

Einar Beer (1887–1982)

Einar Beer was born on January 13th 1887 in Kristiania (Oslo) as the seventh child in a family of nine children to Nicolai Sivert Beer and Lovise Sarine Hjort. His ancestors on his father's side came from Holland and were the founders of the town Flekkefjord in the far south of Norway. His father was one of the biggest and most successful businessmen in Norway at the time with huge stone quarries both in Norway and in Sweden. They represented the biggest stone quarries in the country and employed 1500 workers around 1912, and exported pavement stones and stones for piers all over the world. All the granite stone for the Gustav Vigeland sculpture park in Oslo was delivered by the Beer granite quarries, and the cutting of the huge monolith was considered a great engineering feat at the time. Einar studied to become a mine engineer in Dresden in Germany, where he also met and married a very rich noble lady with whom he had two daughters, Helga and Marit. When he met Sri Ananda for the first time during the spring of 1915, he was employed in the business of his father and a great athlete in land hockey and tennis. He was chairman of the board of the national tennis organization and Nordic champion of tennis several years in a row.

His life was one of carefree success. But when he first heard a lecture by Sri Ananda about Indian philosophy at the university, he felt it almost like a revelation: For the first time in his life he saw and heard a person who talked about the soul and who at the same time really knew the soul. After that he wanted to spend as much time as possible with Sri Ananda. Mr. Beer wished to involve his family in his relationship with Sri Ananda, but after only a few years his wife left him for his best childhood friend. He was also almost excluded from the Beer family after a while. It was therefore a disappointed and heavy hearted Einar Beer who by the beginning of the 1920s moved up to Tronsvangen to Sri Ananda, after first having lived for two years at a farm in Valdres. On Tronsvangen he rented various huts and mountain farms, and commuted between Alvdal and Oslo trying various kinds of business in order to get some money for, amongst other things, publishing Sri Ananda's books. He owned and operated the Brahmakul publishers where most of Sri Ananda's books gradually appeared. In all those years in Norway he was the faithful odd-job man and helper of Sri Ananda. It was also he who primarily looked after all Sri Ananda's animals on Gaurisankar. In 1946 – after the death of Sri Ananda – he built his own house in Tronsvanglia, Alvdal, on a spot which Sri Ananda had selected for him many years earlier.

Mr. Beer first called this place “Santibo” but later changed it to “Solbu” (“The Home of the Sun”). From “Solbu” he developed a huge correspondence with many persons and institutions spread around the globe to whom he often sent books or poems of Sri Ananda and in this way made Sri Ananda known in the world. His long standing correspondence with India's first Vice President and later President, the philosopher and statesman Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, is especially worthy of mention. They met first in Oslo and then again for a second time when Mr. Beer visited India as an 80 year old in 1966. Besides, Mr. Beer most welcomed hundreds of visitors to “Solbu” from Norway and abroad during the years. All, from Buddhist monks from the Far East to “lost” youths from Norway's Royal Garden, could find shelter with him for as long as they desired. Especially Krishnamurti's “pupil” Vimala Thakar, who used to stay here for one to two weeks every year during 1968 – 1974, might be mentioned together with the Buddhist monk Shanti Bhadra Thera from Ceylon, who, all told, spent one and a half years at “Solbu” between 1960 and 1970. Several ambassadors and first secretaries at the Indian Embassy in Oslo have also visited this place over many years.

On October 5th 1977 he received a most unusual visit when the then Crown Prince and Crown Princess, Harald and Sonja, came on a short visit outside in the snow in the yard to view the bust of Sri Ananda placed there. Mr. Beer naturally had been informed beforehand about their visit and made ready a small gift which he presented them. It was a fine photograph depicting Harald's great-grandfather, King Oscar, who was sitting outside having a nice chat with Biørn Biørnson (the son of Biørnstjerne Biørnson) at Golaa Hoeyfjellshotell in 1899 (the Beer family had a cabin at Golaa). Einar, who was then only 12 years old, had been hidden behind a tree when he snapped the picture, and only the King's dog saw him. During the presentation the photo fell to the ground but Sonja quickly bowed down and picked it up. This incident was captured by a VG photographer for which the photographer won a national prize.

Mr. Beer was also a popular interview subject for the press, and together with various coverage about Sri Ananda and the University of Peace, there were on average four press spaces distributed on 45 different media from all over South Norway during the period 1945 – 1980 (this was only what Mr. Beer had managed to collect). There were also several features in NRK, both radio and television, during this period. On February 24th 1978 a very special event in his life took place as the ballet “Syklus” was performed for the first time at the

National Theatre, conceived and choreographed by his grand niece Lise Eger. The ballet was dedicated to the then 91 years old Einar Beer and also inspired by his life and thoughts. "Syklus" was also performed on February 28th, March 7th and March 8th at the National Theatre, and at the Munch Museum on March 12th 1978.

During all the years Mr. Beer lived at "Solbu" he was always occupied in various ways with the continuation of Sri Ananda's work through the publishing of posthumous manuscripts by Sri Ananda and by trying to gain agreement for the University of Peace. From 1961 to 1964 he worked specifically to acquire a building site for the University of Peace on Mt. Tron in Alvdal and forwarded an application about it to the municipality of Alvdal. He collected the signatures from a majority of the affected ground owners and got clearance from both the local and the regional authorities, but the case was closed at the Department of Church and Education and the process therefore stopped. Exactly ten years later Mr. Beer again went through the same operation, but this time not for acquiring land but to erect a monument to the memory of Sri Ananda which at the same time would be the foundation stone to the University of Peace. This time he got all the necessary permits, including from the Government, and also got a grant from the municipality of Alvdal for the erection of the monument. The monument was inaugurated on July 1st 1979 by Einar Beer in the presence of about 20 local people.

In 1975 he established the Swami Sri Ananda Acharya Foundation for the caretaking of the spiritual inheritance from Sri Ananda and for administering the property "Solbu" in the service of Sri Ananda. Einar Beer died at "Solbu" on February 19th 1982, 95 years old.

(Shortly after the death of Einar Beer a vicar, whose family name was Solbu, complained to the authorities and wanted the place name on the property removed. When Bjoern Pettersen, who received the letter with the case from the district recorder, had no wish to quarrel with the man and at the same time found the name "Santibo" in the sales contract when Mr. Beer bought the property, he had the property name changed to the now existing "Shantibu").