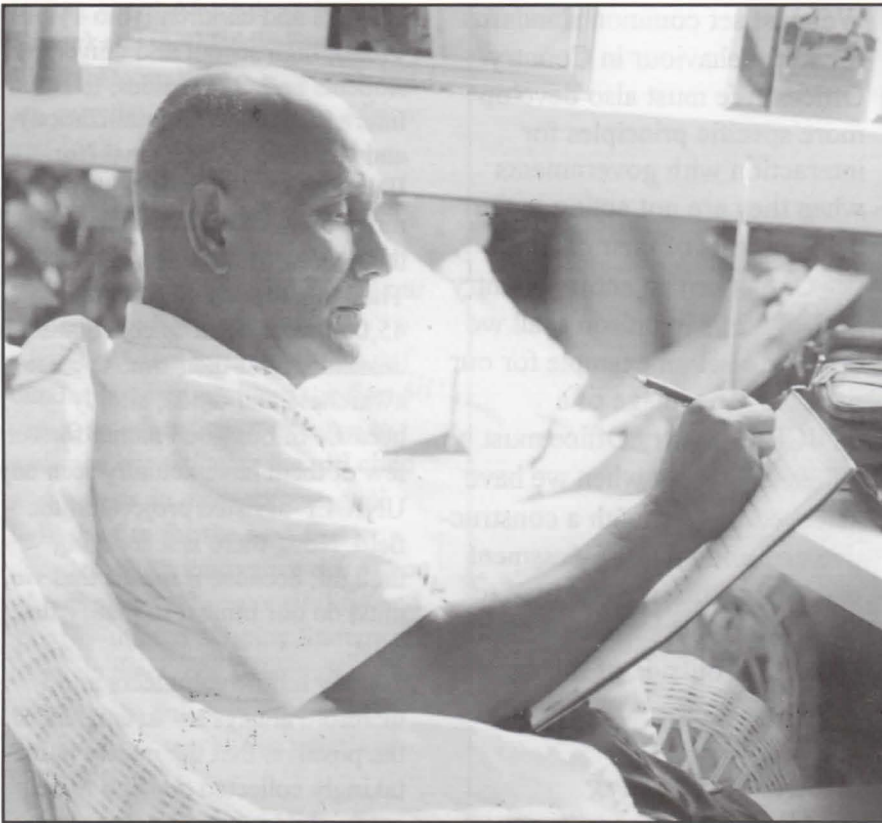
Nations as the principal instrument of peace and oneness for the world family. In 1995, two extensive volumes of Sri Chinmoy's writings were published: *The Garland of Nation-Souls*, including his talks at the UN; and *My Meditation-Service at the United Nations*, a compendium of his answers to questions asked by those attending the Peace Meditation over the years.

With Sri Chinmoy's encouragement, the members of the Peace Meditation Group, with friends and colleagues around the world, have organized numerous activities to highlight UN ideals and foster international harmony. These include Peace Walks; one-mile Fun Runs for UN staff; interfaith Prayer Breakfasts; world-wide observances of Seven Minutes for Peace on United Nations Day; Peace Concerts by Sri Chinmoy for special UN anniversaries; benefit concerts and sports events for UNICEF; and programmes to honour the cultural and spiritual contributions of member States and individuals who have dedicated their energies to world peace.

### **The Message of Self-Transcendence**

In his daily life, Sri Chinmoy lives by a motto that all of us





Sri Chinmoy

... serving the United Nations might well adopt: "Never give up!" He is a prolific writer, painter and composer. In physical achievements, perhaps more vividly than in any other field, Sri Chinmoy has demonstrated the power of meditation coupled with determination. A track-and-field champion in his youth, he now, at age 65, competes enthusiastically in sprinting, rowing and other athletic events, and his weightlifting accomplishments have become legendary.

### **Peace Meditation Members at UNICEF**

For Sri Chinmoy's students, meditation is far from an isolated abstraction or an escape from reality; it is the foundation for every day's aspirations and attainments, and the strength to

face the inevitable hurdles. Sunil Davidson of DFM, who succeeded in swimming the English Channel several years ago along with colleague Adhiratha Keefe, scaled over 50 rock and ice peaks in 1995 to commemorate the UN's 50th anniversary. Kripalu Baertsch of IRM and Saral Opera, DOC, journeyed to this year's Inter-Agency Games in Vichy, where they competed for the UN Headquarters team, which later captured the men's prize - thanks to the special coaching of Jorge Hernandez-Mora of DOC.

The sprinters in the Peace Meditation are outnumbered by the marathoners. Almost all the UNICEF meditation staffers have completed at least one 26.2 mile odyssey, and some have gone the distance more than twenty times! UNICEF's Fitness Centre was

the creation of tennis buff Pratap Bushek of IRM. Chetana Hein (DOC) is ranked 8th in the US in her age category in the javelin throw, and just a bit lower in discus.

### **Especially for UNICEF**

In 1988, just outside the entrance to UNICEF House, Sri Chinmoy honoured Executive Director James Grant by lifting him up, on a special platform, with one arm. Beaming, Mr. Grant ad-libbed, "Now that peace is breaking out everywhere, we have to help push it up!" In September 1994, Sri Chinmoy presented to Mr. Grant the Peace Meditation Group's U Thant Peace Award. Visibly moved, Mr. Grant spontaneously touched on the very themes that motivate the Peace Meditation colleagues at UNICEF and throughout the UN:

"We know that individuals can make a difference for peace," he said, "I personally happen to believe that meditation contributes not only to individual peace, but also to the way people relate to others around them.... I am appreciative of receiving this Award from such treasured hands and such a treasured Group."

That is what inspires the UNICEF staff who attend the Peace Meditation: the certainty that individuals can make a difference.

*Chandika Kapalika  
UNICEF New York  
Nemi Fredner  
UNDP New York*



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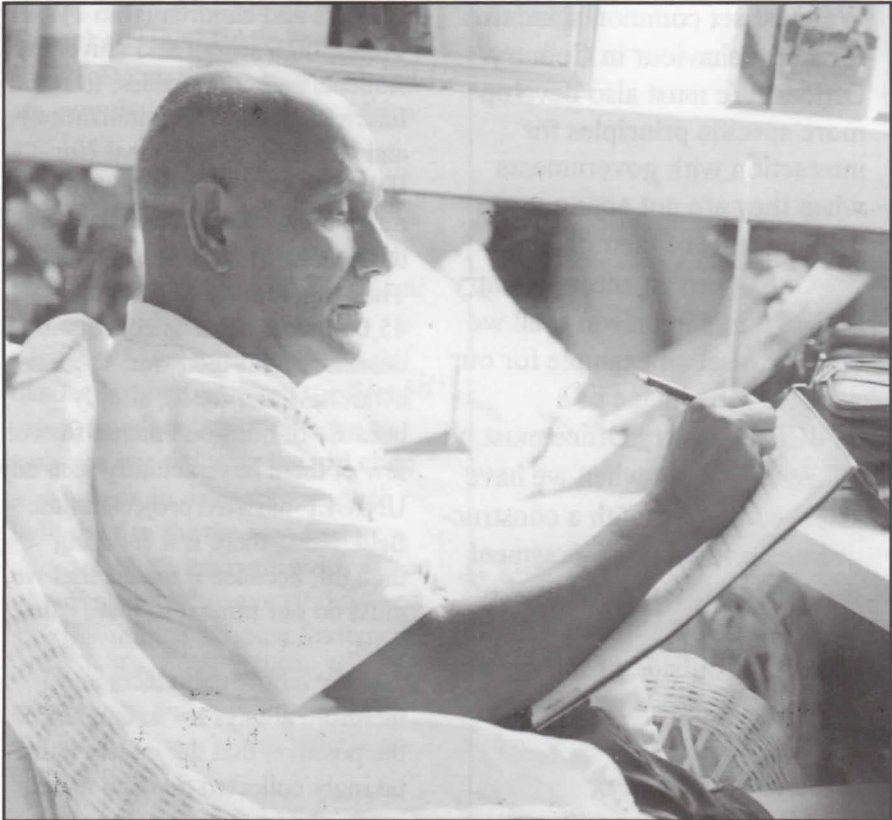
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*3 Letters to the Editor*

*4 Toward a Mother- and Baby-Friendly  
UNICEF*

*6 The Division of Human Resources  
Responds to 'General Service Women Speak Out'*

*8 Soul-Searching and Management  
Excellence in Africa's Country Offices*

*10 Staff Participation and the New Country,  
Regional and Global Management Teams*

*12 Reuniting the Child*

*13 An Interview with David J. Halliday*

*16 UNICEF'S First Mass Email Debate*

*18 Toastmasters in UNICEF: Multiplying Your  
Communication and Leadership Skills*

~~*20 Starting the Journey: The UNICEF Harare  
Staff Retreat*~~

~~*22 Sri Chinmoy: The Peace Meditation at the  
UN - A UNICEF Presence*~~

*27 Around UNICEF*

*32 Staff News Announces Special  
50th Anniversary Issue*