

Lifting Up the World with a Oneness-Heart:
Sri Chinmoy Honours President Mary Robinson

30 October 2004 – Aspiration-Ground, Jamaica, New York

Introduction by Mr. Adhiratha Keefe of UNICEF

It is the greatest honour and privilege to welcome today an extraordinary champion of humanity, Mrs. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

President Robinson's stellar career began when she became Professor of Constitutional and Criminal Law at Trinity College in Dublin at the age of 25. She served as Senator from 1969-1989, as President of Ireland from 1990-1997, and as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights from 1997-2002.

She was the fearless Secretary-General of the World Conference Against Racism in 2001. The following year she launched the Ethical Globalization Institute.

President Robinson is currently Professor, Adviser and Senior Research Scholar at Columbia University here in New York. She is the recipient of numerous honorary degrees and awards, including the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize.

As President of Ireland, tackling controversial issues and at the same time reaching out to the whole population of her country, Mrs. Robinson enjoyed an unprecedented approval rating of 93 percent. During her Presidency she brought to the world's attention the sufferings of Rwanda and Somalia, extending her country's concern to the far corners of the globe. We are deeply grateful to President Robinson for her compassion for the people of India, Sri Chinmoy's Motherland. We thank her for kindly supporting our Peace Run between Dublin and Belfast in 1991, and for most graciously receiving our world-encircling Peace Torch in 1994.

President Robinson is a person of uncompromising integrity dedicated to what she affirms is "the right of the people to gain the full flower of their human rights." She enforces the highest standards "without fear or favour."

Of her position as High Commissioner, she has said, "I knew that to do the job well and bring out what is really the culture of human rights, you have to stand up to bullies, you've got to be prepared to criticise both developed and developing countries."

President Robinson is now even more active. She too, like Sri Chinmoy, believes in self-transcendence. She is travelling extensively, especially to universities, to encourage support of the human rights movement, and she leads several global initiatives. She fights tirelessly against the devastation of human lives by HIV/AIDS in Africa, and is a close friend and collaborator of President Mandela, Archbishop Tutu and a number of other world leaders in this effort.

In President Robinson we see a towering intellect governed by a world-embracing and courage-flooded heart. At her Presidential inauguration she prayed, "May God direct me so that my Presidency is one of justice, peace and love." Indeed, justice, peace and love have been the hallmarks of President Robinson's life. It is with deepest appreciation, admiration and gratitude that we now welcome President Robinson to receive from Sri Chinmoy the Lifting Up the World with a Oneness-Heart Award.

30 October 2004

Aspiration-Ground – Saturday, 11 a.m.

(from tape and steno: Nilima)

“Lifting Up the World with a Oneness-Heart” programme honouring President Mary Robinson

Sri Chinmoy warmly welcomed President Mary Robinson and her husband, Nick, to Aspiration-Ground. Sri Chinmoy opened the programme with a performance on the esraj, followed by a video showing former recipients of the award as well as some of Sri Chinmoy's activities, including humanitarian aid programme to Africa. The Singers then performed several songs Sri Chinmoy had composed in the President's honour, which deeply moved her.

Welcome by Dr. Agraha Levine: It is our greatest honour to welcome our dear President Robinson to our humble Aspiration-Ground. I would like to just say a few words about Sri Chinmoy's “Lifting Up the World with a Oneness-Heart” Awards Programme. Then Adhiratha Keefe would like to offer his special introduction of President Robinson.

Sri Chinmoy has travelled, as you have seen, throughout the world to offer this message of the oneness of the world-family. He offers this message through many means, through music, art, literature and his lifting programme, and on the level of the common person as well as with some of his friends—President Mandela, Archbishop Tutu and others—many of whom I've heard are your friends also.

This lifting programme especially is Sri Chinmoy's humble way to offer gratitude to people from all walks of life, and indeed to many children. He's lifted thousands of children from all cultures because they are our future leaders. Therefore, we are very thrilled that you have come today.

I would like to say one thing. In just a matter of two weeks' time, Sri Chinmoy will be offering his weightlifting celebration. He believes very strongly in self-transcendence. I would like to give just two examples of his message of going beyond limits. That's really one of the main things he teaches us, to try to go beyond whatever we do—do more, offer more and strive for the betterment of humanity.

In his own life he began lifting people in 1988 to honour them, and he began from a standing position. But now he lifts from a seated position, which isolates the upper body, and our strength experts say is three times more difficult, at least—and he is now 73 years old!

As I said, he will celebrate his weightlifting anniversary in a couple of weeks. Two years ago he lifted a total weight in one day of about 86,000 pounds, and this year he is going to be lifting over 200,000 pounds. It's the message again of transcending, that we can do more for the world. That's the inspiration that you are offering us, and I would like to ask Mr. Adhiratha Keefe to please come and give his introduction.

Introduction by Mr. Adhiratha Keefe of UNICEF: It is the greatest honour and privilege to welcome today an extraordinary champion of humanity, Mrs. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

President Robinson's stellar career began when she became Professor of Constitutional and Criminal Law at Trinity College in Dublin at the age of 25. She served as Senator from 1969-1989, as President of Ireland from 1990-1997, and as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights from 1997-2002.

She was the fearless Secretary-General of the World Conference Against Racism in 2001. The following year she launched the Ethical Globalization Institute.

President Robinson is currently Professor, Adviser and Senior Research Scholar at Columbia University here in New York. She is the recipient of numerous honorary degrees and awards, including the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize.

As President of Ireland, tackling controversial issues and at the same time reaching out to the whole population of her country, Mrs. Robinson enjoyed an unprecedented approval rating of 93 percent. During her Presidency she brought to the world's attention the sufferings of Rwanda and Somalia, extending her country's concern to the far corners of the globe. We are deeply grateful to

President Robinson for her compassion for the people of India, Sri Chinmoy's Motherland. We thank her for kindly supporting our Peace Run between Dublin and Belfast in 1991, and for most graciously receiving our world-encircling Peace Torch in 1994.

President Robinson is a person of uncompromising integrity dedicated to what she affirms is "the right of the people to gain the full flower of their human rights." She enforces the highest standards "without fear or favour."

Of her position as High Commissioner, she has said, "I knew that to do the job well and bring out what is really the culture of human rights, you have to stand up to bullies, you've got to be prepared to criticise both developed and developing countries."

President Robinson is now even more active. She too, like Sri Chinmoy, believes in self-transcendence. She is travelling extensively, especially to universities, to encourage support of the human rights movement, and she leads several global initiatives. She fights tirelessly against the devastation of human lives by HIV/AIDS in Africa, and is a close friend and collaborator of President Mandela, Archbishop Tutu and a number of other world leaders in this effort.

In President Robinson we see a towering intellect governed by a world-embracing and courage-flooded heart. At her Presidential inauguration she prayed, "May God direct me so that my Presidency is one of justice, peace and love."

Indeed, justice, peace and love have been the hallmarks of President Robinson's life. It is with deepest appreciation, admiration and gratitude that we now welcome President Robinson to receive from Sri Chinmoy the Lifting Up the World with a Oneness-Heart Award.

President Mary Robinson: Sri Chinmoy and all who are present, I'm really very humbled and indeed very uplifted by this very thoughtful ceremony this morning. Indeed, I'm afraid I was almost overcome by the beautiful singing and the choices of phrases that I was being honoured with. As President Nelson Mandela, Madiba, said, it is a shot in the arm.

We've also recently become grandparents. My husband Nick is here with myself. And that is also an enormous shot in the arm. I was reminded by a friend of mine, who is also a grandmother, that it's the best and least exclusive club in the world, which I liked very much. But somehow it renewed my commitment beyond belief.

So today is, in fact, very uplifting because the initiative that I now lead—which itself is very small, but is trying to connect with others—we have also named Realising Rights. Everyone in the world should realise that they have human rights, as it says in Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” And I've always liked that “dignity” comes before “rights.” Everybody should realise they have rights, and those with power should realise those rights, meaning implement them.

I'm afraid I'm incurable. I will go on doing this, but I do feel very uplifted. Thank you so much.

Sri Chinmoy then requested to lift the President and her husband together.

Ms. Shatapatri Mahar: Mr. Nick Robinson is a lawyer, an author, a conservationist. He is working on another book of his at the moment and travels frequently to Ireland and works closely with President Mary Robinson.

After lifting the Robinsons together, he invited them to come visit his museum, and they graciously accepted his invitation. President Robinson reminisced about her visit with the Dalai Lama, when he invited her to see his museum, which housed wonderful works of Tibetan culture.

Sri Chinmoy (introducing Mr. Sundar Dalton): He comes from Ireland.

President Robinson: Oh! From what part?

Mr. Sundar Dalton: From Belfast. I also went to Trinity, and I went to one of your lectures there many years ago.

Sri Chinmoy: He made arrangements for me to meet President De Valera and President Erskine Childers.

President Robinson: Yes, both of them I knew, but I knew Erskine Childers well.

Sri Chinmoy: Today I am blessed by a third President.

President Robinson: I must tell you a funny story. I mentioned this earlier. I served my seven years as President. Then there was a contested election, and President Mary McAleese was elected. And she finished her seven years in November. She's done a good job so nobody opposed her, and I will go to Dublin on the 11th of November for her inauguration as President for a further seven years. Now we both tell the same joke, which is that small boys in Ireland weep on their mother's knee and say, "Why can't I grow up to be President?" (*laughter*) (With two women Presidents,) we're a little ahead of the United States.

Sri Chinmoy, Ms. Ranjana Ghose, the curator of Sri Chinmoy's artwork, and the President and her husband then proceed to the museum.

Selected comments afterwards about the meeting

Sri Chinmoy: Before she came here, she said she was quite apprehensive. Now it is all gone. Apprehension is gone.

Sri Chinmoy (A later comment): At one point Mary Robinson said, “I talk too much,” means she talks too much, and it is the habit of the President to talk. So her husband made a plot. Her husband will cough when she is talking too much. He will cough and cough. Then she knows that she has to stop. Now it has happened a few times he was not there, but she used to hear his coughing. Even in his absence, she used to hear his coughing, so she used to stop.

Adhiratha: When I first saw her come in, being she’s four years older than I am, I expected one thing. I’ve seen her picture and seen quite a bit written about her. I thought she’d look a little older, and I thought by this time she’d be a little plumper because that’s usually what happens to people when they’re out of office. And she was so striking and approaching everyone directly with so much energy that it almost took you aback at first, just this incredible light.

The other thing that we had seen was that when she was trying to raise awareness about certain things in Africa, she was part of a big press conference. And she took pride in presenting things to get people interested, but not being too

emotional. But after she had been to Africa and she went to try to expand, she almost broke down on television, and she was furious at herself afterwards. But even the people that had originally been criticising her in different newspapers, one of the editors passed her a note afterwards that said, “You were magnificent.” And it ended up having an incredible effect on everyone who saw it because they knew how she prided herself on not being too emotional, and yet it was so overwhelming that it moved her and it so moved everyone who was looking. And that’s why she had 93 percent approval rating.

Then she was telling us when she first came in about people she had seen, like Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, and she’s with Desmond Tutu quite a lot. And she was saying how he is quite mischievous when he is in political situations and they’re asking him questions. I mentioned that after he was with Guru, the next day he gave his big speech to the UN, which we all attended. And that night he was on the media, and it was obvious they were trying to press him about the current situation in our country. So they said, “What do you think about the American elections, especially the last election?” It was one of those questions that everyone was wondering how he would answer it. And he sort of stepped back and said, “Well, the only advice I have is that the Americans should learn how to count.”

When I told her that, she said, “That’s him! That’s him! I got asked questions like that last week—if I had just been able to say that.” I said, “Well, in

three or four days you might be asked more questions.” She said, “That’s right.”

It’s obvious that she’s always looking for ways to move things forward, but within the atmosphere that’s created. So it was really refreshing to be with her and to hear the story she shared with Guru upstairs about her family. Everything just came out with Guru. Thank you, Guru. And thanks to Nemi for editing everything.

Sri Chinmoy: She is very proud of her 23-year-old son, her youngest, who lives in Cape Town. He was studying here in Rhode Island at the art school. He liked the place very much. But his girlfriend comes from Africa, so he went to live in Cape Town. When he went, and he saw the poverty, he gave up his studies. He said, “Let me work for the poor.” In the beginning she could not understand. Then when she saw the son working for the poor people, helpless people, she became so proud of her son, so proud. He is not studying. He is only helping the poor in Cape Town.

Pulak: About that story, after she told him how proud she was of him, he said, “Well, Mother, it’s now about me. It’s about them.” Then she said she was so proud of him at that moment because when she was that age herself, she knows she would not have had as selfless an attitude herself. And then Guru commented that

because he was her son, he had that kind of love for humanity, which he got from her.

Sri Chinmoy (talking about President Robinson signing the guest book):

Her husband was telling her the spelling of Chinmoy.

Ranjana: She wanted to know which page she should sign on. There was a blank page in the middle of the book, and she thought perhaps she should use up that blank page. I said, “No, please do it at the end because we’re doing it in chronological order.” She said, “Well, I’ll start by putting down the date first. Of course, because I’m a lawyer I have to write the date first before I do anything.” That’s part of the training, I suppose. Then she said, “But of course you’ll have to help me out with the date.”

Reading out the inscription: 30th October 2004: Dear Sri Chinmoy, I’m very hounoured and humbled to have been lifted by you today. It was also a thrill that you then lifted Nick with me. As Madiba said, “It’s a shot in the arm.” May you continue your inspirational work for peace and for the oneness of the world. We need it more than ever. (*In Irish*) *Joneri layat* (?). May all go well with you. Warm good wishes, Mary Robinson.

She's an incredibly, incredibly famous person in human rights and loved the world around, especially by women in the western hemisphere.

Other comments about the occasion

Nilima: Nishtha was saying that she was very interested to know that so many disciples worked at the UN. And I used to work on her floor, on the 29th floor, and I would see her when she came to New York. On her way out just a few UN workers happened to be near the car when she was leaving, and she said that she actually recognised me.

Adarini: At the last song to her words, she actually burst into tears right away, and she was trying to cover it up. She didn't want anyone to see, so she started drinking. She was so moved that tears came down her cheeks. She smiled, and she seemed so strong and at the same time there was so much kindness in her eyes, especially in this picture (*referring to a photograph near the lifting apparatus*). She looks like she cares a lot about people.

Anjali: It's a little hard on the singers when somebody is so moved by Guru and by the songs and then they start crying. Then we get such a lump in our throats that we can hardly sing. Guru, I do not know if you could see, but during the song to her words, "I was elected by the women of Ireland, who instead of rocking the

cradle, rocked the system,” she smiled so much the first time we sang it. And the next time we sang it, she pumped her fist in the air.

Chandini: One of the very nice things about living in Washington, D.C. is that when Senators write books, then they have book signings. Senator Bob Graham, who’s a democrat from Florida, is retiring this year, and I went to a book signing where he was signing his new book called, *Why Intelligence Matters*, and he means the Central Intelligence Agency type of intelligence, not your IQ. I asked him if he would kindly sign a book for Guru. I said, “I’m a student of Sri Chinmoy. Would you please sign this book for him.” He didn’t have to ask me who Guru was or anything. And he wrote, “Sri Chinmoy, it has been a source of spiritual comfort to have shared your wise counsel. –Bob Graham, October 6th, 2004.”

Guru (referring to a photograph Chandini gave Guru showing her with Senator Graham and his wife): Very good! Chandini is with his wife and with him. Excellent, excellent, excellent! He is retiring?

Chandini: He’s retiring, and he’ll be teaching at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University with Dan Fenn, the man that you lifted at Harvard. He’ll be teaching government. One more thing, if you count up all the

PRESS RELEASE

Saturday, 30th October 2004, 19.00 GMT (14.00 New York Time)

MARY ROBINSON RAISED TO NEW HEIGHTS

Queens, New York - The former President of Ireland and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, was presented with the 'Lifting up the World With A Oneness-Heart' award by world renowned humanitarian Sri Chinmoy. The award is offered to men and women from all walks of life whose contributions to their particular fields of endeavor have elevated humanity.

In a show of oneness with their uplifting achievements, 73 year old Sri Chinmoy honours individuals by lifting them overhead on a specially constructed platform. Past recipients of this award include many world figures such as President Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, Muhammad Ali and Carl Lewis. For forty years Sri Chinmoy, who has long and close association with the United Nations, has dedicated his life to the pursuit of world harmony and understanding through various fields of endeavours such as music, art, poetry and physical fitness.

Over the years, Ireland has supported Sri Chinmoy's many initiatives. Since the early 70's, Sri Chinmoy himself has met with President De Valera and President Childers. In 1991, whilst in office, Mrs Robinson hosted a reception in Aras an Uachtarain for the participants in the 'Oneness-Home Peace Run', a global relay run founded by Sri Chinmoy to inspire world harmony. President McAleese also received the relay runners as they passed through Dublin on the European leg of the relay.

For the afternoon ceremony in Queens, Sri Chinmoy composed songs, performed by a choir, in honour of Mary Robinson and also put some of her words to music, including her famous phrase: "I was elected by the women of Ireland, who instead of rocking the cradle - rocked the system".

Moved by the experience, Mrs Robinson noted; "I am very humbled and indeed very uplifted by this very thoughtful ceremony, by the beautiful singing and the choices of phrases that I was being honoured with." She went on to say: "Sri Chinmoy, may you continue your inspirational work for peace and for the oneness of the world."

Mary Robinson is currently Professor, Adviser and Senior Research Scholar at Columbia University in New York. She also leads an initiative named Realising Rights, which promotes "the right of people to gain the full flower of their human rights".

www.srichinmoy.org

letters that Senators have sent, I told Senator Graham that he probably wins first prize for sending the most letters over the years because before he was Senator, he was Governor of Florida, and he has written many, many, many letters.

Guru: Governor of Florida? O my God! Before light disappeared.

Chandini: He was the Governor and then Lotten Childs, my old boss was the Governor, and then the one that is now.

Tilvila: Actually, I was going to say the same thing. Whenever he was approached to right a letter, it was immediate every single time. And his successor Lotten Childs was the one who approved to have a big monument, which still exists, on Jefferson and Monroe, which is on the corner of the Capital Building. There's a big monument which says Sri Chinmoy Peace State. It was Lotten Childs who approved that. But Graham was incredible the whole time.

3 July 2004

BBC radio interview (tape played at Aspiration-Ground)
(from tape: Nilima)

Saturday

BBC radio interview

[BBC interviewed Guru over the phone at 6:30 our time, and it was aired at 9:30]

Interviewer: With a record-breaking power lifter, a 72-year-old Guru who has held Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, and 1500 lambs aloft in the name of world peace. Sri Chinmoy, who describes himself as lifter for the stars. The 72-year-old is a spiritual Guru who has lifted more than 7000 people since starting a campaign for world peace 16 years ago. His famous liftees include Nelson Mandela and Yoko Ono. So I asked Sri Chinmoy how long he'd been lifting

Sri Chinmoy: I have been lifting up human beings, people who have inspired the world, for the last 16 years.

Interviewer: And why?

Sri Chinmoy: I do it as a service to mankind. The theme of this is "Lifting Up the World with a Oneness-Heart." We need a oneness, oneness here within, without. In order to lift up the world we feel oneness is of paramount importance.

Interviewer: So it's a kind of a symbolic gesture, or do people actually feel enlightened?

Sri Chinmoy: It is a symbolic gesture, and at the same time I am trying to do it on the physical plane because sometimes if it is only symbolic, people do not pay any attention. Therefore I do it on the physical plane. Physically I lift up these human beings in order to inspire them. When one does something significant, others get inspiration. They can shine in their respective fields.

Interviewer: And you've lifted some very famous people, haven't you, Mr. Chinmoy?

Sri Chinmoy: Well, I have lifted Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and Jesse Jackson, Carl Lewis, Mohammad Ali, and of course Cardinal Hume. I did not dare to invite him to be lifted. He came to learn from others that I lift human beings of

inspiration and dedication, so he said to me, “I am coming to be lifted.” It was far beyond my imagination. I had a short interview with him. Then he wanted to be lifted. And he was holding our Peace Torch, flaming Peace Torch, Cardinal Hume.

Interviewer: And what do they say after you’ve done it?

Sri Chinmoy: They thank me profusely. Nelson Mandela said to me, “I am so glad to take part in your “Lifting Up the World” programme. They get joy, and we need only one thing in life, and that is joy. They get joy. From joy they get inspiration, and we all try to be better human beings when we have inner joy. When we do not have joy, we quarrel, fight and we do many, many things undivine. But when we have joy, we do not create problems for others.

Interviewer: Mr. Chinmoy, I’m sure you wouldn’t mind me revealing your age. You’re 72.

Sri Chinmoy: I am fast approaching 73. On the 27th of August I will complete 73.

Interviewer: So how do you actually physically do this?

Sri Chinmoy: I am physically fit. On a daily basis I lift 1400 pounds. It is called calf lifting. With my legs I lift 1400, and also I lift 1200, 600 pounds on each arm I lift every day.

Interviewer: Do you just lift people, Mr. Chinmoy, or do you lift objects?

Sri Chinmoy: No, I lift people. I have lifted elephants and helicopters and small planes and also I have lifted 1,000 lambs. I was in New Zealand. I am very fond of lambs, so I lifted 1,000 lambs, six at a time. Six lambs at a time I lifted, and also I come from India. I am a Hindu. I was born in a Hindu family. So for us the sacred cow is very sacred. So I lifted 100 cows. They were 1,500, 1,600—very, very heavy. So this was done two years ago in New Zealand.

Interviewer: I wish I could come and see you do one of these—1,000 lambs!

Sri Chinmoy: You live in London?

Interviewer: Yes, I do. Can you come and lift?

Sri Chinmoy: Last year I lifted many, many prominent figures including the daughter of Mount Batten, who gave us freedom. Lord Mount Batten was responsible for India's independence.

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Sri Chinmoy: In 1947 he gave us independence. He gave us freedom. So we are extremely, extremely grateful to Mount Batten and his daughter. Patricia Mount Batten came to be lifted. She has been very, very kind to me over the years. I have given concerts at Royal Albert Hall five times, and she has attended a few times.

Interviewer: Sri Chinmoy there. I just want to lift him up and give him a cuddle.