



Global Peace

Through Personal Peace

by Natalie Kaharick

An Interview with **Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, founder of the Art of Living Foundation, is a spiritual leader and humanitarian recognized worldwide for his service and peacemaking initiatives. Millions have benefitted from his Art of Living course, which teaches unprecedented breathing techniques to rid the system of stress and negativity. Here, he comments on his vision of Creating a Violence-Free, Stress-Free Society.

Is world peace possible?

World peace comes with individual peace. If individuals become peaceful, communities become peaceful. Then the leaders of the world will also become peaceful, and we can have world peace. When people have a broad vision for the whole world, world peace is a possibility. We need to spiritualize the politics, socialize the business, and secularize the religion.

What can we, as individuals, do to increase our personal peace?

Our breath has a great lesson to teach us, which we have forgotten. For every rhythm in the mind, there is a corresponding rhythm in the breath, for every rhythm in the breath there is a corresponding emotion. So, when you cannot handle your mind directly, through breath you can handle it, it's easier. We need to know a little bit about all the layers of our existence: body, breath, mind, intellect, memory, ego, and the Self. This is what I call the Art of Living: learning a little bit about ourselves, and that makes you be in the present moment and it helps us to maintain the innocence that we are all born with, and feel at home with everybody, anywhere.

Do you believe our world leaders can create peaceful and loving solutions to world problems?

I find there are many good world leaders who want to do something for our society but they feel constrained. They feel helpless. Many times they cannot do what they want to do because they are trapped in a system. The system doesn't allow them to do what they want to do. And there are others for whom their position or party matters more than the welfare of the people. Their eyes are on the next coming election, the needs of their political party, their political agenda rather than the larger interest of the people in the long term. Even if they think of the bigger issues they are unable to take action as their political agenda stands in front of them.

How do you propose or manage reconciliation between enemies?

Many times those who appear to be enemies are not actually enemies. Neither at home nor at school are we taught how to manage negative emotions. You get angry, upset, greedy or depressed, but we are not taught how to manage our mind. I am not saying that we have solutions to resolve all the conflicts in the world tomorrow.

It is not practical. But what has given us hope is, after experiencing meditation, there is enormous change in the same people who appear to be aggressive or enemies.

What do you say to people who mock the importance of peace?

There is strength in peace. There is strength in calmness. There is strength in love, but it goes unnoticed. What you cannot win with a stick, you can win with love. What you cannot win with guns, you can win through love. And this power of love needs to be realized. The most powerful thing in the world is love! We can win the hearts of people through love. When we are peaceful, we radiate that peace to the people around us and they also become calm. In these times of war and disease in the world, it's so important that we all meditate a little bit everyday. When we meditate, we nullify those vibrations, thereby creating a more harmonious environment around us.

Sri Sri will be in Connecticut from July 22-25 for an Art of Living Course. For more information, go to www.us.artofliving.org/ct or call 860.880.0260. See ad on page 23.