* Bestowing this award on U Thant and his Daughter Aye Aye,
* Uthant was a great world figure that Sri Chinmoy had tremendous respect for and he was also very appreciative of aye Aye for her ongoing work
* She and her late father secretary-general Lieutenant who was a major figure in world history and one whom she chin why I always admire greatly

The previous recipients of award that were present were introduced

Previous Recipients  present included

Rezwana Choudhury Bannya, well recorded singing artist of both India and Bangladesh. A noted authority on songs by Rabindranath Tagore ([Rabindra Sangeet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabindra_Sangeet)), she is director/founder of Surer Dhara academy in Dhaka. There young people are taught music and the Performing Arts. She also performs the songs of **Kazi Nazrul Islam, the national Poet of Bangladesh.**

Bannya has sung at Aspiration Ground and charmed us all . We have presented her this award in the past and we're very pleased you're here with us tonight.

Hon. Dr. Davidson Hepburn O.B.E: President of the 35th General Conference of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO);  Permanent Representative of Bahamas to the United Nations  for a Decade and  Founding Executive Director, Government Public Policy Institute, University of the Bahamas, Nassau

Many here heard him speak eloquently at the United Nations and events elsewhere. He joined us earlier today and spoke beautifully on the anniversary of the inauguration of the Heart-Garden and Street in Flushing meadow corona park .

Ambassador Hepburn also received from us this award in April of 2012. During that visit we marked the inauguration on 14th April 1970 of the Peace Meditations at the United Nations – which he had attended when he was ambassador and where he first met Sri Chinmoy.. We were also celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Oneness-Home World Harmony and Peace Runs for which he had offered strong support on many occasions - especially his video message with subtitles in 25 languages when he was President of the General Conference of UNESCO.

Ambassador Hepburn returned again for the October opening of the Art Exhibit at the Delegates Entrance to the United Nations in 2012 where he was a keynote speaker and helped us present the Culture-Light Award to Archbishop Desmond Tutu at the UN.. So we're very very proud and honored that he has joined us tonight

On Presenting the Award:

Sri Chinmoy always felt very affectionate towards Aye Aye. Although her life toils kept her in many different places – and Sri Chinmoy similar toils kept him, as we all know, visiting many countries around the world . but there was this inter connection that was growing. Sri Chinmoy ‘s had deep regard for U Thant and Aye Aye. Sri Chinmoy would often inquire if Aye Aye had started her own non-profit organization. He felt she would be very gifted at and that it would further her work in world peace, education and bringing equality and education to the women of Myanmar and the other places. Aye Aye is a tremendous Humanitarian In heart and in deed.

We felt it was particularly meaningful and appropriate to bestow this award on a Aye Aye and her father jointly as they have worked together in so many ways.

The Sri Chinmoy Culture Light Award - is intended to honor those who bring light to the human Mind through culture using:

* The written word;
* Photography;
* Cinematography;
* musical performance; or
* any other manner of the Fine Arts.

These expressions symbolize the creative Spark - ignited by the Divine - to help illumine Humanity.

Illumining the mind of humanity is a significant way to bring more peace and harmony to the world.

Experience of culture can increase ***the light of understanding***.

Communicating higher ideals educates - and can clarify perceptions or mental states.

Illumining thoughts can lesson fear of the unknown.

All such efforts help to increase tolerance and a more peaceful co-existence. They potentially reduce friction and tension among individuals and communities.

The Goal is a more compassionate, accepting and understanding Society. One which is more caring and supportive of higher ideals and beneficial mores.

We give great value to those ideaistic members of Society such as Aye Aye Thant.

They focus on higher Ideas and act as a catalyst for society to evolve.

For this role of catalyst in society we would like to bestow upon you the Sri Chinmoy Culture-Light Award.
As Sri Chinmoy was - you too are an educator of people.
Similar to your father, You endeavor to bring about Harmony among the people of the world.

Sri Chinmoy said “we are **all** needed to establish World Harmony here on Earth. We are all needed for peace.”

We thank you for the significant role you played and are playing to bring this about.

Aye, Aye Thant and U Thant You endeavor towards peace and World Harmony.
Through the light of culture.
Therefore we offer you the SRI Chinmoy culture light award.
As you can see, the etching on the Crystal award is from a World Harmony painting by Sri Chinmoy. Titled "Unity." This series of paintings is comprised of the iconic birds of Sri Chinmoy. Sometimes referred to as birds of inspiration. Sometimes referred to as birds of aspiration. Sometimes the soul Birds. The song birds. Birds of beauty, birds of of light,.
The bird as an analogy for the soul.

 SRI Chinmoy culture light, honoring, encouraging, recognizing the spreading of peace through the Fine Arts, through music, through the written word, through performance, through the message of heightened ideals, manifest in our thought, word and deed - as a conscious offering to Humanity.

The SRI Chinmoy culture light award recognizes your contribution to the betterment of the world's family and we thank you for doing so.

**Remarks** at Sri-Chinmoy Culture-Light Award
By **Aye Aye Thant**
October 10, 2017

"May I thank Ranjana, Ambassador (Hepburn)  and friends from thet 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 at the National school in his home town, a government official, an ambassador to the United Nations 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/him  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 now 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 well-being.

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 one 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 mementos. 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 that with you. If and when I get more opportunities I shall continue to help shine the light of my father in his quest for a peaceful world.

Thank you for the honour.

PDF of [2017-10oct-10-a-a-thant-Remarks at Sri Chinmoy Cultural -Light Award](http://www.srichinmoypeacemeditationatun.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017-10oct-10-a-a-thant-Remarks-at-Sri-Chinmoy-Cultural-Light-Award.pdf)

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MC: Now I invite Sri Chinmoy's Brother-Friend,  Ambassador Davidson Hepburn to make a few comments as previously agreed. We are very honoured to have you come to the podium..

Good evening dear friends.
Unfortunately I did not have the pleasure of meeting the former secretary-general U Thant.
I came to the United Nations I think the year of his passing. (1974)

So I did not have the opportunity to personally meet him, but I did attend a memorial service that was held for him at the United Nations.

But I always knew that he was an innovator. I am going to give you three points that I feel will tell you more about him.

1. " Secretary General **U  Thant:**
* **supported** UN **SDGs**  long **before** they were **called “sustainable development goals**”. He was aman who was dedicated to Education (especially **goal 4 Quality Education**)
* He had as commitment to all aspects **of universal peace** **before** it was **called “culture of peace**”
1. Secondly, The work of **Aye Aye** and the U Thant Institute **have kept his vision alive**.
* With the **unique understanding** of her father’s expanding **vision** she has **encouraged all.**
* Her wonderful **dedication and personal example** admired by so many is a **highlight of the award**.
* These  **continuing efforts** are **invoking** more culture and more **light  --- so needed** in this world today.
1. Thirdly, this **beautiful** **Aspiration Ground** is a **most appropriate** setting.

Here: **Light is valued** and **culture is valued**. ..

Here: **Artists share** soul stirring compositions

Here: We observe great **attention to the detail** that **create and maintain** a **beautiful sacred space** atmosphere.

This is always a wonderful place to come for peace, and meditation and relaxation

**On entering this place**

**one feels culture,**

**one feels light,**

**one feels peace and**

**most of all one feels *Oneness*.**

**So Obviously:**

**U Thant, Sri Chinmoy, and Aye Aye    all share a profound**

**love of oneness and spirituality**

**as a natural part of peace-building"**

**Thank You**

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Note about the case for the award:

MC: The Box this award comes in was hand embroided in Myanmar in Mandalay, we had them done there when SRI Chinmoy had brought us there. Now AA will explain a little bit about the art.

Aye Aye Thant: this is a very unique piece of Art in Myanmar. Actually it only in Mandalay, that City that they make this kind of embroidery. We call it kalaga inn Burmese. So I am so pleased that I receive this along with the prize. With the writings of peace and from Sri chinmoy. Thank you so much.

MC, the embroidery on this box says peace and SRI Chinmoy, and it is written in Sri Chinmoy’s handwriting. We gave the embroiderers that particular artwork, one of Sri Chinmoy’s Birds. Some of our girls went to Mandalay, and the Artisans there embroider these. They were very touched and moved. The little circle of ladies that worked on it - was a type of joy that we liked. When we were traveling with SRI chinmoy all those years, we would give local ladies some business when we came to visit a place. Naturally when you travel usually the traveler have more money then some of those in the communities you are visiting. Very often in the east. This business can mean a lot to these woman who are in sewing circles to be able to make this extra money. It is so hard for a woman in many parts of the world to get an income. We found  that local sewing was away to support. One place in Myanmar we actually bought some sewing machines and gave them to some of the ladies in the marketplace.

In this case two of the woman from our group, went to Mandalay and had these particular boxes from the award made. The ladies who did the sewing we're so proud of their workmanship and we were so thrilled that they really tried so very hard to do a beautiful job. And they certainly did. It may be hard to see if you're sitting from a distance, but we'll leave it here for a while so that you can come up if you wish to see and have a glance of it.

Now we will have two U Thant songs and a peace song.

SRI Chinmoy composed these first two songs dedicated to Aye Aye’s beloved father former secretary-general U Thant. The first one in 1976..

We love your silence soul, we loved your compassion heart.

Your world Harmony role challenged ignorance.

Un pilot Supreme. You treasured Perfection dream.

The second one in 1977, SRI Chinmoy set to the immortal utterance of U Thant

Gone are the days when each Nation

was an island unto itself.

As a program coordinator for Sri Chinmoy the peace meditation at the United Nations I have a very special honor of introducing a book.

 Aye Aye’s dear father secretary-general U thant invited SRI Chinmoy to lead peace meditations for delegates and staff at the UN headquarters here in New York in 1970. And until SRI Chinmoy’s passing in 2007 he often brought his multifaceted inspiration to the UN community through these meditations, concerts, art exhibits, and other programs for peace.

 These activities continue to this day. One of his activities, SRI Chinmoy wrote a number of songs, actually hundreds of songs dedicated to the UN.

 Including the songs dedicated to U Thant, which we just heard and songs of peace that we are about to hear. We have collected just a few of these songs in this lovely Book “Songs of Peace”. This was presented to the library at the UN office in Geneva. In June 2017, when the UN held an Art Exhibit of Sri Chinmoy’s paintings there.

This is the second edition. We would like to present it to our honored guest at this time.