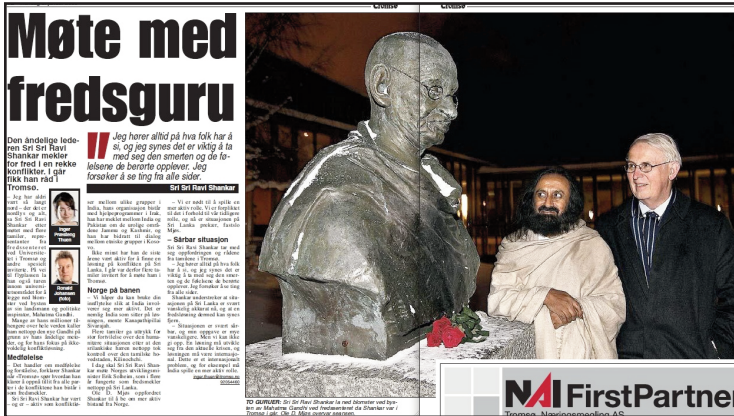


Meeting with Guru of Peace

by Inger Præsteng Thuen, Tromsø, Norway, Jan 5, 2009

Spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar mediates for peace in several conflicts. Yesterday he received advice in Tromsø. ***“I always listen to what people have to say, and I think it is important to be open to the pain and feelings experienced by those affected. I attempt to see things from all sides.” Sri Sri Ravi Shankar***



“I have never been so far north – where there are northern lights and everything,” said Sri Sri Ravi Shankar after a meeting with several Tamils, representatives from the Peace Centre at Tromsø University and others specially invited. On the way to the airport, he also stopped by the university to place flowers at the bust of his countryman and political inspiration, Mahatma Gandhi.

Many of his millions of followers around the world refer to him as the new Gandhi, because of his spiritual methods and his focus on non-violent conflict resolution.

Compassion

“It is about compassion and understanding,” explains Shankar when “Tromsø” asks how he manages to gain trust from all parties in the conflicts that he helps with as mediator. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has been - and is – active in finding solutions to conflicts between various groups in India, his organisation contributes with relief programmes in Iraq, he has mediated between India and Pakistan on the troubled areas of Jammu and Kashmir, and he has contributed to dialogue between ethnic groups in Kosovo.

Not least, he has been active in recent years in finding a solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka. Yesterday several Tamils were therefore invited to meet him in Tromsø.

Norway playing an active role

“We hope you can use your influence to get India more actively involved. India, in fact, holds the key to the solution,” Kanapathipillai Sivarajah said. Several Tamils expressed great despair at the humanitarian situation after the Sri Lankan army just took control over the Tamil capital Kilinochchi.

Today Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is going to meet the Norwegian Minister of International Development Erik Solheim, who, for several years, has been acting as peace mediator in Sri Lanka.

Ole D. Mjøs urged Shankar to ask for more active assistance from Norway. “We have to play a more active role. We are obliged to do so due to our former role, and now the situation in Sri Lanka is precarious,” Mjøs stated.

Vulnerable situation

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar brings with him the appeals and advice from the Tamils in Tromsø. Shankar emphasises that the situation in Sri Lanka is very difficult at the moment, and so a peaceful solution seems distant.

“The situation is very vulnerable, and my task is more difficult. But we cannot give up. A solution must develop from the actual crisis, and the solution must be international. This is an international problem, and India for example, has to play a more active role.

Text below picture of Mahatma Gandhi statue, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and Ole Danbolt Mjøs:

TWO GURUS: Sri Sri Ravi Shankar placed flowers at the bust of Mahatma Gandhi at the Peace Centre when Shankar was visiting Tromsø yesterday. Ole D. Mjøs attended the ceremony.