

For your information: This letter is being sent to all U.N. Clubs.

SRI CHINMOY: THE PEACE MEDITATION AT THE UNITED NATIONS
GPO 20 - Room S-765 • United Nations • New York, N.Y. • 10163

Copy

16 October 1987

Dear Friend,

UNITED NATIONS:



the Heart-Home
of the World-Body

We believe and we hold that each man has the potentiality of reaching the Ultimate Truth. We also believe that man cannot and will not remain imperfect forever. Each man is an instrument of God. When the hour strikes each individual soul listens to the inner dictates of God. When man listens to God, his imperfections are turned into perfections, his ignorance into knowledge, his searching mind into revealing light and his uncertain reality into all fulfilling Divinity.

We are writing as colleagues and fellow members of the United Nations community who are deeply concerned by what we see as an unwarranted and vicious attack against Sri Chinmoy: The Peace Meditation at the United Nations as set forth in an unsubstantiated, mysteriously anonymous "study". This study was prepared with no first-hand investigation of the individuals concerned, let alone opportunity for them to explain or defend themselves against what was written. It was first sent to some United Nations officials by an individual who apparently did not have the professional integrity or even the common courtesy to provide a copy directly to the Peace Meditation group itself. It was then circulated throughout the House by a retired staff member, under the pretext of providing information to Staff Recreation Council clubs. We are saddened by this kind of behaviour, which seems especially inappropriate within the U.N., and we also view these actions as a threat to freedom of association and expression which could have serious implications for all staff and members of delegations.

This so-called investigation is filled with so many deliberate, conscious omissions of fact and false allegations that it can be construed only as a malicious attempt to damage the good reputation of a group of staff members and delegates who have dedicated themselves to peace initiatives and strengthening the positive image of the United Nations since 1970.

Naturally, we are very disturbed by this "disinformation campaign", a rather obvious attempt to discredit the work of the Peace Meditation group by certain individuals who, for reasons of their own, are perpetrating what must be viewed as destructive misrepresentations. We can only hope that those who have worked with us and participated in our programmes for the past 17 years at the United Nations will see through these deplorable misrepresentations and continue to offer their good will, without being unduly discouraged or intimidated by the implications of such "official" repression.

We would be grateful if you could consider the attached "3 page Detail" information, which responds to the "study" and identifies its distortions, briefly outlined below:

1. The deliberate and obvious omission of any reference to the Peace Meditation's activities for peace, often co-sponsored by Ambassadors, as well as any reference to the appreciation of these activities expressed by the Secretaries-General and by other members of the Secretariat, Permanent Missions and United Nations Associations;

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Sri Chinmoy: The Peace Meditation at the United Nations is an association of United Nations delegates, staff, NGO representatives and accredited press correspondents holding bi-weekly peace meditations and other programmes at the United Nations Headquarters.

Comments
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2. The misrepresentation of the Peace Meditation as an "outside" organization, instead of what it really is: "an association of United Nations delegates, staff, NGO representatives and accredited press correspondents" - the majority of whom are long-serving staff members;
3. The distortion of the Peace Meditation's relationship with the Office of the Secretary-General and the Office of Legal Affairs, which has always been one of responsible co-operation;
4. In spite of the author's awareness that the Peace Meditation has obtained permission from the Legal Office for its use of the emblem, Group letterhead and description of the Group, an attempt to imply some sort of impropriety in this use;
5. The conscious omission of any reference to a letter of formal explanation sent by the Peace Meditation to the Department of Public Information after a misunderstanding which took place nearly two years ago;
6. An absurd complaint that the media are unduly or improperly interested in the wide variety of peace activities of the Peace Meditation;
7. A final baseless attack on the character of the staff members and other members of the United Nations community who constitute the Peace Meditation, which can only be seen as an attempt at intimidation and selective victimization of those identified with the group.

Especially at a time when the very existence of the United Nations is subject to pervasive criticism, it seems particularly self-defeating for staff members to be expending time and energy attacking their actively idealistic colleagues. Are the attackers in fact the very ones who are being influenced by outside organizations? Perhaps these individuals feel that staff should not engage in peaceful activities but rather complacently await the start of World War III. What other conclusion can we draw?

We welcome your comments and take this opportunity to thank those of you who have supported our efforts over the years.

Members of
Sri Chinmoy: The Peace Meditation
at the United Nations

Attachments:

- * Response to an anonymous "study".
- * Information on the programmes, lectures, concerts and meetings of Sri Chinmoy and members of the Peace Meditation group at the United Nations, from 1970 to present.

RESPONSE TO A "STUDY" CONCERNING
THE PEACE MEDITATION GROUP AT THE UNITED NATIONS

DETAIL

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The following, prepared in response to an anonymous "study" concerning Sri Chinmoy: The Peace Meditation at the United Nations, circulated within the United Nations Secretariat, identifies the inaccuracies contained in that document and then attempts to clarify them.

1. The deliberate, obvious omission of any reference to the Peace Meditation's activities for peace, often co-sponsored by Ambassadors, which include twice-weekly meditations for peace at headquarters, in keeping with the minute of silence which opens and closes each session of the General Assembly; peace walks and peace runs for Charter Day, the International Day of Peace and United Nations Day; an ongoing series of programmes, lectures, concerts and events, ranging from commemorative days to symposia addressing crisis situations; and the dedication of U Thant Island in honour of the late Secretary-General. Also omitted is any reference to the United Nations documentation of these peace initiatives and appreciation by the Secretaries-General who have served since 1970 as well as by other members of the Secretariat, Permanent Missions and United Nations Associations.

2. The misrepresentation of the Peace Meditation as an "outside" organization, instead of what it actually is: "an association of United Nations delegates, staff, NGO representatives and accredited press correspondents" - the majority of whom are long-serving staff members who in their own quiet way have come to be known throughout the house as colleagues who value peace and have been inspired to personally cultivate and work for peace in the United Nations community over the last 17 years. Never does the anonymous author admit that most of the members of this group are staff members. Instead he states or implies a total of 12 times in his four-page "study" that all these staff-initiated activities are "outside" activities. Never once does the author acknowledge that over the years literally hundreds and hundreds of delegates and staff have co-sponsored and/or participated in these programmes, and thus the events certainly qualify as "inside" activities. If the author feels that staff members do not have the right to hold a variety of personal visions of peace and to join in activities inspired by these ideals, then he should consult the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. The basic rights of freedom of association and of expression are guaranteed to all human beings.

It should be added that this study has been widely circulated to people within the House, with the notable exception of the Peace Meditation group members themselves, who are easily available and public in their many activities. This tactic of operating "behind their backs" is not in keeping with the United Nations practice of consulting all parties concerned in order to reach viable solutions. It is also clearly poor scholarship not to interview representatives of the group itself.

Detail
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3. The distortion of the Peace Meditation's relationship with the Office of the Secretary-General and the Office of Legal Affairs, which has always been one of responsible co-operation. Using accusational phrases and innuendo, the author chooses to ignore the fact that the Peace Meditation has always consulted the Legal Office. We have received six letters containing explicit approval in regard to the name of the group, the use of the United Nations emblem and the design of the group's letterhead, as well as the phrasing used in descriptions of the group. The then Director of the General Legal Division expressed the Legal Office's appreciation of the Peace Meditation's approach when he wrote in one of the letters of approval, "Your Group's support of the ideals and principles of the United Nations is very much appreciated," and also thanked the Peace Meditation for consulting his office. Correspondence received from the Secretary-General's Office has similarly been appreciative of the group's efforts.

4. In spite of the author's awareness that the Peace Meditation has obtained written permission from the Legal Office for its use of the emblem, group letterhead and description of the group, an attempt to imply some sort of impropriety in this use. For example, the author refers to the use of the emblem in one of the group's publications (knowing well that the group had complied with the requirements set forth by the Legal Office), saying that it might be misleading. The author omits that in addition to using the emblem correctly, the group also used, directly under the emblem, the disclaimer that had been developed in co-operation with the Legal Office: "This information is presented as a service and does not necessarily represent the official views of the United Nations and its Agencies." Since there could be no possibility of assumption on the part of any reader, including the anonymous author, that this was an official publication, we can only cite this as a striking example of the use of the deliberate omissions and misrepresentations that form the basis for this "study".

5. The conscious omission of any reference to a letter of explanation sent by the Peace Meditation to the Department of Public Information for a misunderstanding unwittingly caused by one of its members almost two years ago. Choosing to ignore the letter of explanation for an honest mistake, the author pretends that this incident is indicative of some sort of clandestine operation on the part of the group. Progressive action depends on the enthusiasm of individuals in the United Nations community and misunderstandings may on rare occasion occur as a result of youthful dynamism. In fact, following this very occasion the Secretary-General's office commended several members of the group for the "intrepid endeavours" and "admirable commitment, which you and your colleagues in the Meditation Group share for the principles of the United Nations Organization and its International Year of Peace".

6. An absurd complaint that the media are unduly or improperly interested in the wide variety of peace activities of the Peace Meditation group and Sri Chinmoy, who conducts the meditation sessions. This objection is all the more self-defeating because of the considerable amount of positive media coverage that has been generated for the United Nations as a result of the activities

of the Peace Meditation group. From a United Nations Day Fair in New York City, which was covered by CBS news and the New York Times, to swims for the International Year of Peace, seen by millions on television and in newspapers, to the Peace Walks in the rose garden, depicted in the UN Chronicle, activities by members of the Peace Meditation have resulted in significant, constructive publicity for the United Nations. (A list of the group's programmes from 1970 to the present is attached.) When so much of the news coverage of the United Nations is negative, should not enthusiastic and positive media personalities who support the highest ideals of the United Nations be encouraged to report on efforts for peace?

7. A final baseless attack on the character of the staff members and other members of the United Nations community who constitute the Peace Meditation and of Sri Chinmoy, alluding to more unsigned, anonymous letters - perhaps written by the author himself or by an anonymous friend. Could the author really believe that because these staff members are searching for inner and outer peace, they must be under some tragic influence - that they are not intelligent, independent individuals who have consciously and bravely chosen to commit themselves to world peace? Implying that Ambassadors should use their influence against the Peace Meditation group, the author again has forgotten to refer to the Declarations cited in paragraph 2. Why should United Nations staff in good standing, some of whom have worked in the Organization since its inception, be subject to such insulting criticism by small minds who choose not to tolerate, let alone understand, their enthusiastic support for programmes for peace? Why should the intentions of delegates who are tirelessly working to express their countries' highest aspirations in a creative manner be so maligned?

The actual tragedy lies in the short-sightedness and violation of rights by persons such as the author of this unsubstantiated "investigation" and those who have circulated it. Do we need to be reminded again of the religious intolerance of the totalitarian regimes whose threats of world domination led to the Second World War and eventually to the creation of the United Nations? Are the attackers of the Peace Meditation group the very ones who are being influenced by outside organizations? The misrepresentations in this "study" are strikingly similar to the various "backgrounders" attacking the United Nations and widely circulated by certain organizations. Ambassadors and other members of the United Nations community should be urged to "use their influence" to help eliminate such blatant forms of intolerance and discrimination against staff members with certain beliefs - in this case the idealistic belief that peace may someday dawn on earth, if we all continue to work for it - in spite of such shocking examples of prejudice and jealousy as displayed in this attack on the Peace Meditation.