

~*~ Mother Teresa's Prayer ~*~

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered;
...Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;
...Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies;
...Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;
...Be honest and frank anyway.

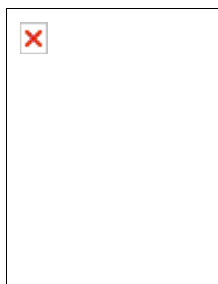
What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;
...Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;
...Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;
...Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;
...Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God;
It was never between you and them anyway.



MOTHER TERESA

The myth created in 1969 by Malcolm Muggeridge has been fiercely protected and amplified by the world's wealthiest and mightiest—but with not inconsiderable help from Mother Teresa herself. If you want to know about the real Mother Teresa, you may read some sample chapters of my book

The Mother of All Myths

It is relevant that I am Calcuttan born, bred and educated. Please note that my work is factual and wholly evidence-based. I am neither a leftist nor a Hindu, hence my brief is neither ideological nor religious. But **THE CELEBRATION OF UNTRUTH SHOULD NOW STOP**

You will find some rabble-rousing in my other web page if you have the stomach for more

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SUBMISSION BEFORE THE COMMITTEE FOR BEATIFICATION/CANONISATION OF MOTHER TERESA

Being a lay person not versed in ecclesiastical procedures, I am not eminently suited to make a formal or technical deposition before the Committee. However, I have had a keen interest in Mother Teresa for the last few years and have researched her operations, perhaps more thoroughly than anyone else in the world. And, as somebody born, brought up and educated in Calcutta, I feel I am in a unique situation to offer evidence to the Committee. The Committee may summon me at any time to appear personally before it to offer evidence. I also put my audio visual evidence at the disposal of the Committee should it want to consult them.

Over the years I have been dismayed at the discrepancy between Mother Teresa's words and her deeds, and here I present some of them. Mother Teresa had said many thousands of times in her life that she "pick[ed] up" people from the streets of Calcutta. She expounded on it at length in her Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

Her order did (and does) not "pick up" destitutes from Calcutta's streets. They do not provide an ambulance service for the city's poorest of the poor. If one rings the Kalighat home for the dying destitute, one is told curtly to ring 102 (the Calcutta Corporation ambulance line) so that a Corporation vehicle would bring the destitute to Kalighat.

I believe that Mother Teresa had deliberately misled the world in her assertions about "picking up" destitutes from the streets of Calcutta in order to bolster her own image and that of her faith. Her failure to provide vehicles (whilst continually claiming to do so) is even more significant because she had been donated a number of ambulance vehicles. These are used mainly (though not solely) as vans to ferry nuns, often to and from places of prayer. I believe that this constitutes an abuse of other people's trust in her.

Mother Teresa is on record in various publications (written by her friends and followers) as having said that her order fed 4000, 5000, 7000 or 9000 people in Calcutta everyday (the figures are not chronologically incremental). I do not know what she meant by feeding that number, but the fact remains that her soup kitchens (numbering between two and three) in Calcutta did (does) not feed more than 300 people daily (a generous over-estimate). The Committee should also take into account the "food cards" that poor people must possess to obtain ration in at least one soup kitchen. The Committee should note that such cards are not easy to come by for the poor, and that virtually all Christians in a particular slum have food cards, when hardly any of the poor from the other religions have them. This policy gives the lie to Mother Teresa's assertions that she treated the poor from all faiths equally. On the issue of bias toward Catholicism, I would also like to tell the Committee that worship inside Mother Teresa's homes is solely Catholic, and non-Catholic worship is not at all permitted therein. This practice should be judged in the context of a minute proportion of the residents in her homes in Calcutta being of the Catholic faith. I would like to draw the Committee's attention to Mother Teresa's frequent pronouncement: "I help a Hindu to become a better Hindu, a Muslim to become a better Muslim....." etc. The practice of denying poor people under her care the right to worship their own god(s) can be judged as harsh and demeaning.

Mother Teresa once said, "If there are poor on the moon, we will go there." She said many times that she never refused anybody who needed help. In reality however, her order operated strict exclusion criteria in their selection of who to help and who not to. Mother Teresa's order did (does) not help anybody, no matter how poor or helpless, who had a family member of any kind -- what they term a "family case".

One of Mother Teresa's slogans had been, "Bring me that unwanted child." In her Nobel Prize speech she said, "Let us bring the child back.What have we done for the child?Have we really made the children wanted?" If the Committee examines what Mother Teresa had done for street children (in Calcutta), it may find that she fell short of optimal standard. Despite her assertions, she did not operate an "open door" policy at her homes for the poor, including for poor children. A very poor and very ill child would not be offered help unless the parents signed (or thumb-printed) a form of renunciation signing over the rights of the child to her organisation. I have video evidence of such a case happening on the doorstep of Mother Teresa's orphanage.

The Committee may also want to interview street children from around Mother House who were repeatedly reported to the police by Mother Teresa's nuns for "pestering" foreigners who came to visit the "living saint". I have video interviews with such children, which the Committee may like to consult.

In her famous letter written in 1978 to the then Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai in protest against the curbing of Christian missionary activities, Mother Teresa mentioned that she operated "102 centres" of natural family in Calcutta. The Committee should heed that such centres do not exist. The Committee should also note that in her Nobel Prize speech Mother Teresa had said that in 6 years in Calcutta there were "61,273 babies less" born because of her organisation's natural family planning activities. There is no basis whatever for this statistic, and it was disingenuous of Mother Teresa to mention it in her Nobel Prize speech.

In the April 1996 issue of the US magazine Ladies Home Journal, Mother Teresa said that she wanted to die like the poor in her home for the dying destitute in Kalighat. This is a very outrageous statement indeed. By then she had had numerous in-patient medical treatments in some of the most expensive clinics around the world. This includes the Scripps Clinic in La Jolla, California and the Gemelli Hospital in Rome. She also had numerous treatments at Calcutta's Woodlands and Belle Vue Clinics, which are outside the reach of 99% of India's population. She also received (on numerous occasions) sophisticated and expensive cardiac treatments at Calcutta's Birla Heart Institute.

When Mother Teresa died, she was surrounded in her bedroom by sophisticated and expensive cardiac equipment, which had been specially fitted for her. Such privilege is usually granted to kings, presidents and dictators. Whether such exclusive facilities befit a future Saint is for the Committee to decide, but I would ask it to take note of the wide discrepancy between Mother Teresa's deeds and her pronouncements.

In 1984 Mother Teresa (publicly) declined the offer of cataract surgery from the St Francis Medical Centre in Pittsburgh, USA, telling the media that she could not possibly accept the £5000 treatment; but the very next year she had the same surgery (which cost even more) in St Vincent's Hospital, New York.

I think Mother Teresa (or anybody else) should receive the best possible medical treatment, but she utterly failed giving her residents (at least in Calcutta) the minimum dignity and treatment -- despite her vast resources. The residents at Kalighat were denied beds -- they were forced to lie on hammocks, known by her order as "pallets". They were not allowed to get up from their pallets and stretch themselves. They are denied visits from friends and relatives -- indeed they would not be admitted in the first place if they had any relatives. They are forced to defaecate and urinate communally. They are given only the simplest possible treatments, such as simple painkillers for the intractable pain of terminally ill residents. Gloves and more importantly, needles are routinely re-used when deadly diseases are rife within this population. It has to be borne in mind that the home for the dying in Calcutta is a very small operation, catering to less than 100 people -- is it not legitimate to expect a minimum decent standard for these few people? What does the Committee think?

Except for adequate and simple food, the regime in the home is very harsh indeed -- some would call it dehumanising; apart from the above points mentioned, I would like to draw attention of the Committee to the compulsory shaving of the heads of residents, including of female ones. The Committee should take cognisance of the particular importance Indian women (however poor or destitute) attach to long hair.

One could perhaps overlook the medical facilities at Kalighat (although the Committee should not perhaps ignore such dismal standards from a woman with such resources) but where Mother Teresa failed was in providing minimum "Love" and dignity for her residents, despite her numerous claims that she did so. Mother Teresa's motto had been "You did it to me", implying the suffering of Jesus; she said many times how "beautiful" suffering and pain were. However she had one standard for herself and another one for her residents. She herself had never declined painkillers or anaesthetics.

Mother Teresa, although protesting to live a life of utter humility and suffering, frequently travelled the world in the luxury class of aeroplanes, which is outside of the reach of all but the super wealthy. Granted she did not pay for her travels (the airlines usually did), but I believe her travels were a waste of resources, undertaken as they were mostly for religious purposes. The majority of her journeys -- including the last foreign travel of her life that began in May 1997 -- were to oversee the vow taking of her nuns. She would also travel frequently to the Vatican to meet up with the pope -- indeed on most of her international travels she would break journey at the Vatican, sometimes twice -- onward and return. Can the Committee justify such frequent and expensive travels for reasons of religion by a woman who always claimed that she was utterly devoted to the cause of the poor? Occasionally when on board the first class section of an aeroplane, Mother Teresa would ask for food to be given her so that she could take them to the poor. This would impress those around her and would imply that she never did anything that would detract from the cause of the poor -- thereby she would manage to camouflage the real purpose of her luxurious travels which were unnecessary, at least for the interests of the poor. I would urge the

Committee to take into account Mother Teresa's affectations which were adopted (perhaps unwittingly) to cause deception and bolster image.

Although always protesting that she knew nothing about politics, Mother Teresa voted in elections in India, as acknowledged by the Catholic author Eileen Egan in one of Mother Teresa's official biographies *Such A Vision of the Street*. She also made sure that her nuns all voted. Here again, we are getting a discord between words and deeds.

In the matter of politics, the most serious issue that can be raised about Mother Teresa's actions was over her support of the State of Emergency in India (1975 - 77). This was a time when democratic rights were suspended in India and thousands of activists (both social and political) were detained without trial. Other crimes, much more heinous, were committed by the erstwhile government. The Committee should take particular note of the forced sterilisation programmes (of poor men) that were undertaken during this period. And yet, Mother Teresa issued the State of Emergency a certificate of approval (acknowledged in the above official biography) to help her friend the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The Committee should decide if such action befits a potential Saint. The Committee should particularly consider the way Mother Teresa intervened in politics in this instance and compare it with her (political) intervention during the passage of the Freedom of Religion Bill in the Indian parliament in 1978. In the first instance when human rights were threatened, she aided and abetted the powers that were threatening them; in the second instance when Catholic rights were threatened she made a strident protest. One could not have criticised her if she had remained silent on both occasions.

The Committee should also take into account Mother Teresa's wooing of the media, which was often selective. There are a lot of media persons (primarily in India) who may testify to that effect. I have interviews with such people which the Committee may like to consult. I am aware that the help of the media is essential in the running of an international organisation such as the Missionaries of Charity and I certainly do not think it was unreasonable of Mother Teresa to enlist such help, but she always publicly maintained that she detested publicity.

The word "saint" in the broad sense implies a person who is uniquely kind and charitable; somebody above meanness and pettiness, somebody who does not publicise their own deeds and achievements, at least does not exaggerate them. Mother Teresa was a kind and charitable person, but whether she was an exceptional in this regard is a matter for the Committee to decide. I strongly urge the Committee to not simply be guided by what she said, but look beyond that. She was an exceptional Catholic -- indeed much (if not most) of the resources of her organisation was spent on religious activities, such as in the training of nuns, novices, Brothers and priests, and in the upkeep of establishments which are exclusively nunneries and Brothers' houses. When Mother Teresa told journalists (as she did very often during her life) how many establishments she ran around the world, she never made it clear that a large number of these housed nuns and Brothers and were not homes for the poor.

In this context, Mother Teresa's fund raising from people of dubious reputation needs to be mentioned. To give an example, in 1991 she received a very large sum of money from Charles Keating, who had stolen most or all of it from the American public, many of them people of modest means. After Keating's arrest, Mother Teresa steadfastly refused to even acknowledge requests from the authorities to return the money. Did she think that she was above earthly laws? If the money had been returned, some of Keating's poor investors who had been deceived could have been repaid. Mother Teresa's logic was that she was using rich people's ill-gotten money to help the poor. Such logic is perverse, not only because she was knowingly handling stolen money, but also because much of that money was being spent not on the poor but for the nurturing of her faith.

If the Committee wants to confer sainthood on Mother Teresa for being an exceptional Catholic, then no doubt such honour is deserved. If on the other hand, sainthood is something the Committee would confer on somebody who is also more than ordinarily honest, "humble", dedicated to the poor, free of falsehoods and above all a person of unique integrity, then in my opinion Mother Teresa falls short of being a shining example.

Finally I would ask the Committee whether it would do justice to the memory and spirit of Mother Teresa -- who had such visceral opposition to abortion in any circumstance -- to be called "Saint Teresa of Calcutta", for Calcutta is one of the world's most pro abortion cities, where hundreds of institutions (one of them not that many yards from Mother House) offer abortion (virtually) on demand.

CHAPTER 1

"She rushes in to places where we would never go"

On 11 October 1995, prostitutes in a certain quarter of Calcutta came out in force; they cajoled and coaxed passers-by for money, but not in return for the usual favours. For some reason, they had decided to don white coats, the type worn by doctors, and they made a strange and surreal impact in the midst of the hectic Calcutta street. Each of them had a large collection tin in her hand, which was rattled vigorously as the ladies walked along this congested street in north Calcutta.

The sex workers were collecting money for flood victims. In September devastating floods had struck large areas of West Bengal, the state in India of which Calcutta is the capital. What made the floods especially poignant was its timing -- it had come just before the biggest festival of 70 million Indian Bengalees, the spectacular Durga Pujo. Although in Indian terms, the number of casualties was small, with 200 dead (many of them from snake bites, as is often the case during floods, when snakes and humans climb up to the same elevation), more than three million people were made homeless in the villages surrounding Calcutta. In pure financial terms, the loss was estimated at Rs 1050 million.

The stories of loss and suffering moved millions, including the sex workers. One of them, Uma Mandal, said to newspapermen, "How can we call ourselves human if we don't come to the aid of suffering people in their hour of need? Those who have lost everything in the floods could easily be the members of our own families." Sankari Paal, who could not read or write, but had come to know of the devastation through television, said, "Although I don't personally know anybody who has been affected by the floods, we believe we are very much part of a wider community, and so, it was almost natural for us to come out to help." 1

The sex workers' collection drive was jointly organised by the Institute of Health and Hygiene, the Women's Co-ordination Committee and a neighbourhood club, the Ward no. 48 Milan Sangha. This was merely one of the many hundreds of collection drives and relief measures organised by the citizens of Calcutta, operations that started in September and that lasted almost six months. Schools, colleges, offices, businesses, restaurants and individuals all chipped in. The only organisation that did not feature was the Missionaries of Charity, the multinational charity headed by Mother Teresa, the person who has become synonymous with Calcutta in the eyes of the world. Mother Teresa's absence in the relief operations was not conspicuous in Calcutta. Strange though it may seem to a non-Calcuttan, her order is not known to throw in its lot in these circumstances. In Calcutta, she was known to undertake small niche activities, for which she was generally liked and her order is well-regarded.

During the aftermath of the floods, in December, when West Bengal was still reeling from the effects, Mother Teresa travelled to USA. She made a highly successful visit to Peoria, Illinois, and when she arrived at the St Mary's Cathedral, she drove the crowds wild with devotion and delight. She said her usual lines, which she had said hundreds of times before:

I was hungry and you gave me to eat,

I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink,

I was naked, and you clothed me,

I was homeless and you took me in,

I was sick and in prison and you visited me.

This is exactly what the Missionaries of Charity are doing 24 hours.

Mother's stopover at Peoria was to oversee the renewing of vows by seven nuns of her Missionaries of Charity. She had had a long association with the Diocese of Peoria, and had been "adopted" by the Peoria Diocesan Council of Catholic Women way back in 1958, who had donated \$300000 to her causes over the years. After her speech, Mother made an announcement that she would present a "medal" to each of the 750 strong congregation in the cathedral. All were reduced to tears, and many actually swooned when receiving their medal. One of them later said, "My personal impression: Very old, very tiny, very humble. There is something about this woman that brings grown men to their knees. She has gained popularity not by manipulating the media with sound-bites but by serving the poorest of the poor in places we would never go. She is truly a living saint!An air of HOLINESS filled the cathedral."

Shortly after the medal ceremony, Mother Teresa left by private aeroplane, as she had arrived, presumably to visit "places we would never go".2

Although she never lifted a finger during the 1995 floods, in a fairly recent interview with Lucinda Vardey, Mother Teresa had mentioned working during floods in Calcutta. Characteristically however, she does not provide any details about time and place: "For instance, when a large area near Calcutta was flooded and washed away, 1200 families were left stranded with nothing. Sisters from Shishu Bhavan, and also brothers worked all night, taking them supplies and offering shelter."³ This may well have been true on a single occasion, but this is definitely not the usual nature of the work of the Missionaries of Charity. The world however would assume, reading her interview, that Mother jumped in headlong in natural disasters in and around Calcutta.

During the fifty-one years that Mother Teresa had been doing charity in Calcutta, there were about a dozen very major floods near Calcutta, with hundreds to thousands dying on each occasion. The city itself was flooded quite a few times, paralysing urban life, and badly affecting the poor of the city; only during one of those floods, did Mother Teresa offer some kind of help. I do not belittle that assistance, modest though it was. It is however characteristic of the Teresan mythology that, that one occasion has become symbolic of her work -- it is only fair that her inaction during the other floods should receive at least some emphasis.

On 13 July 1995, Shahida, a 16 year old mother of a one year old child, got badly burnt. Shahida used to live in the Dnarapara slum, which surrounds Mother Teresa's Prem Daan centre in Calcutta. She had great difficulty trying to get herself admitted into a state hospital; there were no beds as usual. In the end she managed to get into the NRS Hospital, a state hospital. She was thrown out in less than three weeks, before her wounds had started to heal. She did not have the financial means to get private medical care -- in India, even the middle classes cannot quite afford private medicine. So she picketed Calcutta Corporation in protest. She set herself up in a tent in front of the Victorian red brick building of Calcutta Corporation. She lay there a few weeks, while infection was slowing seeping into her burns. While her husband was at football matches and her father was busy selling fruit, her mother sat with her, crying silently, cuddling the baby.

Shahida failed to move the hearts of the Calcutta Corporation officials. Finally, a Corporation worker, Sonnasi Das, took pity, and contacted Dr Amitabha Das, from the charity HEAL. Dr Das had this to say, "Though the immunity of pavement dwellers is high, bacteraemia and other infections could set in any time and she will die. She needs skin grafting, otherwise she will develop contracture, that is, her calves will get stuck to her lower thighs." The painkillers Dr Das prescribed Shahida, still on the pavement, did not quite help: "The pain is so great and even when I try to sit up, blood trickles down my legs."

During her various representations for assistance, she appealed to Mother Teresa for financial help, so she could buy private care. (Contrary to international mythology, Mother Teresa does not have a hospital in Calcutta). Shahida appealed to the Missionaries of Charity not because they are a natural port of call for helpless Calcuttans, but because they were one of the many she approached, and also because, being from the slum beside Prem Daan, she was a neighbour of theirs. The appeal went up to Mother directly who very considerably asked her nuns "to look into the matter".

Shahida was swiftly turned down by the Missionaries of Charity, because she was "not destitute enough", i.e., she was "a family case", a clause regularly applied during the vetting of indigents by the Missionaries of Charity in India; the organisation is ever watchful that "family cases" do not slip in.

Finally Shahida's fortunes turned. On 30 August, she was accepted by the Islamia Hospital, for free. The Rotary Club of Calcutta also made a modest financial contribution toward her treatment. She was given adequate care and treatment, and was nursed in a private room. She improved, and within days she was throwing tantrums like any other 16 year old. By this time she had begun to make headlines, and the entire city breathed a sigh of relief.

On 21 October 1995, Shahida died, leaving behind a baby. Her death made headline news in Calcutta, where pavement dwellers and slum dwellers are dispensable.

Everybody blamed the government and the corporation, for their heartlessness and lack of facilities. Nobody pointed a recriminatory finger at Mother Teresa, as she is not seen in Calcutta as a saviour. The world however sees her as such, and Mother Teresa has done a great deal over the last few decades to make the world think that way.

Shahida's unfortunate tale did not end with her death, as she left behind her baby daughter Marjina. By May next year, it was apparent that Marjina, who was now 16 months old, had tuberculosis. The charity HEAL again chipped in with moderate assistance, but medicines had to be bought. The baby's grandmother Jubeida, was getting more and more desperate by the day. The baby's father Ziarul (the late Shahida's husband) was an occasional street vendor, and although fond of the baby, could not be trusted upon -- besides he was often in prison. Jubeida was getting apprehensive over the baby's long term future and was reluctant to take the responsibility of another girl child, who had to be married off in due course. She decided adoption was the best option, and Ziarul also reluctantly agreed. I am not aware if Jubeida went back to the Missionaries of

Charity, but I know that the organisation did not come forward with help of any kind.

Mother Teresa herself was far too busy for such mundane happenings in Calcutta, for the United States was preparing for presidential elections, and in May 1996, she again found herself in Washington D.C. On 1 June 1996, she met the Republican candidate Bob Dole (the US Catholics' consensus candidate) to exhort him to run the election on an extreme anti-abortion platform. The intimate details of this private (but no doubt political) meeting have not been made public, but Mr Dole found the living saint "inspirational" and in possession of "a good sense of humour", and of "not a bad business card". Mother Teresa gave Mr Dole, his wife Elizabeth, and his daughter Robin "miraculous medals", and also a card that read:

The fruit of silence is prayer

The fruit of prayer is faith

The fruit of faith is love

The fruit of love is service

The fruit of service is peace

Mother Teresa is a woman of passion where abortion is concerned. This frail woman would often travel all over the world to prevent individual cases of abortion -- I do not know if faith can move mountains, but it obvious that it can and did move living saints. As far as disasters in India are concerned however, the saint had proved surprisingly hard to move -- when I look at local and national disasters in Calcutta and India, I can find very few indeed where Mother Teresa had gone in to help.

In December 1984, three and a half thousand people died in Bhopal from inhaling toxic gas, leaked by the multinational giant Union Carbide, in the worst industrial accident the world has ever seen. The number of people actually affected cannot be logged as the effects are long-standing and future generations would probably continue to suffer.

Mother Teresa, whose post-Nobel reputation within India was then very high indeed, rushed in to Bhopal like an international dignitary. Her contribution in Bhopal has become a legend: she looked at the carnage, nodded gravely three times and said, "I say, forgive." There was a stunned silence in the audience. She took in the incredulity, nodded again, and repeated, "I say, forgive". Then she quickly wafted away, like visiting royalty. Her comments would have been somewhat justified if she had sent in her Missionaries of Charity to help in any way. But to come in unannounced, and make an insensitive comment like that so early on, was nothing short of an insult to the dead and suffering. In the wider world however, her image became even more enhanced, as she was seen even more like Jesus Christ, who would turn the other cheek, although in this instance the cheek was not hers. People in Bhopal were not amused; it is said that the only reason Mother escaped being seriously heckled was by dint of being an elderly woman.

Mother Teresa's propaganda machinery handled her Bhopal trip in the following way:

As she was present to the agony of Calcutta, and that of India's other great cities, so Mother Teresa was present to the anguish of Bhopal, a city four hundred miles to the south of Delhi, when a cloud of smoke enveloped a crowded slum on the night of December 3, 1984. The Missionaries of Charity, who had long been working in Bhopal, escaped being among the victims because the death-bringing gas was blown by the wind in a different direction..... Even while the dead were being cremated or buried, Mother Teresa rushed to Bhopal with teams of Missionaries of Charity to work with the Sisters already on the scene. "We have come to love and care for those who most need it in this terrible tragedy", said Mother Teresa, as she went from centre to centre, from hospital to hospital visiting afflicted people.⁵

This is an extremely clever play of words, as "Mother Teresa was present to the anguish of Bhopal" means literally that; "teams of Missionaries of Charity" means the couple of nuns who accompanied Mother to Bhopal; but the verb "work" is employed in a very broad sense. "The Missionaries of Charity (who) had long been working in Bhopal" is however entirely true, as they have had a small but neat home for destitutes (called "Nirmal Hriday", like the one in Calcutta) for many years.

Another of Mother's biographies has a photograph in it with the following caption: "Helping A Survivor of the Chemical Leak at Bhopal, December 1984"

The photograph concerned shows Mother daintily offering a marigold flower to a woman moribundly lying in a hospital bed.

"Helping" no doubt, but not in the sole sense that the world would expect of Mother Teresa.

The September 30, 1993 Latur earthquake in the western Indian state of Maharashtra, is the biggest natural disaster -- though not in terms of deaths alone -- in the history of India. 8000 people died and five million lost their homes and all their possessions. Over two hundred NGOs rushed in to help, and many are working to this day, as the rebuilding of a large district, both physically and emotionally, can take decades. Many charities have come forward to actually rebuild entire villages from the rubble they had been reduced to. The government has already put in a special grant of Rs 8 billion.

The world obviously thinks Mother Teresa had put her heart and hands into the operation, as it instinctively assumes that in any disaster in India, especially of that magnitude, she would have a presence, if not the biggest one. The Missionaries of Charity never came to Latur. (Neither had they gone to Uttarkashi in the foothills of the Himalayas, where an earthquake had killed 1500 people on 20 October 1991.)

Stock-taking of the earthquake in Latur took a few months, and rebuilding began in full earnest around January 1994 and around February Mother Teresa got preoccupied with more weighty matters -- when the process of re-building was going on in full swing she had been obliged yet again, to come to the United States, this time to the country's supreme court in order to file a "friend-of-the-court" brief for one Alexander Loce. Mr Loce had been convicted of trespassing into an abortion clinic to stop his estranged ex fiancée from having an abortion -- his indictment had not been heavy, but he did appeal, but little did he know when he did so, that he would have a saint as a co-defendant. While in Washington DC, Mother also took the opportunity to appear on television before the American nation along with the President and the Vice President. She mesmerised the nation in her National Prayer Breakfast speech where she talked about the evils of contraception and abortion, and about charity -- Latur was many thousands of miles away.

Alexander Loce and Shahida Khatun -- two people, two worlds. One literate, well off, living in suburban New Jersey, the other an illiterate, teenage mother living in a Calcutta slum, daughter of a Bihari Muslim immigrant worker. Is this not the scenario that Michael J Farrell, editor of America's National Catholic Reporter, was alluding to when he talked about two different strands of "human evolution" -- one a rich man in the US, the other a "poor man in a back street in Calcutta, who, unable to hack it any more, lies down and dies."? Perhaps, unlike Shahida Khatun, Mr Loce was not a "family case".

The government of India came in for criticism for being tardy in spending the \$246 million loan that it had received from the World Bank for the rebuilding of Latur, but nobody commented on the inaction on the part of the Missionaries of Charity, whose assets (just the Indian slice of them) are of a similar value.

The summer of 1994 found Mother Teresa of Calcutta, in Calcutta for a few months; in October she left once again for another punishing schedule of instructing the world about the values of prayer, humility and charity, and most importantly, about the blight of abortion; fund-raising was also on the (undisclosed) agenda. This time she decided to make the Vatican her first stop, as she often had done on her international whistle stops. While she was passing through Bombay catch her plane for Rome, authorities in Bombay got hold of her and got her to present the deeds of some newly built houses in Latur to some of the villagers who had lost their dwellings in the earthquake -- the authorities at the time were coming in for more and more international criticism for being slow and clumsy in spending the World Bank loan, and they had naively presumed that having Mother Teresa present the deeds would attract the world's attention to the government's work. The world however presumed otherwise -- looking at pictures of Mother Teresa bending down humbly to present the papers of houses to villagers, they very naturally thought that Mother herself had been instrumental in building those houses. The international Catholic media was not going to let this opportunity of getting free publicity at the expense of the government of India and the World Bank slip from their grasp -- "All In A Day's Work for Mother Teresa" was how they captioned Mother's photo with the villagers.

The world media have little appetite for facts -- they never told the story of how the readers of an Indian newspaper (the Malayalam Manorama) collected Rs 20.61 million for the earthquake victims and got architect Laurie Baker (who lives in India) to rebuild villages. They never reported that although Latur is a thousand miles from Calcutta, the Calcutta based Hindu charity the Ramakrishna Mission and numerous Christian charities have worked ceaselessly in Latur. When on 18 December 1995, the chief editor of Malayalam Manorama handed over the keys to 163 reconstructed houses to the villagers of Banegaon at a ceremony at Killari, the epicentre of the earthquake, it did not even make headline news in India.

On 20 August 1995, a week before Mother's 85th birthday, 200 people died in the Ferozepur rail crash near Delhi. Mother's contribution? -- Special prayers on her birthday. Mother never forgot to pray for victims, but did she slip up once -- in October 1979, after her Nobel award was announced, the Corporation of Calcutta gave her a civic reception. On 23 October, the eve of the reception, three carriages of a packed train plunged into the Hooghly river at Jangipur, in West Bengal itself, hardly 100 miles from Calcutta, killing 350 people. Mother forgot to mention the victims in her speech the following

evening, -- possibly from excitement about her impending trip to Oslo.

On 11 September 1995, 22 children (13 girls and 9 boys) died in an explosion hardly 40 miles from Calcutta in West Bengal's Howrah district, where the Missionaries of Charity, especially Missionary Brothers of Charity have a largish centre. The children were making fireworks for the forthcoming festive season in an illegal factory. 18 more children were seriously injured. The youngest dead was 9 year old Sheikh Mahidul. The factory solely employed children (1500 of them) who worked from 6am to 6 pm for an average weekly wage of Rs 65 per week. In this particular instance the children were making "chocolate bombs" (so called because the individual crackers are wrapped in aluminium foil like pieces of chocolate).

The explosion destroyed a third of the large factory building and rocked the whole village of Haturia. Trees were uprooted and concrete pillars along with children's bodies were tossed up in the air and landed in a nearby pond. Sabera Bibi lost all her four children.¹⁰

The incident caused some stir in Calcutta, possibly as a result if guilt pervading the middle classes, for whose entertainment the fireworks were obviously destined. There is hardly a family (of middle class and above) in India which has not employed a child servant at some point. In India child servants and child labourers (there are 55 million of them) remain nameless but after the Haturia incident the Calcutta newspapers took the unusual step of publishing the names and ages of all the dead and injured children.

There are at least two dozen organisations in India working to eliminate the ancient tradition of child labour and child slavery. They have achieved much but there is a long way to go. The South Asian Coalition of Children in Servitude (SACCS) even organised two long marches, in 1993 and 1994, one from the east to the west of the country, the other from north to south -- no mean feat, considering the size of the nation and the climatic conditions. Nobody expected Mother Teresa to speak out against the practice of child labour, as it would be too political for her. Furthermore the "anti-slavery movement" is tainted by a substantial leftist presence. She had frequently said, "We are not concerned about the cause of a problem, we look after the effects." The village of Haturia happens to be half an hour's drive from Mother Teresa's Howrah centre, where large number of her Brothers learn to be good Christians. Their contribution towards the "effects" of the carnage? -- You ought to have guessed by now.

On the eve of Christmas eve 1995, in the northern Indian town of Mandi Dabwali, not very far from Delhi, 1200 children were celebrating their end of school term with a giant party in a marquee at the rather inappropriately named Rajiv Marriage Palace. Presumably as a result of a short circuit, the marquee caught fire around 2 pm. From the fumes and from the resulting stampede, 360 children died along with 50 adults. Some families were totally wiped off. The local hospitals did not have the means to cope with a crisis on such a scale, and for days severely burnt children were ferried between local hospitals and Rohtak Medical College. The incident put a cloud of grief over New Year celebrations in the entire north of India, and for days a large field near the scene of the disaster was converted into a giant cremation site, with charred remains, often two or three unidentified bodies stuck together burning in silent grief under the wintry sky. The state of Haryana declared an official three day mourning period. The citizens of the entire nation did whatever they could to help, and donations flooded in. Doctors and other volunteers came up in droves to offer their services. Members of Manav Seva Samstha, a local voluntary organisation co-ordinated a massive blood donation drive.¹¹ Once again, the Missionaries of Charity were not around, once again not conspicuous by their absence. Two days later, during Christmas mass at "Mother House" in Calcutta, special prayers were said for the dead.

When the plague struck India in 1994, Mother Teresa arrived at the Vatican on one of her frequent visits. As she arrived at Rome airport, she was ceremoniously quarantined there. Pictures of her being taken away for quarantine were circulated all over the world -- the natural assumption was that she had been working knee deep with plague sufferers. She had had no involvement whatsoever either during or after the plague with treatment or prevention.

If one is led to suppose that Mother's paucity of action was a recent phenomenon, let us go back to 1979, the Nobel year. Jyotirmoy Datta, a conservative Calcutta intellectual, not known for his opposition to Mother Teresa, wrote a stark account of the problems encountered by the middle class inhabitants of a Calcutta neighbourhood when faced with an old destitute woman found dying on the streets. This, according to international perception, is a quintessential "Mother Teresa scenario", for her image is that of a roving angel who came and whisked off the sick and the suffering from the streets.

Finding 102 (the Calcutta Corporation ambulance line) perpetually engaged, Datta decided to call the Missionaries of Charity. Twice he was told he had the wrong office of the Sisters and on the third occasion he got through to Mother Teresa herself (although already widely known as a "living saint", she had not quite acquired a detached celestial lifestyle -- she would pick up the ringing phone herself) on 247115. Mother said to him in "a mellow, reassuring and beautiful voice", "Please persevere with 102; if the ambulance doesn't come, then let me know."

Persevere he did and eventually a Corporation ambulance did come and take the old woman away. "Blessed is this city", writes Datta, "the phone may fail and ambulances might break down, but where else in the world can you dial a number and have a living saint answer the call?"¹²

Less than two months later Mother Teresa was collecting her Nobel peace prize in Oslo -- and, being feted by the media as the "saint of the gutters" who picked up vagrants from the streets of Calcutta, unaided in any way by anybody else.

In India, disasters, natural and unnatural, are as numerous as the Hindu deities. I have only mentioned some major ones. For the poor in India, everyday existence is punctuated with unfortunate happenings which are so predictable that they can hardly be called disasters. These "minor" incidents (on an Indian scale) usually go unreported in the Indian media. For example, on 20 April 1996, 500 slum-dwellers in Calcutta became homeless within an hour when a fire razed their shacks to the ground. They also lost all their modest earthly possessions. Without the luxury of a social security system, the Indian poor are blessed with a remarkable amount of resourcefulness -- within hours of the fire, the men and women started rebuilding their shacks. Some voluntary organisations lent a helping hand, but not amongst them Calcutta's (and the world's) most famous one.

Indeed, Mother Teresa spent such a large part of every year outside of India, it would have been impractical for her to help out in that country's problems and calamities.

From 1978 and up to and including the year of her death 1997, she spent every summer and monsoon -- barring 1994 -- in Europe and the United States. Her pattern would be to leave in early June and return end-September or early October as the downpourings of monsoon were giving way to the mellow autumn sunshine. (Most of the sub-continent's problems and pestilences occur in summer and monsoon.) In 1994 too, she did go to Europe and the United States, but initially made a long winter visit, to attend a number of highly politicised anti-abortion meetings. In October 1994 she left yet again for Europe and the US.

I could go on and on, filling page after page with dense examples of disasters and crises where Mother Teresa had had no involvement whatsoever. For me, a Calcuttan, born and bred, it does not come as surprise, as I know her order has no infrastructure -- indeed it had never been her intention to create an infrastructure for such work, as she had frequently said, "I'm not a social worker." But what I find somewhat disturbing is that she remained inactive when children were hurt or killed, or were at the risk of being orphaned, as in the case of Shahida, who appealed to her personally; this did not sit comfortably with her "Child First" philosophy. But then, for her the unborn child is far more important than the actual child:

Many people are very very concerned with the children of India, with the children of Africa where quite a few die of hunger, and so on. Many people are also concerned about all the violence in this great country of the United States.

These concerns are very good. But often these same people are not concerned with the millions who are killed by the deliberate decision of their own mothers.

And this is what is the greatest destroyer of peace today -- abortion which brings people to such blindness.¹³

It might appear from the above account that Mother might have retired, may be she had withdrawn from day to day work, or even risen above such. Whether or not that was the case is open to debate, but when it came to important matters, no small detail escaped her attention. When the Vice President of India came to Calcutta on a two day visit in July 1996, Mother Teresa delivered him a letter. It was to protest against the demolition of church wall in Bandel (a township near Calcutta) and to urge the government to rebuild the wall.

NOTES

Chapter 1

1. Kalantar, Calcutta, 12 October 1995
2. Communiqué of the Catholic Diocese of Peoria (December 1995), Peoria, Illinois, USA

3. Lucinda Vardey, *Mother Teresa, A Simple Path*, Rider, London 1995
5. Eileen Egan and Kathleen Egan, *Prayertimes with Mother Teresa*, Doubleday, New York, 1989, p. 110
6. *Christianity Today*, 4 April 1994, v. 38. no. 4, p. 75
7. National Prayer Breakfast, Washington DC, 3 February 1994
8. National Catholic Reporter, 17 March 1994
9. *Asian Age*, London, 12, 19 December 1995
10. *Frontier Magazine*, Madras, 20 October 1995
11. *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, 25 December 1995; *India Today*, Delhi, 15 January 1996
12. *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, Calcutta, "Mission of Mercy", 12 October 1979
13. National Prayer Breakfast, Washington DC, 3 February 1994

CHAPTER 2

FICTIONS OF GLORY

The getting of riches by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

Proverbs 21:6

On 18 June 1996, Mother Teresa came to Wales. Her order had bought a small terraced house in a down at heel neighbourhood in Swansea, where she opened her first Welsh centre amidst much fanfare. Men and women of the media turned up in numbers befitting Mother's status as an international celebrity. Much was made of the fact that this was the Missionaries of Charity's 565th centre. The media faithfully reported Mother's words that the four nuns in the home would counsel sufferers from "AIDS and other incurable diseases".¹

The media omitted to mention the fact that the home, which was added to the charitable order's statistics as "yet another one" of the ever increasing number of centres, was exclusively a nunnery. The media did not pause to think about Mother's assurance about the nuns' counselling role. These are nuns who lead an excessively secluded life -- they are not allowed newspapers or television. Their knowledge of HIV and AIDS is even more limited than most of the general population's. They belong to that orthodox strain of Roman Catholicism which regards homosexuality as an "abomination". They are not allowed to mention condoms; furthermore, if they have worked in the home for the dying in Calcutta, they would think that re-using needles after washing them in diluted surgical spirit is standard practice. And, so far as Mother herself was concerned, her knowledge of HIV and AIDS was summed up as "the leprosy of the West", which was not unreasonable coming from her background. Many people would argue that counselling does not require any specialist skills, and that empathy is all that you need. I can see their point. I can also see the point of those who say that many HIV positive and terminally ill people are looking for a religious and spiritual experience and not for counselling as we understand it. These people, I am sorry to say, would be hard put to find it at Clifton Hill in Swansea; partly because the nunnery's telephone is ex-directory, but most importantly, because the counselling service does not exist, despite Mother's press statement to the contrary. When I rang the Canon of St Joseph's Cathedral in Swansea, he categorically told me, "The nuns don't do any counselling; their only charitable work is visiting the elderly at home." (Conversation recorded on 2nd October 1996) This is the typical pattern of the myth of Mother Teresa's charitable work. No doubt the media exaggerate and sometimes even invent, but the source most often was Mother herself.

Let us take for instance her comment that "on the ground floor of Shishu Bhavan [her orphanage in Calcutta] there are

cooking facilities to feed over a thousand people daily."² That there are, but are the facilities used for the purpose of a soup kitchen? They are not. I have spent days on end in front of Shishu Bhavan with a video camera and I know what goes on there. The soup kitchen at Shishu Bhavan feeds about 70 people a day, and that too 5 days a week. The daily turn out is about 50 people for lunch and 20 for dinner, but charity does not come easy for the poor -- they need to possess a "food card" in order to get their gruel. It has to be admitted however that the night time kitchen is not that fussy about the food cards, and I know of instances when even for lunch, the absence of the card has been overlooked. Mother's soup kitchen runs on a far stricter regime at Prem Daan, her other home in Calcutta. The production of food cards is mandatory here, possibly because Prem Daan sits in the middle of Dnarapara slum and there is the likelihood of getting overwhelmed. Here the number of beneficiaries is around 50 a day, 5 days a week, but only one meal is served daily. I have the close-up of a food card captured on video, with its days and corresponding boxes, which are ticked off by the nuns. Now, how does one obtain a food card? -- The process is shrouded in mystery, like most of the functions of the Missionaries of Charity. New ones have not been issued for some time. There was a vetting procedure involved at the time of issue and I am told that they were given only to the "poorest of the poor" -- there is an element of truth in that. By some coincidence however, the handful of Catholic families in Dnarapara, who cannot be called "poorest of the poor" by any stretch of the imagination, have all got their cards. It has to be said to Mother Teresa of Calcutta's credit that her soup kitchens feed three times as many people in New York as they do in Calcutta. If, when Mother Teresa said that at her kitchen at Shishu Bhavan "there are facilities to cook for a thousand people daily", she implied that as many meals were cooked there everyday, then she was right -- if one takes into account the children at the orphanage, plus the twenty or so ayahs who look after the children, plus the few hundred trainee nuns and mature nuns, the number of meals cooked for lunch and for dinner at Shishu Bhavan everyday for all these mouths does no doubt come to "a thousand". However, one could be forgiven for interpreting from Mother's statement that she runs a public kitchen catering for that number.

Mother Teresa had not always been so subtle and circuitous with her claims about the beneficiaries at her soup kitchen. During the 1970s and early 1980s she used to make forthright claims about the number of poor people she fed daily in Calcutta -- I am afraid I have no first hand knowledge of the number she fed at the time, and I therefore endeavoured to take her word for it; but I soon got confused -- for she sometimes would be feeding "9000", next minute it would be "4000", then again it may change to "7000". Chronologically these numbers do not correlate, as the three figures were given round about the same time. It is also noteworthy that her most modest claim, i.e., about "facilities to cook for a thousand people daily", was the most recent one, made in the mid 1990s, when her activities came under increasing scrutiny.

Shortly after her Nobel, she told her friend and biographer Kathryn Spink: "In Calcutta alone we cook for 7000 people everyday and if one day we do not cook they do not eat".³ This was a voracious claim -- at the time the Missionary of Charity kitchens cooked for at the most 500 people a day, and that included their vast army of nuns, novices and Brothers, most of whom do not have any charitable function. The "7000 people" story was part of a fairly lengthy parable, similar to the one with "loaves and fishes" of Jesus. Mother retold it numerous times, in various parts of the world, but never in Calcutta itself. Almost certainly, it will be invoked as a "miracle" during her beatification process. In her own words, one version of the story ran as follows: "We have witnessed God's tender care for us in a thousand different ways. In Calcutta alone we cook for 7000 people daily. If one day we don't cook, they don't eat. One Friday morning, the Sister in charge of the kitchen came to me and said, "Mother, there is no food for Friday and Saturday. We should tell the people that we have nothing to give them either today or tomorrow." I was shocked. I didn't know what to tell her. But about 9 o'clock in the morning, the Indian government for some unknown reason closed the public schools. Then all the bread for the schoolchildren were sent to us. Our children, as well as our seven thousand needy ones, ate bread and even more bread for two days. They had never eaten so much bread in their lives. No one in Calcutta could find out why the schools had been closed. But I knew. It was God's tender care. I knew it was his tender loving care."⁴

During the course of a decade, roughly between 1975 - 1985, many a time did Mother Teresa recount the story about the government miraculously sending her bread on account of the schools closing; the body of the story remained the same, but the opening line would change -- "In Calcutta we feed 7000 people daily" would sometimes become ".....4000 people daily", then change back to "7000" again. Here is how, on one occasion, she told the parable with a "4000" figure:

"We were feeding 4000 people each day and these were people who simply would not eat unless the Sisters fed them. But we had nothing. Then, about 9:00 AM on Friday" etc.-- the rest about the government schools shutting suddenly and the bread miraculously coming to the Missionaries of Charity would now follow.⁵ On one occasion the "number of people that would not eat unless we fed them" reached 9000: "You must know just in Calcutta we feed 9000 people daily."⁶ This claim caused a whiff of embarrassment in even the dotting devotee Jose Luis Gonzalez-Balado, who quickly added, "Mother Teresa is among those who least worry about statistics. She has repeatedly expressed that what matters is not how much work is accomplished but how much love is put into the work."⁷

This was however not the end of the matter -- a few years later the same Gonzalez-Balado edited a book of Mother's sayings, wherein he recounts, in Mother's words, the miracle of the bread and schools, thus:

"In Calcutta alone we feed about ten thousand people every day. This means if one day we do not cook ten thousand people will not eat. One day the Sister in charge came to tell me" etc.

Although the passage is quoted in Mother's name, and although the book itself is called *Mother Teresa, In My Own Words* I am prepared to give Mother the benefit of the doubt; the "ten thousand" was very likely an invention of Gonzalez-Balado, as Mother Teresa had not retold the parable for a long time. But I am sure Mother would have approved of such liberties with numbers, as it was all for the sake of Jesus. It is interesting that Gonzalez-Balado, who had earlier been embarrassed about the "9000" claim, had become emboldened with time to go a step further. I can see why -- the entire Teresa cult has come to realise that whatever they say about Mother Teresa in the positive, and whatever bizarre negatives they say about Calcutta, have come to be accepted as gospel truth by the world. And their main justification (to themselves) in carrying on this game of deceit is that they are not doing it for their own personal gain, but for the propagation of their faith. They also believe that if you repeat a lie thousands of times, it comes to be regarded as the truth -- in achieving this end they have been successful.

I can see why Mother Teresa and her publicity machinery were fond of the "thousands" figure when it came to feeding people -- apart from the obvious and usual business of inflating figures which became their stock in trade, a figure of "200" would not have been Biblical enough. Mother's story is almost a carbon copy of those in the Bible. Here is one of them: "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, 'Here is a small boy with five barley loaves and two fish; but, what is that among so many?'" Jesus said to them, "Make the people sit down." There was plenty of grass there and, as many as five thousand men sat down. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks and distributed them to those who were sitting there; he then did the same with the fish, distributing as much as they wanted. When they had eaten enough he said to the disciples, "Pick up the pieces left over, so that nothing is wasted." So they picked them up and filled twelve large baskets with scraps left over from the meal of five barley loaves." (John 6:9 -13)

Luke (9:15) tells us the same story, and is consistent with "five loaves and two fishes" and with "five thousand men": "For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. And they did so, and made them sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes," (Luke 9:13 - 17) Mark tells us a similar but different parable, and surprise surprise, he gives us a figure of 4000: "And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away." (Mark 8:9)

There are a number of differences between Mother Teresa's tales and those in the Bible. First, the Biblical incidents, assuming they had happened, were descriptions of different episodes, and not different and differing accounts of the same incident. Secondly, these were tales told by the apostles, and not by Jesus himself; I do not think that Jesus, who Mother Teresa modelled herself on, would have been immodest enough to tell self-aggrandising stories about himself. And, being as they were versions by different apostles, a degree of variation in detail could be expected. Thirdly, and most importantly, Mother's tale was pure fantasy (I am again assuming, for the sake of those amongst readers who believe in the literal meaning of the Bible, that the Biblical happenings were real) -- during the 1970s and 80s, Mother Teresa's soup kitchens in Calcutta fed not more than 150 people daily (that too six days a week); indeed, the total number of people fed daily by the Missionaries of Charity kitchens at that time was not more than 500 -- this included her vast number of nuns, novices, and Brothers, most of whom do not have any charitable functions.

The figure "5000" has a particular fascination for Mother, no doubt because of its Biblical connotation. She once said, "Today there is a modern school in that place [in Motijheel slum] with over 5000 children in it."⁸ This appears in a book published in 1986. Earlier, in 1969 - 70, she had told Malcolm Muggeridge, ".....if we didn't have our schools in the slums -- they are nothing, they are just little primary schools where we teach the children to love the school and be clean and so on -- if we didn't have these little schools, those children, those thousands of children, would be left in the streets."⁹

In 1969 -70, Mother Teresa's primary schools catered for not more that 200 (a generous overestimate) in Calcutta -- the figure has remained the same today. Nonetheless, I was prepared to overlook her "thousands of children" as a figure of speech -- saints are allowed to get carried away. But "5000 children" was a calculated lie, especially as the school in Motijheel has less than 100 pupils. I do not think that there is any school in the world which caters to 5000 children from a single site -- Calcutta is of course, extra worldly.

The largest school in India is Calcutta's South Point -- my own alma mater -- which, with 11000 (fee paying) students, was at one time the largest school in the world, but is run from six sites. The largest site at Mandeville Gardens is seven storeys high and caters for 3000 students -- numerically speaking, it is far and away Calcutta's largest school premises.

Biblical connotation or not, I do not think it became a living saint to turn 100 into "over 5000".

During the fortnight following Mother's death, hordes of local and international journalists were scouring Motijheel slum for

stories and reminiscences, for this was after all, the most famous slum in the world -- the one that launched Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Two journalists from Ananda Bazaar Patrika spoke to Paltan Roy, a long term resident of Motijheel. Roy was saddened at Mother's death, but said, "Back in the 1950s there were two schools here for a while, but one of them soon closed down. I have heard that Mother had done so much for the whole world, but our school here has remained exactly the same -- the same single storey structure. Could Mother not have added another floor to it.....?"¹⁰

Mother Teresa frequently said that her nuns "pick[ed] up" people from the streets of Calcutta. If she said it once she said it a thousand times. She said it in her acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize: "We have a home for the dying in Calcutta, where we have picked up more than 36000 people only from the streets of Calcutta, and out of that big number more than 18000 have died a beautiful death. They have just gone home to God." Mother's "big number" is wrong, but more importantly, her basic premise of "picking up" people is entirely false. If the situation demanded, Mother put it more poignantly: "Maybe if I had not picked up that one person dying on the street, I would not have picked up the thousands. We must think Ek, (Bengali for "One"). I think EK, Ek. One, One. That is the way to begin." On another occasion, she said, "They [Western volunteers] pick up all sorts of people for us, but they do it with a great deal of love."¹¹ Perhaps the major source of disappointment for volunteers as they arrive to work with the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta -- even before they have had the chance to start working -- is the realisation that they would not be part of an angelic team that would scour the streets of Calcutta gently scooping up hordes of humanity as they go along. I know of instances when very young volunteers, disregarding official advice, have hired taxis and cruised along streets looking for people they could befriend and bring along to Mother's homes.

The sad truth is, Mother Teresa's organisation does not pick up people from the streets of Calcutta -- no,.... not beggars, not lepers, not destitutes, not the poorest of the poor who she loves so much; they do not even pick up the babies and children of these people. They do possess the resources to remove destitutes from the streets, but they do not utilise them.

I understand this strikes at the heart of the world image of the Missionaries of Charity, for the abiding image of the organisation is that of demure nuns wearing blue bordered sarees stooping to pick up the helpless from the streets of Calcutta.

It is not true that they do not provide a "pick up" service at all for destitutes -- they do in Rome, where most evenings a couple of nuns set out in a van, scouring the streets of Rome for destitutes and prostitutes. They at first befriend these people and gain their trust, before inviting them for a meal or a berth -- usually on a later date. Very noble act indeed -- but does not happen in Calcutta. Once when I was waiting in front of Mother Teresa's large home in Rome's Piazza San Gregorio al Celio, an ambulance arrived bringing in a man from a hospital -- he had nowhere to go after his medical treatment was over, so he gets to stay in Mother Teresa's place; this would not happen in Calcutta, as, unlike in Rome, no arrangement exists between the Missionaries of Charity and hospitals in Calcutta.

Though the Romans' adulation for Mother Teresa is somewhat over the top, I cannot blame them when they say if Mother was doing so much in Rome, how much more must she have been doing in Calcutta. The Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta possess a small fleet of "ambulances", many of them donated by businesses and individuals. These vehicles are painted to appear as ambulances and are fitted with red beacons; they are exempt from traffic regulations. But their sole function is to provide a taxi service for the nuns. In my time, I have never seen an "ambulance" carry a patient or a destitute. Indeed, they do not have the provision to carry a stretcher, for the rails on the floor have been removed. The seats on the sides have been replaced by patterned sofas for the nuns to sit on. On 21st August 1996, I saw an extraordinary sight, even by the standards of the Missionaries of Charity -- here was an ambulance, donated by Federal Express (India), filled with chickens; they were being brought to Mother House for the nuns' annual feast the following day! I have a photograph of this bizarre spectacle. Vegetarians amongst the readers will be happy to know that the chickens had an unexpected extension of their lives, as the feast was cancelled due to Mother taking seriously ill.

I am fully aware that many readers will not be fully convinced about Mother Teresa's nuns not picking up people from the streets of Calcutta; to say that they do not provide this vital function which is central to their image is tantamount to saying that the Pope (or Mother Teresa) is not a Catholic. I have therefore tape recorded numerous telephone conversations with the Missionaries of Charity at their world famous home for the dying at Kalighat in Calcutta. These conversations were all recorded during 1995 and 96. Here is one typical such conversation:-

Me (pretending to be a concerned citizen):

Ota ki Mother Teresar home? ["Is that Mother Teresa's home?" in Bengali]

Nun: Speak in English please, or Hindi.

Me: There is a man [sometimes I changed it to a woman] lying in front of Ashutosh College; he is seriously ill. He is

probably going to die.[Ashutosh College is fairly close to the home -- walking distance in fact]

Nun: Yes, we have beds. Ring the Corporation ambulance -- they will bring him to us.Me: Yes, ... butthe line is busy. I have been trying for some time.

Nun: They are always busy. You just have to keep trying ringing 102.

Me: Can you not send an ambulance? -- he is not very far from you.

Nun: We don't send out ambulances. We use the Corporation ambulances.

Me: Can you not help him out this time?

Nun: Look, I have told you, WE DO NOT HAVE AMBULANCES. (The voice becomes louder and the temper slightly frayed.)

At this juncture the nun would usually disconnect the phone.

There would be those amongst readers who have visited Mother Teresa's home for the dying in Calcutta and will remember the "ambulance" that stands at attention at the front door. Its appearance is like that of a proper emergency vehicle rearing to go to attend to the sick and the dying. It however lies dormant all day until 3-45 p.m., when it briefly comes to life -- it leaves the home for the dying for Mother House with a bevy of nuns; it returns a few hours later with a fresh batch of nuns. Its work for the day is then complete. One of Mother Teresa's more high profile fans, the former California governor Jerry Brown, was a regular traveller in Mother's ambulances during his stint as a volunteer at the home for dying:

"At 6 p.m. daily [previously the ambulance used to leave at 6 rather than at 3 45 p.m.] I would get into an ambulance with half a dozen nuns and some volunteers and ride back to the mother house for a half hour prayer and the saying of the rosary. Mother Teresa was always there [at Mother House]."12 Interested readers may like to procure a copy of The Telegraph, one of the English dailies published from Calcutta, which gives a list of the ambulance services in the city, both free and fee-paying; the Missionaries of Charity does not appear in the list.The more senior of the nuns do not put up with the inconvenience of travelling with others in the ambulance mini bus; they get a taxi. I have numerous photographs of nuns in taxis. A brief taxi ride in Calcutta costs at least Rs 80 -- enough to buy 16 kilos of coarse grain rice. One may think that I am being petty about how the nuns travel; does it really matter if they travel in taxis? -- after all they have precious few luxuries in life. The sight of nuns in taxis would not have irked me at all, had I not read over and over again about the "poor and humble" means of their travels; again and again, authors have produced a Biblical picture like that of Jesus and his apostles trudging through the holy land. The official party line on transport is provided by Chawla in Mother's authorised biography:

"The Sisters travel as the poor do. They usually walk, or if the distance is far, use public transport."13

The misuse of the ambulances is naturally an issue in itself; they could be used to relieve the city's creaking public health service. Instead of demanding that Calcutta Corporation provide her with ambulances, Mother Teresa could bring her resources to the aid of the city's cash strapped civic body. Also, I find it disturbing that vehicles donated by individuals and businesses should be misused in this way. I wonder if Dr Sinha, a Calcutta doctor who donated an ambulance to Mother Teresa in the memory of his parents, is aware that the vehicle has never been used for its intended function.

The image of extreme austerity and "humility" of the nuns that have been portrayed by Mother and her biographers is not quite true. It has been said that the nuns do not know what the inside of a shop looks like, so unworldly are they. Mother's nuns are not infrequently seen shopping in Calcutta's New Market -- a 19th century conglomeration of shops covering 2 sq. km in the city centre. I have got photographs of nuns buying basic cosmetics in New Market. On 27 December 1997, I photographed a couple of nuns buying expensive Cashmere shawls in a shop called Kashmiri Corner (Shop No. G56). I have rung Mother Teresa's home for the dying in Calcutta on numerous occasions,and, very often I have been sternly told by the nun on the other side to speak in English only, as I kept breaking into Bengali and Hindi. In a recorded conversation on the 7th of October 1996, I started off in Bengali, but very soon realised that there was complete blankness on the other side, so said a sentence in Hindi, in reply to which I was sternly told, "Speak in English."It is a well known fact that majority of Mother Teresa (of Calcutta)'s nuns cannot speak or even understand rudiments of Bengali, the language of Calcutta; some of them have a working knowledge of Hindi, the language of north India, and that spoken by the majority of Indians. This is because the vast majority of the nuns (around 70%) are recruited from southern India, which has a large Christian population, and who speak English as a parallel vernacular to their native languages, which could one of Kannada, Tamil, Telugu or

Malayalam. I have never met a "poorest of the poor" in Calcutta who knows even a word of two of English. In India at large, I am sure there are a few Christian people in that category who speak English -- possibly in southern India or Goa -- but they must be very rare indeed; this is because the relatively compact Christian communities in India have enough resources to bolster their weakest members.

This begs the question -- how do Mother Teresa's nuns communicate with the poor in Calcutta? -- They do not. They do not need to, as they do not go out into the streets or the slums to ask about the needs of the poor. But the problem remains within the homes where the needs of the residents have to be met. Here the job is done by English, Italian, German, Spanish, Finnish etc. on one side, and, gestures on the other. The work on the ground in Mother Teresa's homes in Calcutta is done entirely by volunteers from all over the world. And they do it to the best of their abilities, and some do it very well indeed. But many of them have told me of their frustration at not being able to speak to the residents; there are of course, some, who pick up a few words of Hindi or Bengali and then claim to be fluent in "Indian". It is not a requirement of Missionaries of Charity nuns to learn the local language, as their official language is English and a knowledge of English that allows a concrete understanding of the scriptures is deemed sufficient; they also move around a great deal from one corner of the globe to the other, and hence, learning the local lingo would not be worth its while. However, is it not reasonable to expect the Calcutta nuns to have a basic knowledge of Bengali? Is it not reasonable to make it an organisational requirement for those who are stationed in Calcutta to learn some day to day Bengali -- it was, after all, Calcutta which brought such glory to Mother Teresa and her Church. Way back in early 1969, Mother had stipulated that women and men who "were desirous of joining [her order] must be able to acquire knowledge -- especially the language of the people they serve". This was of course at a time when Mother Teresa was a sincere and unknown nun doing her best with limited resources, and before she allowed herself to be sucked up in the publicity blitz. Over the years, there has been no effort to allow the nuns any understanding of the language of the people they are supposed to serve, at least not in Africa or India. One could argue that when Mother Teresa said "language of the people they serve" she meant the universal language of the poor, which is the language of needs, both physical and spiritual. This is possible, as Mother Teresa looked upon the poor as nameless, faceless, speechless entities without individual identities or needs; they are all Jesus Christ in distress -- not symbolically, but literally. This was at the core of Mother Teresa's beliefs. But the bottom line is -- she did not assuage the distress -- not in Calcutta. Mother Teresa herself was not fluent in Bengali! This may seem some kind of a feat after her 70 years in Calcutta, but to me it does not come as a surprise -- she was surrounded by Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Christian southern Indians. She retained an exceptionally prominent Balkan accent, and her Bengali was stilted and basic -- she used stock phrases such as "I will pray for you", "Jesus Christ lives in the leper" etc. She could, if she wished to, get by adequately with her structured, grammatically correct Bengali, but she rarely made the effort. What then, of the claim by scores of her biographers that she had taught the Bengali alphabet to the children of Calcutta's Motijheel slum in her 40s when she was starting out in life as a saviour of the poor? -- this parabolic tale has been told thousands of times. I give a typical illustration from the account of one of Mother Teresa's close journalist friends, Franca Zambonini:

"Her first project was a school, and it is not by chance that she has been a teacher for almost 20 years. She went to Moti Jhil, the poor people's quarter adjacent to the wall of the school and convent in Entally. She gathered some children together in an empty space surrounded by the thatched huts of the poor. There were no desks, no blackboard, no chalk. With the help of a man who was lounging nearby, she cleared the ground of grass and debris, and using a stick, she traced the letters of the Bengali alphabet on the ground. She ended her lesson by reciting a poem and concluded with a prayer. The next day someone brought her a table and a stool"¹⁴

This parable, like the account of Moses receiving the commandments etched on stone, does not hold ground, not least because the inhabitants of the Motijheel slum are mainly Bihari Muslims and do not speak Bengali; their language is Urdu or Hindi. Today, there is a government run primary school in Motijheel, and the language of instruction is Urdu. Even if, for the sake of argument we accept that Mother Teresa of Calcutta did indeed teach the children in Bengali, it is all the more surprising that she never wrote anything in Bengali in the following 45 years of her life. She produced a profuse number of letters and messages in English, mostly hand-written in her familiar scrawl, many of which have been framed by her admirers (including by those in Calcutta) and many others been reproduced in the numerous books written on her. Not one such letter or message is in Bengali. A few years back at an auction in Nottingham, a few words written by Mother Teresa fetched £12015 -- I am prepared to pay substantially more for a similar product written in Bengali.

Mother's "big number", which is the number of people that she had claimed in her Nobel Prize acceptance speech to have "picked up" from the streets of Calcutta, does not stand up to scrutiny. Below is a list of time and place of various claims, and the number on each occasion she claimed to have "picked up":-

Time and Place Number Claimed To Have Been "Picked Up"

December 1979, Oslo 36000

(Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech)

September 1978, Freiburg Cathedral, 3600016

Breisgau, Germany (Speech as Special Guest at the German Catholic Bishops' Conference)

February 1973, Sydney 3600017 (Population & Ecology Conference)

February 1973, Melbourne 2700018

If I am asked what number she had actually picked up from the streets of Calcutta, I am afraid I would have to come up with only an informed guess. Technically of course, the number is nil, as she had never "picked up" anybody. Leaving aside that minor detail, if I am asked to put a figure on how many new admissions her order has to the home for the dying in Calcutta each year, I would come up with something between 500 and 600.

Mother Teresa had frequently said that neglect by the family is the greatest poverty -- "the poverty of love". In her Nobel speech she spoke about it at length: "That poverty comes right in our own home, the neglect to love. Maybe in our own family we have somebody who is feeling lonely, who is feeling sick, who is feeling worried, and these are difficult days for everybody. Are we there? Are we there to receive them?" It would therefore seem strange that she took almost a punitive line against those poor people who sought her help but who had family of any kind, however distant or however poor. In the assessment of the Missionaries of Charity, these people (who may be exceptionally poor and needy) are "not destitute enough".

I have here the essence of three telephone conversations with the home for the dying, which were recorded on 16 June 1995, and 3 and 8 October 1996.

Me: I have a woman with me near Purno Cinema [this happens to be quite close to the home] who is dying. Will you send an ambulance?

Nun: We don't send ambulances. Contact the Corporation. Where is the woman?

Me: She is at my house.

Nun: Why is she at your house?

Me: Well, err....., she is my kind of aunt..... a distant relative in fact.

Nun: SORRY, WE DON'T TAKE FAMILY CASES. SHE CAN'T COME HERE. (The voice becomes loud and irritated)

Me: But she is homeless and poor. I myself am pretty hand to mouth; I don't have the resources to look after her.

Nun: That does not matter. Our rule is, we do NOT take family cases.

Me: But,.....will you not consider?

Nun: Look, I am telling you, we do not take family cases whether she is poor or not.

Me: What if I make a small payment?

Nun: We don't have that system. We can't help you. (At this juncture she would usually disconnect the phone)

This system of not having anything to do with anybody who may be dying or suffering but who may have a putative family member of any kind is one of the founding principles of the Missionaries of Charity. The rule was formulated by Mother herself many years back. Will Mother Teresa's devotees tell me how this rules reconciles with her frequent declaration., "In your homes you have a starving Christ, a naked Christ, a homeless Christ. Are you capable of recognising him in your own homes? Do you realise he is right there in your midst?" Even if any of us lesser mortals could manage to recognise the

suffering Christ in their own homes and would endeavour to bring him to the care of Mother Teresa, who professes to be his ultimate friend, his suffering would only be compounded by rejection.

Many a time when I had rung the home for the dying in Calcutta, the very first question I had been asked was whether I was ringing about a relative. If the nun on the other side had not been satisfied that I was not, she would not continue the conversation any further. In Rome, on the other hand, it is not asked of the destitutes if they are a "family case" -- they would have to be unwanted, and that alone would suffice.

Mother Teresa had been habitually economical with the truth over the last half a century when talking about her operations. Journalists and authors with or without a vested interest have often taken cues from her when creating fantastic tales of charity. But I think when it came to fairy tales, it was Mother who took the wafer. And, fictions of glory others manufactured on her behalf had her blessings -- "Journalists can do the work of God" was one of her favourite sayings. Audrey Constant's book on her life written for children is perhaps the only manuscript she personally corrected and annotated -- the author herself said so in a personal communication: "Sadly I have not yet met her [Mother Teresa]. When I wrote the story (which I did with the help of the Sisters of Charity) Mother Teresa herself amended the manuscript and she wrote in a copy of the book and sent it to me. I will always treasure it."¹⁹ This book makes some bizarre claims about the charitable functions of the Missionaries of Charity including that they have "122 leprosy clinics".²⁰ In Calcutta they have a single leprosy clinic, an open air one, which runs weekly on Convent Road -- average attendance is about 60. The book also describes Calcutta as a city so overwhelmed by lepers that a special church has to be earmarked for them: "They have their own church."²¹ There is no such church. Mother Teresa was immensely proud of her work in the field of leprosy and she certainly showed some sincerity in this area. But her claim "We care for more than 53000 leprosy patients. With the help of the Indian government we are creating rehabilitating centres for them"²² was a wild one. In the whole of India, her leprosaria have about 3000 residents and they look after another 3000 as outpatients. The estimated total number of lepers in Calcutta was 20000 at its peak in the early 1970s. Currently the estimated total is about 10000. When it comes to incredible and impossible claims made by Mother Teresa or by others on her behalf, the one that I find most bemusing appears in a letter written by her to Morarji Desai in 1979, when Mr Desai was (briefly) the Prime Minister of India. In her letter, Mother severely upbraids Mr Desai for not outlawing abortion and then she goes on to say, "In Calcutta alone we have 102 centres where families are taught self control out of love"²³ -- meaning of course, natural family planning. Now, whatever could she mean by "102 centres"? -- I have thought very long and very hard but could not fathom the basis of the claim, especially as she does not have a single such centre. Could she mean she had natural family planning advisers in her homes? -- At one time she did have such advisers, but centres? The outlandishness of this claim is mind-boggling -- after all, she was writing to the Prime Minister, although, admittedly, he was far less of a celebrity than she was. It does not come as a surprise to me, when Mother Teresa's friend, the Calcutta based Father Edward Le Joly, 13 years later, gives the global total of her family planning centres as "69"²⁴. None is mentioned in Calcutta. I may have been bewildered or even amused by Mother Teresa's figure of "102 centres" of natural family planning, but I was disturbed by what she said to an assembly of her "co-workers" (a very large and powerful body of people from all over the world, who do a lot of the fund raising) in London on 13 July, 1977. She said, "We spend Rs 20000 a week just on food for the 59 centres we have in Calcutta."²⁵ This was not just a slip of the tongue, as the "59 centres" recurred, such as in this way: "They [the Sisters] go all over the city (in Calcutta alone we have 59 centres, the home for the dying is only one of them). The Sisters travel everywhere with a rosary in their hands."²⁶ In 1977 Mother Teresa had 4 centres in Calcutta, and presently her order has 5 -- not counting her 3 large nunneries in the city. So what should we make of her "59 centres"? To a sinner like me, it seems to be a large measure of saintly license. Alternatively, it could be described as a symptom of psychosis, or, to use a 19th century term to describe fantastic story telling, pseudologica fantastica. Some would of course, sum it up as a plain whopper. These gross travesties of truth have been treated as pearls of veracity by the world -- understandably so, as they were pronounced by the holiest person of our time. An (almost) saint cannot of course, lie; perhaps we ought to treat these as parables with hidden and symbolic meaning, or, as apocryphal truths. As the whole world knows, Mother Teresa was the ultimate champion of the poor, especially so in Calcutta. She could therefore make some claims on behalf of the poor of Calcutta, such as this one: "We deal with thousands and thousands of very poor people in Calcutta. As you may know, there are over 10 million people in that city, but up now I am not aware of one woman among the very poor who has had an abortion."²⁷ In other words, Mother was harking back to her old theme, "We have always space for another child. Bring me all your unwanted children."

I am bewildered by Mother Teresa's claim that not a single woman amongst "the very poor" in Calcutta had an abortion. In Calcutta, one and half million people live below the poverty line. Even considering that among the poor, a low female: male ratio obtains because of the migrant nature of the population, there would be about half a million women in Calcutta living below the poverty line, and most of these women would be of child bearing age. Did Mother Teresa want us to believe that she catered for four hundred thousand pregnant or potentially pregnant women and their children in Calcutta, when her order does not have a single maternity home or mother and baby unit? I am told that many years back she used to have a small mother and baby facility but certainly none exists currently.

A handful of poor women in Calcutta who are contemplating abortion, are persuaded by the Missionaries of Charity not to

have an abortion and to continue with their pregnancy. These women are looked after, sometimes as in-patients, by the Association of Medical Women in India (AMWI) Hospital, a government run maternity hospital, which happens to be situated very near Mother House. Historically, the management of the AMWI Hospital and the Missionaries of Charity have enjoyed a close relationship. The hospital has thirty beds, and many of them are occupied by "Mother Teresa's women". These women are taken care of until delivery by the hospital, and their new-born babies are taken care of by the Missionaries of Charity -- all of them are adopted. Needless to say, the Missionaries of Charity do not fork out a paisa towards the upkeep of "Mother Teresa's women", although they have been known to send in food from time to time.

When Mother Teresa said that she was not aware of "one woman among the very poor" in Calcutta who has had an abortion, was she deliberately misleading or was she genuinely misinformed? Who can tell, but she had quoted the population of Calcutta correctly, which is surprising, as she was endearingly famous for not having a clue about these matters. I can therefore assume that she would have some idea about the number of "very poor" women in the city, especially as she had always been solely preoccupied with the city's poverty.

I may be wrong, but I feel Mother had knowingly made a misleading statement -- maybe she was too embarrassed to tell the truth that women in Calcutta, including the city's "very poor" women who are supposed by the world at large to be beholden to her, are uniquely nonchalant about abortion. Having made many thousands of women around the world give up abortion, may be she considered it a personal failure that she had been singularly unsuccessful in Calcutta -- but is this the way to deal with perceived failures?

Mother Teresa would have been horrified to know that during my two years as a junior and senior house officer at the Calcutta Medical College Hospitals, I had personally assisted in numerous abortions, and a number of these were on "very poor women". In case I am seen by a section of readers as some kind of unusual demon in the city of Mother Teresa, let me point out that every one of us did it -- including the Muslims -- except the lone Roman Catholic girl.

Having said that, "Bring me all your unwanted children" is the only one amongst Mother's innumerable claims about her operations in Calcutta which has a germ of truth in it. However, the children have got to be completely and utterly unwanted. To illustrate, I shall relate my own recent experience at Mother's Calcutta orphanage, Shishu Bhavan. The entire episode has been captured on video. On 30 August 1996, at around 5 p.m., I found a small commotion in front of Shishu Bhavan's entrance -- a "very poor" woman, Noor Jehan, was wailing at the top of her voice. She had with her, her two children, both girls, the younger one about 10 months and the older about 2 years old. The 10 month old was obviously suffering with diarrhoea and was ill; the 2 year old was miserable and fed up and was lying on the pavement, screaming. I asked Noor Jehan what the matter was. She told me that she had been thrown out of her home (she lived in a slum near the Calcutta docks) by her violent husband the night before and she had arrived at Shishu Bhavan at 10 p.m. hoping to get some help for her children. She had been let in by the night porter and had been allowed to sleep in the courtyard -- they had even given her a sheet for her children. Promptly at 5 a.m. however, she had been thrown out on to the pavement with a cup of tea. From then on, she had been alternately pleading and demanding to be let in, so that the children could have something to eat and somewhere to sleep. Noor Jehan's entreaties for help were not entertained by the nuns -- the door remained firmly shut in her face. The baby's hungry wails were ignored. The local shopkeepers took pity on the woman and gave her some tea and bread; somebody brought some milk for the children. By the time that I arrived at 5 p.m., a small crowd of about a dozen people had gathered and had turned quite hostile towards the nuns. After a lot of loud banging, a nun appeared at the door. I asked her why they would not give the woman and her children some food, and shelter for that night only. The nun explained that they could do that, but only after the mother had handed over the absolute rights of her children to the Missionaries of Charity. In other words, the "form of renunciation" had to be signed, or in this case, had to be imprinted with the impression of Noor Jehan's left thumb. The children would then, in due course, be adopted by a good Catholic family in the West -- the last bit is my own imagination; the nun did not actually say it. Noor Jehan became hysterical at the mention of "signing over" her children, and told the nun what she thought of her, which is untranslatable and (possibly) unprintable. About 7 p.m., Noor Jehan left Shishu Bhavan, disappearing into an uncertain Calcutta night, probably to go back to her violent husband. Noor Jehan left without much bitterness; as a poor woman in India, she was used to doors slamming shut on her face. She knew that the rich and powerful always rejected the poor. She knew that her children's existence was borrowed. She however did not know how the world wowed every time Mother Teresa said, "There is always room for another child in my home."

Stark distortions of facts in Mother Teresa's statements or speeches were evident during the decade 1975 - 85. After the mid 1980s she became subtle in her methods, as by this time, the media were doing most of her work for her. For instance, when she came to London in April 1988, journalists stuck to her like limpets. For two successive nights she took them on walkabouts along London's "cardboard city", especially under Waterloo bridge. She said, "There's much more suffering I believe now, much more loneliness, painful loneliness of people rejected by society who have no one to care for them.

"It hurt me so much to see our people in the terrible cold with just a bit of cardboard around them. I did not know what to say, my eyes were full of tears.

"There were this man lying there protecting himself from the cold with no home and no hope. He looked up and said, "It's a long time since I felt the warmth of a human hand." "28 The media convulsed with devotion.

All very good, but initially Mother Teresa never made it clear to the media what the specific purpose of her London trip was - it was to put pressure on Prime Minister Thatcher and British MPs to support David Alton's bill to reduce the time limit of abortion from 24 to 18 weeks. (Banning abortion completely was not on the agenda) The media possibly did not know that her trip had been funded and sponsored by the anti-abortion lobby.

Her meeting with Margaret Thatcher, and her departure from Westminster in a car driven by Mr Alton (Britain's only "single-issue" anti-abortion MP) obviously could not be kept a secret, but even so she told journalists that she had told Thatcher, "Give me a house, or I will bring them [the homeless] all in the big hall"²⁹, referring to the Great Hall of Westminster. That was all that she told the media after she emerged from the meeting, apart from it having been "wonderful", deviating from her usual "beautiful".

Mr Alton, on the other hand, quite categorically talked about the specific anti-abortion agenda of the meeting, saying, "We know her involvement at a very personal level at this crucial moment will be a decisive factor."³⁰

Now, why did Mother Teresa go to this extent to camouflage the real purpose of her visit? Because she knew that abortion was not burning issue in British society, and, more importantly, that the majority of the British population had always favoured abortion. It was possible that she could have alienated the British public had she gone on her usual virulent anti-abortion rant. The theme of homelessness was a safe emotional string to pull at the time, especially as "cardboard city" was then emerging as a contentious social issue.

Mother Teresa was obviously not always so coy about her anti-abortion stance -- only six years previously, in August 1983, she had gone to Ireland to join the then Irish Prime Minister Charles Haughey, to campaign against abortion. This time there was no midnight walkabouts amongst Dublin's homeless, of whom there was no dearth -- she knew that she did not need to, as the Irish population was overwhelmingly (especially at the time) opposed to abortion.

I may sound sanctimonious, but I think that a person of faith such as Mother Teresa should have greater strength of conviction. I do not think Mother Teresa's hero, St Francis of Assisi would have played to the gallery, rather than declare loudly his own (albeit unpopular) stance on an issue. Never mind St Francis, lesser mortals like David Alton and Cardinal Thomas Winning of Scotland have been doing it. They are, of course, not "living saints".

In the past, Mother Teresa had said, and has been quoted frequently as having said, "We depend solely on providence. We don't accept government grants. We don't accept church donations..."³¹

This is a very incredible statement indeed. 95% or more of the buildings of the Missionaries of Charity have been donated by either governments or by the Catholic church. How she got her first and most famous home from the Corporation of Calcutta has become folklore, quoted numerous times. In her own words:

"And the same day I went to the municipality and asked for a house. I said I only wanted some place where I could bring these people, and the rest I will do myself. The official of the Calcutta Corporation took me to this place, a part of the Kali temple, and he said, "This is the only place I can give you," and I said this is just the ideal place..."

As far as I am aware, in the first few years, Calcutta Corporation used to give her a small sum of money also for each resident treated at the home. The home was therefore called "CORPORATION OF CALCUTTA : NIRMAL HRIDAY", and a small board of the same name (written in both English and Bengali) hung in front of the home until, I believe, the early 1970s. The board appears in the Muggeridge film, and also in photographs of the home that have been reprinted in many books on Mother Teresa, such as in Goree and Barbier's book, which was first published in 1971 (the book is still in print).

Indeed, the board still exists (or will do until such time that this book is published) -- it lies upside down in a small alcove just inside the main door on the left hand side. It is now a collector's item no doubt.

Mother Teresa's home in Dum Dum, near Calcutta airport is also built on land donated by the West Bengal state government -- the site had been a refugee camp (the Missionaries of Charity ran one of the smallest camps at the time) during the Bangladesh war in 1971. After the war ended the government allowed Mother Teresa to keep the land; the building was donated by a Catholic foundation, which announces itself on a marble plaque inside the home. Mother also chipped in with some of the money she got from the John F Kennedy Prize -- hence the name: "Nirmala Kennedy Centre".

Mother's newest home in Calcutta, in Tangra, is however not on government donated land; she rents the land from the government. According to Father Le Joly:

"..the government had given her a very large property for the nominal rent of one rupee [1.5 pence] a year." Now why does she rent, rather than outright own it? In her own words, "It is good that the ownership of the land remains with them, said Mother, always practical-minded, "because if the roads need repairs they will have to do them, as it is their property." "32 All very good, but the biggest building on this property has no charitable functions, but is the residential quarters for trainee Brothers. This is another example how the state of West Bengal and the city of Calcutta are (unknowingly) subsidising the Missionaries of Charity and its religious activities.

When lies are peddled, slip ups will occur, as happened in Muggeridge's book *Something Beautiful for God* -- on page 32, Muggeridge says, "...she has never accepted any government grants in connection with her medical and social work", only to quote her on page 103, "We are trying to build a town of peace on the land that the government gave us some years back, 34 acres of land."

As recently as June 1997, Mother Teresa was asking New York's mayor Giuliani to give her a building so she could extend her AIDS home (a worthy request no doubt), and, she asked for free parking permits for her nuns. She got the latter immediately, and no doubt she will also get the former.

If I gave a list of all the Missionaries of Charity buildings that have been donated by governments and the Church, it will run into a small treatise. Their first building, where Mother House now is, was bought by funds provided by the Archbishop of Calcutta -- it was bought at a knockdown price in 1951 as the Muslim owner was fleeing India in a hurry after the partition of the sub continent:

"The largest figure he [Archbishop] could propose was less than the worth of the land on which the house was built; but miraculously the offer was accepted."33

Two of her other buildings in Calcutta, one by Sealdah railway station, and the other on expensive Park Street, have been donated by the Church. Neither of these buildings has a charitable function. In various other parts of India, such as in Agra, Mother's homes are situated within the compounds of Catholic churches. In the United States, the Church has bent over backwards to give her property. Her home for AIDS patients in New York's exclusive Greenwich village (657 Washington Road) is in a building which used to be a presbytery. In Italy, almost all her operations are run from church premises, and many of these do not have charitable activities. Her nunnery in Cagliari in Sardinia adjoins a church and when I visited the place in December 1996, I found the structure being renovated by the government department that looks after historical buildings.

And yet, I am sure, people will continue to believe "We don't accept government grants; we don't accept church donations...." as this has been uttered by the holiest person of our time. It was a major theme in some of her obituaries.

I just do not know how to react to statements like: "The Sisters go out at night to work, to pick up people from the streets." I can assure you they do not. They retire early -- about 8 p.m., and a major earthquake will not bring them to the doors, at least not in Calcutta. I have numerous recorded telephone conversations where I was trying to have somebody admitted to the home for the dying in Calcutta in the middle of the night, and the Sisters kept insisting that I brought the person at 9 a.m. the following morning. (I am not saying if I turned up at the door with the man, he would have been turned away.) Indeed, until a few years back, the home for the dying did not even have a nun staying there overnight -- the building was left to the mercy of sweepers and local anti socials. Mother agreed to provide two nuns for the night after intense agitation by some volunteers.

I cannot say that Mother Teresa had always been callous and calculating about misrepresenting her charitable activities -- from time to time she becomes extremely agitated, especially before people who are close to her, that she should be represented in such an extreme charitable light. When, for instance, Father Le Joly, first wanted to write a book on her, she erupted, "Do it, do it.

"We are misunderstood, we are misrepresented, we are misreported.

"We are not nurses, we are not doctors, we are not teachers, we are not social workers.

"We are religious, we are religious, we are religious."34

This is not the only time she had made a similar statement. What she had said was the literal truth about her functions and her world view, but unfortunately such is her aura that the world had decided that she said it because she was humble and gracious. Predictably, in Father Joly's book, her message does not come across; he eloquently speaks about her charitable functions.

Mother Teresa herself was the most to blame in the misrepresentation of her activities. She did get these periods of guilt and remorse that she should be cast as such a figure of charity, but she would soon lapse into her usual mode: "If there are poor on the moon, we would go there" etc. She was after all, human.

NOTES

Chapter 2

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CHAPTER 10

THE POLITICS OF MOTHER TERESA

Mother Teresa issued thousands of disclaimers about any knowledge of politics, but even a casual look at her career would make one wonder if she "doth protest too much."

I wish to make it absolutely clear that unlike Christopher Hitchens, I am not judging Mother Teresa from a leftist sanctimonious angle. According to Hitchens, Mother Teresa was bad because she did not share his politics. I am afraid I have no time for such a view, not least because I have no defined politics myself.

On an international level, Mother Teresa's political agenda were narrow -- the "politics" of human reproductive intervention, and, Catholicism. In India however, she often involved herself with less subtle and more earthly politics.

On the issues of abortion, contraception and Catholicism, she found her political allies in a particular spectrum in the political arena, who are most vociferous in the United States. Indeed, her biggest political allies were also in this country, as were her most powerful financial backers. Not all her political friends were Catholics, and some -- like Ronald Reagan -- are sturdy Christians from other denominations. Without actually giving an overt call to the American people to vote Republican, she made it very clear -- especially by meeting Republican hopefuls before elections -- whom she supported. When the Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole was once challenged by his own party over his anti-abortion credentials, he invoked the Teresa card, saying that he had been endorsed by Mother Teresa.

Many of Mother Teresa's political friends were racists and anti-Semites, although she herself was neither. But she showed remarkable expediency in allying herself with anybody who would propagate her causes. This was especially evident in the Indian context, which I shall come to later.

Mother Teresa's international political diktat came from the Vatican. The friendship between Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II was more special than which existed between Reagan and Thatcher. Mother never saw eye to eye with the previous popes, who were all sitting on the fence on the issue of contraception. The current pope, by unequivocally declaring contraception "anti-life" immediately became her darling. He has also ruled out any discussion on the matter of women priests -- indeed, when the Church of England voted in favour of women priests he sent a midnight telegram of protest. Mother Teresa herself remained irrevocably opposed to women priests. Explaining why women should not be priests, she once (in 1984) told an Indian journalist, "Nobody can be a better priest than Our Lady, and she remained only the handmaiden of the Lord." The Hindu journalist misinterpreted "Our Lady" as "our ladies" and sent a message through the international newswires that Mother Teresa approved of women priests. Mother was not amused -- many disclaimers followed, including one that emphasised that she stood by what the pope had said on the issue.¹ In 1983, The National Association of Religious Women in the US -- the nuns' union as it were -- rebelled against the pope on the issue of women priests. It passed a resolution at its annual convention determined to "stand together and not be broken." Now how did the pope deal with the situation -- a simple phone call to Mother Teresa (she was at the Vatican at the time) was all that was necessary.

Mother Teresa frequently stated that the "happiest day of my life is when the Holy Father came to Calcutta." It was upon her insistence that the pope decided to visit this heathen - Marxist city with a virtually non-existent Catholic population. It is noteworthy that Mother's happiest day was not when she got the divine revelation that she must leave her cloisters, or when she founded her order, or her first home, or treated her first resident, but when she managed to bring the head of an alien order into an Indian city.

After Mother Teresa's death, there remain in the small coterie of the pope's closest circle other ultra-orthodox stalwarts like Cardinal O'Connor of New York, Cardinal Sin of Philippines and Cardinal Ratzinger. Ratzinger, who was also close to Mother Teresa, cannot tolerate other religions -- he recently called Buddhism "auto-erotic". He also excommunicated his own priest., Tissa Balasuriya of Sri Lanka, whose crime it was to portray the Virgin Mary in a robust, unorthodox light. (Balasuriya has recently been accepted back in fold after a sustained world wide protest amongst liberal Catholics.) Ratzinger heads the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), the successor to the Holy Office of the Inquisition. In this all male, chauvinistic, women-unfriendly club Mother Teresa was made welcome, because her views were identical to those of the male members. She was their most effective ambassador. Indeed, this supremely feminine wispy nun clad in a saree was regarded an honorary man by the Vatican inner circle.

Every religious order wishes to have footholds in territories ruled over by other faiths, but the Vatican found it difficult, if not impossible, to break into the Muslim and Socialist blocks. Both the Vatican political machinery and Mother know that she was the one person who would be allowed in hostile territory. Any government in the world who would reject her advances would do so at their own peril.

Regimes which would not normally allow the possession of the Bible, had to accede to her request to be let in. She went to Ethiopia, Libya, Tunisia and Iraq. These footholds were ostensibly (in press briefings etc.) for charitable purposes, but in reality they were to fly the lone flag of Catholicism. In Tunis for instance, her order has a convent but no home; in Libya, they would not be allowed to found a home even if they wanted to.

Fidel Castro found it impossible to say no to her, as he knew he would alienate many of his supporters around the world if he did so. Under Vatican diktat, Mother flew in (by private jet) to Havana from Fort Lauderdale, Florida on 9 July 1986 to meet Castro. Castro was obliged to agree to her coming in to Cuba, as saying no to Mother Teresa would have meant committing a public relations suicide. Once the permission had been given, Mother Teresa declared quite frankly that her mission in Cuba would be "involved in spiritual work."

During the 1980s Mother became obsessed with getting into Soviet Union, and wrote Gorbachev many a letter to be let in. One remembers the famous photograph of her addressing a press conference in Moscow on 21 August 1987 beneath a portrait of Karl Marx. Her last obsession was China. She was known to mutter even in the midst of her severe illnesses, "Let us pray that we get into China."

Latin America was a special case for both the pope and Mother. Here the two have taken on the strategy of fighting socialism with Catholicism. Both Mother and John Paul II are especially worried about "Liberation Theology", which they consider a pernicious Marxist corruption of Christian teaching. Mother Teresa had great contempt for do-gooder priests who engage in community work: "I say to all priests: You have not become priests to be social workers."² The Vatican has singled out Nicaragua a special case because of the popularity there of the Sandinistas, and Mother Teresa predictably went in with the cross -- her order's newest establishment in Nicaragua (founded 1997) is a contemplative house, when what this country needs is more charitable institutions.

Because of her association with the pope, Mother Teresa is not universally popular in South America. Many of the priests there treat her with suspicion and contempt. Once in Brazil, Brothers belonging to her order who had come to set up a mission, were asked by local priests to "move on".³

South American priests have not forgiven the pope's treatment of Archbishop Romero of El Salvador who was murdered in 1980 by the country's CIA sponsored death squad while conducting mass. Ten months before he was killed, Romero had travelled to the Vatican to tell the pope about the relentless murder of citizens and Catholic priests who were standing up to the military junta; the same pope, who was bringing the world down with his protestations about human rights violations in Eastern Europe, kept Romero waiting for six weeks before meeting him -- although normally Archbishops have immediate access to the pontiff. When John Paul finally met Romero briefly, he sent him away with advice to mend his ways.

Vatican's support of Haiti's military (and fascist Catholic) dictatorships was equally bizarre, and here too Mother Teresa vociferously echoed the Vatican line. When Haiti's military overthrew the democratically elected (socialist Catholic) priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991, the Vatican was the only state to formally recognise the junta. Even according to John Paul II's hagiographer Tad Szulc:

"Strange as it may sound, there were no Vatican protests against massive human rights violations, including numerous killings, during the junta's rule, and not a single public word of support for Aristide's restoration to office. Subsequently, Aristide applied to the Holy See to allow him to leave priesthood altogether."⁴

Mother Teresa of course, was an old friend of the Haiti militia. She and the notorious Duvalier family -- who used to "rule" with the help of their private army the Tonton Macoutes -- had a tremendous mutual attraction. When she visited Haiti as the guest of the Duvaliers (to receive the Haitian Legion d'Honneur) she heaped paeans on Madame Duvalier who not only had milked millions off the state coffers, but was also an instrument of torture. Mother said to Michele Duvalier, "Madame President, the country vibrates with your life work." She also added that she had never seen "the poor people so familiar with their head of state as they were with her. It was a beautiful lesson for me."

I am aware that Mother's apologists say that she was just being nice to her hosts -- part of diplomatic protocol. After going through a few hundred speeches she made in her lifetime in all possible corners of the earth to all manner of hosts, I am afraid I cannot agree with this line of argument. She hardly ever spoke about her hosts in her speeches, even when accepting awards -- her speeches were usually quite prolix, starting off with the poverty theme (of both body and mind) and then launching into a long diatribe against abortion.

The praise heaped on the Duvaliers was a special certificate that she reserved for the very select, whose life view she endorsed. I can think of only Reagan who received similar endorsement. Even Rome's mayor Rutelli -- he who said he wants to rid the city of gypsies by 2005 -- who she was particularly fond of, had not received such praise.

It is not that Mother Teresa condoned indiscriminate killing by ruthless dictators, but her line was -- if you are doing all right in religion and abortion, then whatever else you might do I shall overlook.

Mother's most useful political role came in the years leading to the demolition of the Socialist block. It is now known (accepted by the Vatican) that the pope worked closely with the CIA to bring about the just death of Eastern Europe. He and Mother worked tirelessly to be let into one Eastern Bloc country after another, years before the Berlin wall came down. Again the sole purpose was political destabilisation, rather than charity -- the case of Mother's East Berlin home is an example. She came to East Berlin in June 1980, and led a procession of 20000 Catholics -- she called it an "outdoor mass", although I cannot remember her having held an outdoor mass anywhere else -- that was not her style. She opened her home in

East Berlin in 1981 at the height of the cold war -- two years after her Nobel even the East German authorities could not say no to her. But within days of the Berlin wall coming down, the home was closed -- when in fact, such a home would have been direly needed to give succour to eastern Berlin with its new and manifold problems.

Ostensibly however, Mother Teresa maintained distance from Cold War politics, even in situations where her intervention (or mere association) would have been greatly beneficial to detainees and dissenters -- when all the winners of the 1979 Nobel Prizes decided to send a letter to Brezhnev protesting at the detention of a young Russian scientist, the lone laureate who would not sign the letter was Mother Teresa -- it would be (look) too "political" before the world. Again, in India she behaved differently. In July 1997, when a development worker called Sanjoy Ghose was kidnapped by separatist guerrillas in Assam, Mother Teresa (to her credit) sent a faxed appeal from the Vatican (she was here on her very last visit) asking the terrorists to release him. (Ghose was later found murdered.)

Mother Teresa was instrumental in trivialising the Cairo Population Conference of 1994. As a sovereign state, the Vatican was invited to participate in the conference, although I find it odd that a "state" without any women and children among its population would be invited at all -- but then, who am I to quibble at such matters -- such is the clout of the Vatican.

The Catholic establishment fought tooth and nail to wreck the conference and succeeded to a large extent. Among the ploys it employed was a personally signed sugary letter addressed to the conference by Mother Teresa -- it contained her usual words: "If a mother can kill her own child, what is there to stop you and me from killing each other?" She also made it quite clear that she had the capacity to look after all the millions of unwanted children in the world: "If there is a child that you don't want or can't feed or educate, give that child to me. I will look after that child." No doubt, most of the non Catholic delegates believed her -- Mother Teresa did not tell lies! After the Conference was over, the Vatican held it to ransom by refusing to sign the common declaration unless the wording was changed -- the pope and Mother Teresa refused to accede that artificial contraception should be available to women under any circumstance, including marriage or even after rape. In 1996, the Vatican cancelled their token \$2500 annual contribution to UNICEF because it was offering the "morning after pill" to women who had been raped in central African refugee camps.

After the Cairo conference came the 1995 Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing. Here Mother Teresa went one step further. She roped in Mercedes Wilson from the right wing ultra orthodox Family of the Americas Foundation to carry her letter (that she had written unsolicited) and read it to the conference. Mother's letter was trenchant, and attacked the concept of the independent woman:

"No jobs, no plans, no possessions, no idea of 'freedom' can take the place of love. ...Yet we can destroy this gift of motherhood, especially by the evil of abortion, but also by thinking that things like jobs or positions are more important"

The letter made headline news around the world -- that the Conference also received a signature and poster campaign from a thousand poor women of Calcutta supporting its work (sent through the Family Planning Association of India) never became known.

Many of Mother's most high profile admirers are independent women, and indeed some of them might even think that career is more important than child rearing -- I hope people like Joan Collins, Julia Roberts, Gina Lollobrigida, Elizabeth Taylor, Elizabeth Hurley -- not to mention thousands of media women from around the world -- realise in what contempt they were held by their heroine.

In her own case, Mother Teresa did not deem herself a career woman, as she was "doing it for Jesus".

I hate to acknowledge this, but I think that when it comes to social issues, even the present pope is much more liberal than Mother Teresa -- the pope, in his letter to the Beijing conference did not mention the "handmaiden" role, but said that men and women are equal but different -- "uni-duality". He also said unequivocally, "Thank you, women who work!"

Mother Teresa's protestations that she did not personally attend international conferences because that would be too political, do not stand up to scrutiny because she was an official Vatican delegate in the 1975 UN International Women's Conference in Mexico City; the Vatican did not however allow her to head the delegation -- that honour went to a man -- Bishop Ramon Torrella Cascante.

So far as abortion is concerned, it was Mother Teresa who changed it from a personal to political issue over the last few decades. Left to themselves, the old men at the Vatican, one suspects, would have been ignored as a bunch of out of touch fogies.

It was astonishing that the world media reported with great deference Mother Teresa's call to the thousands of women in Bangladesh who had become pregnant after being raped by Pakistani soldiers during the country's independence war in 1971, to go on and have the babies. The sole voice critical of her was that of Germaine Greer, who was dismissed as a "loony feminist" by journalists. The barbaric torture unleashed on these captive women was described by Joyce Goldman writing for the American magazine Ms. Goldman wrote about the women being held in barracks and used as "cigarette machines" by soldiers, and one of the latter was quoted as saying, "We used the girls until they died." She described the case of an eight year old girl who was found to be too small for the soldiers' needs and was slit to accommodate them and then raped until she died.

It is interesting that Mother Teresa did not utter a word of condemnation about the soldiers' actions or even a word of sympathy for the women. Her entire obsession was that the raped women if pregnant must not have abortions. She could have extended assistance toward all the tortured and abused women, but instead she chose to offer help -- and that too only until childbirth -- to only those raped women who would have their babies. What is not generally known is how much heed was paid to Mother's frantic calls -- fewer than fifty women actually had the babies, that too for various reasons unconnected with Mother's plea.

Outside the Indian sub-continent, Mother Teresa would move the earth to prevent a single abortion. Indeed, she often travelled the earth to stop an abortion, or for the cause of abortion. Back in May 1981 she heard that her friend the anti-abortion Republican senator Mark Hatfield had voted against the Hyde amendment which sought to prohibit federal funding of abortion for poor women who had been subject to rape or incest -- he did it for a technical reason, but that did not stop Mother Teresa to travel to Capitol Hill to quiz her friend for two hours (in the company of two militant anti-abortion activists) about what he was up to -- "She made a very heavy pitch on the abortion question," he said. The anti-abortion lobby made Hatfield's life so miserable that he was forced to admit, "They have just as mean, uncompromising, unloving spirit as anyone I've faced on Vietnam or Panama Canal or any other controversial issue. You hear about the power of the National Rifle Association and its communications system in reaching Congress,... well let me tell you, they're pikers compared to these outfits." Although Mother Teresa was at the helm of this "mean, uncompromising, unloving" pack, Hatfield spared her, saying she was a naive old lady who was being manipulated -- she was always likewise spared whatever she did. Later, she met Hatfield in the company of President Reagan (who was in favour of the Hyde amendment) and made it very clear that letting the side down (for whatever reason) was not something she took to very kindly. If this is not active politics, I would like to know what is.

Mother Teresa had actively campaigned against Geraldine Ferraro (a Catholic who did not have an absolute objection to abortion) during the US presidential elections of 1984, when she was the Democratic vice-presidential nominee. On 15 October, New York's Cardinal O'Connor launched a bitter public attack against Ferraro at a meeting in Cathedral High School -- Mother Teresa suddenly "appeared unannounced" on the dais and stood by O'Connor throughout the length of the speech. Three days later Ferraro was suddenly told that she was not welcome at the Catholic Political Dinner Meeting that she was supposed to speak at -- it is well known that Mother Teresa had been influential in making the organisers take that decision. At a later date, O'Connor had the honesty to admit that his critics found him "meddle in politics to much." (CNS sep 98). Such a statement would never pass Mother Teresa's lips -- honesty was not one of her fortes.

In February 1994, Mother Teresa especially came to Washington D.C. to file an amicus curiae in favour of Alexander Loce (see also Chapter 1) who was being prosecuted by the state of New Jersey for vandalising his former girl-friend's abortion clinic. Her letter to the Supreme Court was in her usual vein -- long winded and (humbly) describing all the work she was doing with poor. I believe an amicus curiae can be filed in the US only by an American citizen, so she said, "Like that [unborn] child, I can be considered an outsider. I am not an American citizen. ...In many senses I know what it is like to be without a country. I also know what is like to be an adopted citizen of other lands."

She went on to heap praise on US civilisation ("..in a uniquely courageous and inspiring way, America has kept faith." etc.) before coming to the ad rem; she said, "Yet, there has been one infinitely tragic and destructive departure from those American ideals in recent memory. It was this court's own decision in Roe v. Wade (1973) to exclude the unborn child from the human family. You ruled that a mother, in consultation with her doctor, has broad discretion, guaranteed against infringement by the United States Constitution, to choose to destroy her unborn child. ...America needs no word from me to see how your decision in Roe v. Wade has deformed a great nation.

"The Constitutional Court of the Federal Republic of Germany recently ruled that 'the unborn child is entitled to its rights to life independently of acceptance by its mother;..' Americans...must weep that your own government, at present, seems blind to this truth."

I think people will agree with me that these are not the words of an other-worldly nun.

Eight months prior to *Loce v. New Jersey* (I am afraid I am not aware of the outcome of the case) Mother Teresa had found herself in Dublin stoking up the already boiling political passions over an abortion that has gone into Irish history -- that of the 14 year old girl who is known as "X", who fell pregnant as result of rape by an older married man. In June 1993 Mother Teresa was interviewed on the 98 FM radio talk show hosted by the popular Father Michael Cleary where she ruled out abortion for "X" saying, "Abortion can never be necessary because it is pure killing."⁷ Father Cleary (who was later discovered to have had a wife for 26 years and two grown up children), and who maintained that the "X" case was a conspiracy by liberals to change the law, asked Mother if she would ever accept abortion in cases of rape. "No, never,"⁸ she replied. As it happened, "X" had had a miscarriage by then.

Ireland had had a abortion referendum in November 1992, which, despite non-stop prayers by Mother Teresa, gave women the right to travel to another country for abortion. In 1990, she had lost another marathon prayer battle (backed up by representations to Prime Minister Thatcher and various MPs) to have the UK abortion bill quashed. I hope these circumstances -- central to Mother's life view and being -- are brought up during beatification, when miracles will be invoked -- such as the one when she was praying for funds for a property in London, only to open a purse and find the exact amount in cash!

Mother Teresa seemed to have felt some kind of obligation to interfere in Ireland's social and political processes. Before the 1995 referendum on divorce, she wrote a letter addressing the Irish nation asking the population to vote against legalising divorce. The pope also issued a similar statement. This led the Irish columnist Gene Kerrigan to remark that "people who keep silent when children are raped by priests are now full of chat."⁹ Mother was also full of prayers, which failed again -- the "Yes" vote won.

Some people have always been more equal in the eyes of the Vatican top brass -- it was not therefore surprising when Mother Teresa made an exception when it came to Princess Diana's divorce. Commenting on her marriage, she told an American journalist, "It is good that it [the royal marriage] is over.I know I should be preaching family love and unity, but in their case....."¹⁰ She would of course tell millions of ordinary women to live in a violent and abusive marriage. Similarly the Vatican has always been only too keen to allow the Monaco royal family to divorce, when ordinary Catholics are denied annulments.

Mother was confronted on the issue of paedophile priests by the Dublin journalist Kathy Ward. She replied, "Pray, pray and make sacrifices for those who are going through such terrible temptations."¹¹ It is not that she was against custodial sentencing per se: she once said in New Orleans that she wanted to open a special jail for doctors who performed abortions.¹²

Contraception was another political battleground for Mother, although she kept utterly quiet on the issue in India. In a fairly recent television address to the American nation, she declared, "Once that living love is destroyed by contraception, abortion follows very easily.let us never bring in the worst problem of all, that is to destroy love. This is what happens when we tell people to practise contraception and abortion."¹³ In her eyes, abortion and contraception were two sides of the same coin -- I wish her millions of contraception loving devotees the world over realise that.

Mother Teresa was silent on contraception in India because here opposition to contraception is considered akin to terrorism against the state, by governments of all political persuasions. Mother once got slightly unstuck in Mexico on the grievous charge of violation of national constitutional principles -- the newspaper *Diario del Pacifico* charged her with contempt of the country's constitution when she opposed birth control at a conference in Acapulco in August 1982 -- she quickly left for Honduras leaving the controversy behind her.

It is not entirely true that Mother Teresa said nothing against contraception in India. Unable to take a moral stance on the issue, she part-funded a "medical" study on natural contraception to prove her case. Incidentally this (substantially expensive) study is the only medical or paramedical activity that she ever contributed to. There are enormous opportunities for somebody with her level of funds to contribute to medical research in Calcutta, because here lies the School of Tropical Medicine, an internationally renowned centre for tropical diseases -- the malaria parasite was discovered here, earning Ronald Ross a Nobel Prize in 1902. The "Tropical School" undertakes original research in tuberculosis, leprosy, malaria (a real scourge of India), malnutrition, specific health problems of child labourers -- all of which were supposed to be projects dear to Mother Teresa's heart, but none of which she ever assisted in any way.

Mother's natural contraception study, entitled "Symptothermia Vis a Vis Fertility Control" was headed by her own gynaecologist Professor Ajay Ghosh. They "studied" 17000 slum women of Calcutta and showed that natural contraception, with the help of a thermometer, a temperature chart and an ability to check the character of cervical mucus, worked.

The study is statistically heavily flawed, but eventually it was published in the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of India (1982; 32: 443-447), with which Professor Ghosh has close links. It is now quoted ad nauseum by the Catholic anti contraception brigade as a valid study. I know it for a fact that many of the women in the study who became pregnant went on to have abortions.

Professor Ghosh, who used to perform abortions with gusto in the past, has now given them up. He is probably the only gynaecologist in Calcutta not to do them -- Mother's single success story in Calcutta.

Mother Teresa was convinced that natural contraception should be the norm rather than a matter of choice. She talked about it at length in her Nobel speech:

"And in Calcutta alone in six years -- it is all in Calcutta -- we have had 61,273 babies less from the families who would have had, but because they practise this natural way of abstaining, of self-control, out of love for each other. We teach them the temperature metre which is very beautiful, very simple, and our poor people understand. And do you know what they have told me? Our family is healthy, our family is united, and we can have a baby whenever we want. So clear -- those people in the street, those beggars -- .."

Well, beautiful it may be, but natural contraception is anything but simple. Just imagine the scene -- a beggar woman lying on a pavement in Calcutta in her shack ("walls" made of gunny drapings) getting up in the morning -- with 16 wheeler trucks thundering by, filling her "room" with diesel smoke -- then coyly checking if her cervical mucus has turned "slippery mucoid", then picking up the fertility thermometer from the pavement to check her BBT (basal body temperature), and finally neatly recording the temperature on a beautiful chart pinned on to a gunny "wall".

I do not think it would an exaggeration to say that a good few middle class women would find natural contraception techniques a bit trying. But of course, Mother Teresa's "beautiful poor" would anything for her. No matter, less than 2% of female beggars and less than 25% of female slum dwellers have any reading skills at all -- but I doubt if any would be able to read small thermometer calibrations in English and chart them on a graph. No matter, fevers, especially malaria, are rife in this population and would make BBT somewhat untenable.

And yet, when Mother Teresa -- who washed hypodermic needles in cold water before re-using them for the umpteenth time and who supplied one bottle for twenty babies in her homes -- told her "beautiful" tale of natural contraception to the world, everybody believed her. A saint does not tell lies -- if she says she supplies thousands of fertility thermometers to Calcutta's slum women, then supply them she must! It is scientifically impossible to calculate exactly how many less children were born to certain number of couples practising a certain method of birth control -- one only hazard a very rough guess. In that context Mother's Nobel Prize figure of "61,273" is particularly disingenuous, and was quoted to mislead the world -- yes, deliberately.

Empowered women, who have everything going for them, who are in an equal relationship, who are able to say no to their partners -- natural contraception is for them (maybe). It is bizarre to propose such a method to slum women -- perhaps this is another example of how out of touch Mother Teresa was with Indian slum women.

A (very articulate) Irish Catholic woman called Maire Mullarney once wrote in a Catholic weekly¹⁴ how she finished up with 11 children through practising natural contraception. "The greatest damage was done by the authorities who persistently linked abortion and contraception," she wrote. She implicated the popes in the suffering caused to women through this method. However Mother Teresa is never included in the "authorities", although she had been the most high profile person in the world who used to propound that such a link irrevocably existed; it was partly due to her imprimatur that the Vatican got its courage to go out and tell the world of the virtues of natural family planning.

Regarding her statistic of how many less babies were born to the poor in Calcutta, Mark Tully, the BBC's former India correspondent -- and one of her admirers -- has remarked, "It is not known how the figure was arrived at."¹⁵ Nonetheless, the figure doubled itself eighteen months later, when Mother claimed in Washington D.C. that her "beautiful method" had resulted in 134,000 fewer babies in Calcutta in seven years.¹⁶

Having given up on contraception and abortion in India, Mother chose instead to concentrate her political brief on Catholicism. Although her comment "I help Hindus to become better Hindus, Muslims better Muslims ...[etc.]" is regularly vaunted by the media, it is well known to those close to her that she had an (entirely understandable) sense of unfulfilment owing to the utter lack of impact Catholicism had made in India during her lifetime. Once Edward Desmond from Time¹⁷ magazine asked her, "Friends of yours say you are disappointed that your work has not brought about more conversions in this great Hindu nation." Her reply had not been very convincing. Desmond went on to ask, "And should they [Hindus] love

Jesus too?", to which she replied, "Naturally, if they want peace, if they want joy, let them find Jesus."

Mother Teresa took a keen interest in the complex political processes of India; she allied herself with the political party which she felt was friendliest to Catholicism. This she felt was the Congress party, of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. Mother had a personal relationship with Indira Gandhi, and her ties with the Gandhi family became stronger after Mrs Gandhi's son Rajiv married the Italian Catholic Sonia. Even today, in all of Mother's Delhi homes large portraits of Indira and Rajiv (former Prime Ministers both) hang beside her own picture.

In India's vibrant democratic history the darkest period was between 1975 and 1977, when Mrs Gandhi imposed a "State of Emergency" on the country after being judicially indicted of election malpractices. The period of Emergency in India is one difficult to describe to an outsider -- from a politically open society, India overnight became a country of midnight (and midday) knocks on the door. Political censorship was imposed on newspapers, television, radio and even commercial producers of films and entertainment -- when Kishore Kumar, India's most popular singer refused to sing at a fund raising party for Congress, Mrs Gandhi's son Sanjay issued terse notes to all the record companies (including HMV India) to scrap all his contracts -- as a result he was banned from all broadcasting systems, public or private, and shops had to take his records off their shelves.

A draconian new law called the Maintenance of Internal Security Act was passed, under which anybody could be imprisoned (without a reason being given) and detained indefinitely. The jails were at bursting point with political prisoners, among them Mahatma Gandhi's one time associate Jayaprakash Narayan, a leader of the masses and considered above party politics -- it was later revealed that he had been slow poisoned in prison by arsenic, causing his kidneys to fail.

The real ruler of India during Emergency was Mrs Gandhi's late younger son Sanjay, who did not hold any office of the state, but issued all the orders. Sanjay had a passion for population control and issued monthly "sterilisation targets". As a consequence, slum dwellers (mostly men) were rounded up and forcibly sterilised -- among them many young men who had never been married.

Sanjay also cared deeply for Delhi's beautification, and one fateful night bulldozers arrived at the Turkman Gate slums, where the "poorest of the poor" among Delhi's Muslims had lived for generations. By morning, Turkman Gate became a clean expanse.

The people deployed to keep order during Emergency were mainly black shirt criminals from Sanjay's "Youth Wing", assisted by uniformed officers from the cryptically named Research and Analysis Wing. A group of ten people milling at a street corner was considered a "political assembly" and arrested. Disappearances became common.

It was moving to see that Mother Teresa considered her friendship with Mrs Gandhi precious enough to overlook the small incident at the Turkman slums, and the ongoing programmes of forced sterilisation. Issuing an approval certificate for the state of Emergency, she said, "People are happier. There are more jobs. There are no strikes."18

I do not think it is good enough to say that Mother was not aware of the goings on during Emergency because of censorship - the Catholic establishment was well aware of the forced sterilisation activities. She was actually criticised by the Catholic press for her comments, even in the United States, where a long leader in American Catholic Church criticised her for ignoring human rights abuses.

When Mrs Gandhi was overthrown and all the horrific details of Emergency were exposed, Mother Teresa did not withdraw her comments. Indeed her friendship with the Gandhi family went from strength to strength. One of the key players in Mother's political activities in India, especially in her dealings with the Gandhi dynasty, is Navin Chawla, one of her two official biographers. Chawla is a top ranking civil servant in Delhi who is well known to smooth her ways through Indian bureaucracy. During the Emergency, Chawla was especially close to the tyrant Sanjay Gandhi -- after Sanjay's death, he quickly switched his allegiance to Rajiv and Sonia (the brothers had not been the best of friends).

It is well known that Mother Teresa disliked Morarji Desai, who became Prime Minister of India in 1977 following Indira Gandhi's defeat. Her letter to Desai protesting at the curbing of certain benefits that Christian missionaries enjoyed is much flaunted by Catholic circles as an example of her courage -- and indeed courageous it was, being uncharacteristically straightforward and only lightly charged with her usual plangent echolalia. But it contained a passage which betrays a degree of viciousness hitherto unknown; addressing the 82 year old Desai, Mother said, "Are you not afraid of God?.....Mr Desai, you are so close to meeting God face to face. I wonder what answer you will give....."

It is widely known that Desai was hurt by her comments. He however went on to live another 17 years and died in 1995, aged 99.

In the last few years, Mother Teresa successfully avoided direct political involvement in India, save for the one episode over quotas for dalit Christians. These are Christians who are genealogically lower caste Hindus, and are demanding inclusion in the positive discrimination quotas that lower caste Hindus are entitled to -- these quotas apply to all jobs and college and university places, and in some areas 80% of places may be reserved. The Indian government said that Christians by definition are casteless and refused to accede to the dalit Christians' demands.

During November 1995, all Christian denominations in India organised massive protests over the dalit issue, urging the government to rethink its decision on "lower caste Christians". They were delighted when Mother Teresa agreed to join in, as it raised the profile from a national to an international level. On 18 November, Mother Teresa participated in a dharna (sit-in) and fast in Delhi demanding reservations for dalit Christians.

Then suddenly criticism of her actions started flooding in, especially from the Indian media, who are normally sympathetic to her (a lot of resentment exists in India over reservations). Even her dear old Calcutta Statesman, published a sarcastic cartoon, asking why she should be spared when Muslims are called communal and divisive if they ask for quotas for extremely poor members of their community. Naturally, the Hindu party the BJP, was quite scathing. Sushma Swaraj of the BJP, calling her sit-in "a pitiful event" said, "Mother Teresa, instead of fighting this evil practice [of caste] wants to introduce the evil in her own religion. Her actions will do no good to the society, the country or to her own religion."

Mother Teresa, who moved quite expertly in response to public and media opinion in India, now did an utter volte-face. She took the unprecedented step of calling a press conference (on 24 November) at Mother House in Calcutta and denied all knowledge of the sit-in! She said she thought it was merely a prayer session. Her denial was emphatic: "I have never participated in any sit-in demonstrations or demanded reservations for dalit Christians."¹⁹ A professional politician could not have done it better.

The Christian community in India widely accused her of a "let down". Asked to comment on her denial, Bishop Vincent Consessao said, "When we invited her, we gave her the entire programme but it probably did not register in her mind."²⁰

Why Mother suddenly and so dramatically ran away from the dalit issue is open to conjecture; one reason could be that she did not want to embarrass the Congress party, which was in power in India at the time. I personally think Mother Teresa would have enhanced her reputation in India (amongst both Christians and non Christians) if she had shown integrity over the issue rather than take a U-turn -- but then, she was never entirely comfortable in her adopted country.

Sunanda K Datta-Ray, formerly editor of the Calcutta Statesman and editorial adviser to the Singapore Straits Times, who had known and dealt with Mother Teresa (purely in a journalistic capacity) for years, has always strongly contested Mother Teresa's naive and innocent image when it comes to matters of intrigue. He has told of an incident when he was asked to interview Mother Teresa for a television programme. On the eve of the interview he did a preparatory visit and asked Mother some ever so slightly uncomfortable questions, to do with theological issues -- the next day he discovered that he had been removed as the interviewer at Mother's own insistence, and Desmond Doig (her biographer and sycophant) had been instated instead -- "it is Desmond or no interview," Mother had told Doordarshan (Indian television).

Datta-Ray also talks of an incident that happened during a flight from Bangkok to Calcutta where Mother came down from the first class cabin to ask him if he could help get her nuns "white passports" -- these are passports that are given to middle ranking Indian officials to make travel easier for them.

Another anecdote Datta-Ray tells is one when the head of the British Council in Calcutta took a titled Englishwoman to see Mother Teresa, but mentioned her title only in passing. Six months later, Mother telephoned the aristocrat in London from Rome, calling her by her correct title, and asked her if she could use one of her houses in a up-market area of London to put up some of her nuns.

Datta-Ray describes Mother Teresa as anything but publicity shy. During his long tenure as the editor of The Statesman, Mother Teresa used to send him regular messengers (usually a pair of her nuns) with little notes about some programme or the other she was embarking on. Datta-Ray also told me of an incident recounted to him by the (late) Subroto Basak, who used to represent Associated Press in Calcutta. One day, Calcutta's local journalists went to see Mother Teresa about some topical issue, but were told at the door that no meeting would be possible because she had suddenly taken ill. When Basak sent in his AP card, he was immediately ushered in.²¹

It may come a surprise to people to know that Mother Teresa used to vote in elections in India in the 1960s and 70s. As the main opponents in West Bengal have always been the Marxists and Congress, it is not difficult to surmise who she voted for. Indeed, her official biographer Egan describes an incident where a Marxist in Calcutta, on noting the indelible ink mark on her finger (that is stamped on voters in India on the casting of the vote to prevent impersonation) had remarked that perhaps, as a saintly nun, she should be above party politics.²²

Latterly she herself had stopped voting, but made it absolutely sure that each and every one of her nuns and novices went out to cast her vote on election day. As recently as 1991, she was writing to West Bengal's Chief Election Commissioner to protest at the exclusion of a number of her nuns in Calcutta's electoral register.²³ I was somewhat surprised to see the Catholic weekly *The Universe*²⁴ print a photograph (with the caption "Nun So Certain"!) of a long crocodile of Mother Teresa's nuns patiently waiting to vote outside an election booth in Calcutta during the Indian elections of March 1998.

It is not that the nuns are given a free choice in vote -- like in every other matter within the closed and hierarchical world of the Missionaries of Charity, instructions came from the top as to who to vote for.

I have no problems with Mother Teresa, an Indian citizen, voting in an Indian election. There is nothing unusual about nuns voting -- in countries like Ireland or Italy it is a familiar sight to find long queues of nuns patiently waiting outside polling stations.

But Mother Teresa (and the media) should have spared us the wide-eyed bewilderment whenever the word "politics" was mentioned. I am afraid the evidence does not match the affectation.

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MOTHER TERESA : WHERE ARE HER MILLIONS?

by

Walter Wuellenweber

The Angel of the poor died a year ago. Donations still flow in to her Missionaries of Charity like to no other cause. But the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize vowed to live in poverty. What then, happened to so much money?

If there is a heaven, then she is surely there: Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu from Skopje in Macedonia, better known as Mother Teresa. She came to Calcutta on the 6th of January 1929 as an 18 year old sister of the Order of Loreto. 68 years later luminaries from all over the world assembled in Calcutta in order to honour her with a state funeral. In these 68 years she had founded the most successful order in the history of the Catholic church, received the Nobel Peace Prize and became the most famous Catholic of our time.

Are doubts permitted, regarding this "monument"?

In Calcutta, one meets many doubters.

For example, Samity, a man of around 30 with no teeth, who lives in the slums. He is one of the "poorest of the poor" to whom Mother Teresa was supposed to have dedicated her life. With a plastic bag in hand, he stands in a kilometre long queue in Calcutta's Park Street. The poor wait patiently, until the helpers shovel some rice and lentils into their bags. But Samity does not get his grub from Mother Teresa's institution, but instead from the Assembly of God, an American charity, that serves 18000 meals here daily.

"Mother Teresa?" says Samity, "We have not received anything from her here. Ask in the slums -- who has received anything from the sisters here -- you will find hardly anybody."

Pannalal Manik also has doubts. "I don't understand why you educated people in the West have made this woman into such a goddess!" Manik was born some 56 years ago in the Rambagan slum, which at about 300 years of age, is Calcutta's oldest. What Manik has achieved, can well be called a "miracle". He has built 16 apartment buildings in the midst of the slum -- living space for 4000 people. Money for the building materials -- equivalent to DM 10000 per apartment building -- was begged for by Manik from the Ramakrishna Mission [a Indian/Hindu charity], the largest assistance-organisation in India. The slum-dwellers built the buildings themselves. It has become a model for the whole of India. But what about Mother Teresa? "I went to her place 3 times," said Manik. "She did not even listen to what I had to say. Everyone on earth knows that the sisters have a lot of money. But no one knows what they do with it!"

In Calcutta there are about 200 charitable organisations helping the poor. Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity are not amongst the biggest helpers: that contradicts the image of the organisation. The name "Mother Teresa" was and is tied to the city of Calcutta. All over the world admirers and supporters of the Nobel Prize winner believe that it must be there that her organisation is particularly active in the fight against poverty. "All lies," says Aroup Chatterjee. The doctor who lives in London was born and brought up in Calcutta. Chatterjee who has been working for years on a book on the myth of Mother Teresa, speaks to the poor in the slums of Calcutta, or combs through the speeches of the Nobel Prize winner. "No matter where I search, I only find lies. For example the lies about schools. Mother T has often stated that she runs a school in Calcutta for more than 5000 children. 5000 children! -- that would have to be a huge school, one of the biggest in all of India. But where is this school? I have never found it, nor do I know anybody who has seen it!" says Chatterjee.

Compared to other charitable organisations in Calcutta, the nuns with the 3 blue stripes are ahead in two respects: they are world famous, and, they have the most money. But how much exactly, has always been a closely guarded secret of the organisation. Indian law requires charitable organisations to publish their accounts. Mother Teresa's organisation ignores this prescription! It is not known if the Finance Ministry in Delhi who would be responsible for charities' accounts, have the actual figures. Upon STERN's inquiry, the Ministry informed us that this particular query was listed as "classified information".

The organisation has 6 branches in Germany. Here too financial matters are a strict secret. "It's nobody's business how much money we have, I mean to say how little we have," says Sr Pauline, head of the German operations. Maria Tingelhoff had handled the organisation's book-keeping on a voluntary basis until 1981. "We did see 3 million a year," she remembers. But Mother Teresa never quite trusted the worldly helpers completely. So the sisters took over the financial management themselves in 1981. "Of course I don't know how much money went in, in the years after that, but it must be many multiples of 3 million," estimates Mrs Tingelhoff. "Mother was always very pleased with the Germans."

Perhaps the most lucrative branch of the organisation is the "Holy Ghost" House in New York's Bronx. Susan Shields served the order there for a total of nine and a half years as Sister Virgin. "We spent a large part of each day writing thank you letters and processing cheques," she says. "Every night around 25 sisters had to spend many hours preparing receipts for donations. It was a conveyor belt process: some sisters typed, others made lists of the amounts, stuffed letters into envelopes, or sorted the cheques. Values were between \$5 and \$100,000. Donors often dropped their envelopes filled with money at the door. Before Christmas the flow of donations was often totally out of control. The postman brought sackfuls of letters -- cheques for \$50,000 were no rarity." Sister Virgin remembers that one year there was about \$50 million in a New York bank account. \$50 million in one year! -- in a predominantly non-Catholic country. How much then, were they collecting in Europe or the world? It is estimated that worldwide they collected at least \$100 million per year -- and that has been going on for many many years.

While the income is utter secret, the expenditures are equally mysterious. The order is hardly able to spend large amounts. The establishments supported by the nuns are so tiny (inconspicuous) that even the locals have difficulty tracing them. Often "Mother Teresa's Home" means just a living accommodation for the sisters, with no charitable function. Conspicuous or useful assistance cannot be provided there. The order often receives huge donations in kind, in addition to the monetary munificence. Boxes of medicines land at Indian airports. Donated foograins and powdered milk arrive in containers at Calcutta port. Clothing donations from Europe and the US arrive in unimaginable quantities. On Calcutta's pavement stalls, traders can be seen selling used western labels for 25 rupees (DM1) apiece. Numerous traders call out, "Shirts from Mother, trousers from Mother."

Unlike with other charities, the Missionaries of Charity spend very little on their own management, since the organisation is run at practically no cost. The approximately 4000 sisters in 150 countries form the most treasured workforce of all global multi-million dollar operations. Having taken vows of poverty and obedience, they work for no pay, supported by 300,000 good citizen helpers.

By their own admission, Mother Teresa's organisation has about 500 locations worldwide. But for purchase or rent of property, the sisters do not need to touch their bank accounts. "Mother always said, we don't spend for that," remembers Sunita Kumar, one of the richest women in Calcutta and supposedly Mother T's closest associate outside the order. "If Mother needed a house, she went straight to the owner, whether it was the State or a private person, and worked on him for so long

that she eventually got it free."

Her method was also successful in Germany. In March the "Bethlehem House" was dedicated in Hamburg, a shelter for homeless women. Four sisters work there. The architecturally conspicuous building cost DM2.5 million. The fortunes of the order have not spent a penny toward the amount. The money was collected by a Christian association in Hamburg. With Mother T as figure head it was naturally short work to collect the millions.

Mother Teresa saw it as as her God given right never to have to pay anyone for anything. Once she bought food for her nuns in London for GB£500. When she was told she'd have to pay at the till, the diminutive seemingly harmless nun showed her Balkan temper and shouted, "This is for the work of God!" She raged so loud and so long that eventually a businessman waiting in the queue paid up on her behalf.

England is one of the few countries where the sisters allow the authorities at least a quick glance at their accounts. Here the order took in DM5.3 million in 1991. And expenses (including charitable expenses)? -- around DM360,000 or less than 7%. Whatever happened to the rest of the money? Sister Teresina, the head for England, defensively states, "Sorry we can't tell you that." Every year, according to the returns filed with the British authorities, a portion of the fortune is sent to accounts of the order in other countries. How much to which countries is not declared. One of the recipients is however, always Rome. The fortune of this famous charitable organistaion is controlled from Rome, -- from an account at the Vatican bank. And what happens with monies at the Vatican Bank is so secret that even God is not allowed to know about it. One thing is sure however -- Mother's outlets in poor countries do not benefit from largesse of the rich countries. The official biographer of Mother Teresa, Kathryn Spink, writes, "As soon as the sisters became established in a certain country, Mother normally withdrew all financial support." Branches in very needy countries therefore only receive start-up assistance. Most of the money remains in the Vatican Bank.

STERN asked the Missionaries of Charity numerous times for information about location of the donations, both in writing as well in person during a visit to Mother Teresa's house in Calcutta. The order has never answered.

"You should visit the House in New York, then you'll understand what happens to donations," says says Eva Kolodziej. The Polish lady was a Missionary of Charity for 5 years. "In the cellar of the homeless shelter there are valuable books, jewellery and gold. What happens to them? -- The sisters receive them with smiles, and keep them. Most of these lie around uselessly forever."

The millions that are donated to the order have a similar fate. Susan Shields (formerly Sr Virgin) says, "The money was not misused, but the largest part of it wasn't used at all. When there was a famine in Ethiopia, many cheques arrived marked 'for the hungry in Ethiopia'. Once I asked the sister who was in charge of accounts if I should add up all those very many cheques and send the total to Ethiopia. The sister answered, 'No, we don't send money to Africa.' But I continued to make receipts to the donors, 'For Ethiopia'."

By the accounts of former sisters, the finances are a one way street. "We were always told, the fact that we receive more than other orders, shows that God loves Mother Teresa more. ," says Susan Shields. Donations and hefty bank balances are a measure of God's love. Taking is holier than giving.

The sufferers are the ones for whom the donations were originally intended. The nuns run a soup kitchen in New York's Bronx. Or, to put in straight, they have it run for them, since volunteer helpers organise everything, including food. The sisters might distribute it. Once, Shields remembers, the helpers made an organisational mistake, so they could not deliver bread with their meals. The sisters asked their superior if they could buy the bread. "Out of the question -- we are a poor organisation." came the reply. "In the end, the poor did not get their bread," says Shields. Shields has experienced countless such incidents. One girl from communion class did not appear for her first communion because her mothet could not buy her a white communion dress. So she had to wait another year; but as that particular Sunday approached, she had the same problem again. Shields (Sr Virgin) asked the superior if the order could buy the girl a white dress. Again, she was turned down -- gruffly. The girl never had her first communion.

Because of the tightfistedness of the rich order, the "poorest of the poor" -- orphans in India -- suffer the most. The nuns run a home in Delhi, in which the orphans wait to be adopted by, in many cases, by foreigners. As usual, the costs of running the home are borne not by the order, but by the future adoptive parents. In Germany the organisation called Pro Infante has the monopoly of mediation role for these children. The head, Carla Wiedeking, a personal friend of Mother Teresa's, wrote a letter to Donors, Supporters and Friends which ran:

"On my September visit I had to witness 2 or 3 children lying in the same cot, in totally overcrowded rooms with not a square inch of playing space. The behavioural problems arising as a result cannot be overlooked." Mrs Wiedeking appeals to the generosity of supporters in view of her powerlessness in the face of the children's great needs. Powerlessness?! In an organisation with a billion-fortune, which has 3 times as much money available to it as UNICEF is able to spend in all of India? The Missionaries of Charity has have the means to buy cots and build orphanages, -- with playgrounds. And they have enough money not only for a handful orphans in Delhi but for many thousand orphans who struggle for survival in the streets of Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta.

Saving, in Mother Teresa's philosophy, was a central value in itself. All very well, but as her poor organisation quickly grew into a rich one, what did she do with her pictures, jewels, inherited houses, cheques or suitcases full of money? If she wished to she could now cater to people not by obsessively indulging in saving, but instead through well thought-out spending. But the Nobel Prize winner did not want an efficient organisation that helped people efficiently. Full of pride, she called the Missionaries of Charity the "most disorganised organisation in the world". Computers, typewriters, photocopiers are not allowed. Even when they are donated, they are not allowed to be installed. For book-keeping the sisters use school notebooks, in which they write in cramped pencilled figures. Until they are full. Then everything is erased and the notebook used again. All in order to save.

For a sustainable charitable system, it would have been sensible to train the nuns to become nurses, teachers or managers. But a Missionary of Charity nun is never trained for anything further.

Fuekkled by her desire for un-professionalism, Mother Teresa decisions from year to year became even more bizarre. Once, says Susan Shields, the order bought an empty building from the City of New York in order to look after AIDS patients. Purchase price: 1 dollar. But since handicapped people would also be using the house, NY City management insisted on the installation of a lift (elevator). The offer of the lift was declined: to Mother they were a sign of wealth. Finally the nuns gave the building back to the City of New York.

While the Missionaries of Charity have already withheld help from the starving in Ethiopia or the orphans in India -- despite having received donations in their names -- there are others who are being actively harmed by the organisation's ideology of disorganisation. In 1994, Robin Fox, editor of the prestigious medical journal *Lancet*, in a commentary on the catastrophic conditions prevailing in Mother Teresa's homes, shocked the professional world by saying that any systematic operation was foreign to the running of the homes in India: TB patients were not isolated, and syringes were washed in lukewarm water before being used again. Even patients in unbearable pain were refused strong painkillers, not because the order did not have them, but on principle. "The most beautiful gift for a person is that he can participate in the suffering of Christ," said Mother Teresa. Once she had tried to comfort a screaming sufferer, "You are suffering, that means Jesus is kissing you." The sufferer screamed back, furious, "Then tell your Jesus to stop kissing me."

The English doctor Jack Preger once worked in the home for the dying. He says, "If one wants to give love, understanding and care, one uses sterile needles. This is probably the richest order in the world. Many of the dying there do not have to be dying in a strictly medical sense." The British newspaper *Guardian* described the hospice as an "organised form of neglectful assistance".

It seems that the medical care of the orphans is hardly any better. In 1991 the head of Pro Infante in Germany sent a newsletter to adoptive parents: "Please check the validity of the vaccinations of your children. We assume that in some case they have been vaccinated with expired vaccines, or with vaccines that had been rendered useless by improper storage conditions." All this points to one thing, something that Mother Teresa reiterated very frequently in her speeches and

addresses -- that she far more concerned with life after death than the mortal life.

Mother Teresa's business was : Money for a good conscience. The donors benefitted the most from this. The poor hardly. Whosoever believed that Mother Teresa wanted to change the world, eliminate suffering or fight poverty, simply wanted to believe it for their own sakes. Such people did not listen to her. To be poor, to suffer was a goal, almost an ambition or an achievement for her and she imposed this goal upon those under her wings; her actual ordained goal was the hereafter.

With growing fame, the founder of the order became somewhat conscious of the misconceptions on which the Mother Teresa phenomenon was based. She wrote a few words and hung them outside Mother House:

"Tell them we are not here for work, we are here for Jesus. We are religious above all else. We are not social workers, not teachers, not doctors. We are nuns."

One question then remains: For what, in that case, do nuns need so much money?

<http://members.lycos.co.uk/bajuu/>