

## **Remarks at Sri-Chinmoy Culture-Light Award**

**By Aye Aye Thant**

**October 10, 2017**

May I thank Ranjana and friends at Sri Chinmoy Center for inviting me here tonight and for presenting me with The Sri Chinmoy Culture-Light Award along with my esteemed beloved Father U Thant. It is a great honor for me to accept the Award and to be among so many notable individuals. I take great pride in accepting it and do so in my Father's memory as well.

As I understand it, the Award recognizes those who contribute to the betterment of the world-family. The Award reflects Sri Chinmoy's life long contribution to peace and harmony in the World.

No questions would be asked about my Father's contribution to the betterment of the world-family. All throughout his adult life as a journalist, writer, headmaster of the National school in his home town, a government official, an ambassador to the UN and as Secretary-General of the United Nations, he had advocated for education to help illuminate the mind of humanity. He felt so strongly that the aim of our education system should not only be to emphasize the development of the intellect, but should also emphasize the development of moral and spiritual qualities including tolerance, patience, humility, the philosophy of live and let live and the desire to understand the other person's point of view.

Those are his words and although it has been almost 43 years since he passed, I can still hear them inside me.

After he passed, I felt so strongly that his vision for peaceful co-existence and the need to make the world safe for diversity was more timely than ever before. Sadly that need is still overwhelming. I have felt that it is my mission even in a small way to keep the vision of my father's alive. He had said "we have to learn to understand each other and to develop a spirit of One World". We seem to have failed in understanding the scope of that in relationship to world peace and individual wellbeing.

Inspired by his vision, I founded the U Thant Institute to promote the spirit of cooperation, mutual understanding and friendship. Reflecting my father's values and visions, the U Thant Institute organized events with speakers addressing current issues and problems facing our world.

When my husband and I went back to Myanmar in 2011, together with our son Thant Myint -U and with the support of the Government we opened the U Thant House Museum. There, we continued the mission to share my father's vision for world peace with a permanent exhibition of his life and work, spanning from his early life through his later life in New York. The exhibit includes photographs, audio-visual recordings, letters to and from world leaders, books, and other mementoes. Lectures and seminars on education, religious and cultural understanding are organized and there is also a small Library where are copies of his writings and papers are displayed as a resource for scholars and students.

I am grateful for this opportunity to help me resurface my mission and to reflect on my father's vision which has always been my cherished pride. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to share with you. If and when I get more opportunities I shall continue to help shine the light of my father in his quest for peaceful world.

Thank you for the honour.