

Mother teresa of calcutta theology religion essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu and commonly known as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, was an ethnic Albanian, Indian Roman Catholic nun. “ By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus.”

The book ‘ Mother Teresa’ by Navin Chawla is a sensitive, perceptive biography written with Mother Teresa’s full cooperation and encouragement, describing her mission of faith and principles that guided her. The first American publication of the authorized biography of Mother Teresa (published in UK in 1992), this book was written over a five-year period (1987-1992). The author, an Indian bureaucrat and a retired chief election commissioner of India, has collected many letters and rare photographs, which provide personal charm as she describes the life of this Albanian nun who has lived in Calcutta since 1928.

To read this book is to be suddenly brought up to Mother Teresa’s transformative vision of the world. Mother Teresa sees the dying as the very body of the crucified Christ, and she views leprosy patients as recipients of a gift of God designed to bring them closer to Him. Page by page, the drumbeat of this astonishing way of thinking makes it instantly clear how the founder of the Missionaries of Charity has transformed what should be the most appalling circumstances of sickness, poverty and death into an opportunity to serve the broken body of the living Christ.

What makes this biography stand out from the many other books of Mother Teresa is Navin Chawla’s unprecedented access to the Saint of the Gutters

and the religious beliefs he holds. Navin is a Hindu, but refers to himself as “near atheist”. Who better to write a biography than one who is skeptical? He writes of the facts, which include miracles that occur every day. Mother Teresa herself tells him about these miracles, “if you pray, you will see them”. He writes facts which no one can dispute. The five years Navin took to complete the book enabled him to understand the inner person and deliver his insights. It was clear right from the Prologue where he writes, “As a Hindu, it took me longer than most to understand that Mother Teresa is with Christ each conscious hour, whether at Mass or with each of those to whom she tends to. It is not a different Christ on her crucifix and a different one which lies dying at Kalighat. For Mother Teresa, to love one’s neighbour is to love God. This is what is essential to her.”

MOTHER TERESA, AN INDIVIDUAL WITH STRONG CHARACTER

The biography started with the biographer’s note on how he managed to get the permission from Mother Teresa to write a book not about her but about the work and gives a short account of success of services by Mother Teresa. Then he talks about the childhood of Mother Teresa though not given in detail but was sufficient to explain the thoughts that led her to becoming a nun. Mother Teresa was born as Agnesë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu on 26th August 1910 as the youngest child to Nikola and Drane Bojaxhiu in Skopje, Yugoslavia. Her mother, Drane who was not merely religious but practical and commitment to her faith had a far reaching influence on the character and the spiritual life of young Agnes. Agnes’s religious formation developed further through her extensive involvement in the vibrant Jesuit parish of

sacred heart. She was described as a good student, meticulous in appearance, well organised, one who never refused help or assistance and friendly by her family members which she developed being part of the Sodality. At the age of eighteen, she decided to leave her home and become a nun as she realised her vocation was towards the poor.

From here the book gives minute details regarding Mother Teresa's journey from her initial days in India especially in Darjeeling and Kolkata as a sister at Loreto convent, Entally where she took her vows, those of poverty, chastity and obedience to becoming ' Bengali Teresa'. A person with strong spirituality and a deep love for her colleagues (Sisters) and followers (students), Mother Teresa's twenty years at Loreto was noted for her charity, unselfishness and courage, her capacity for hard work and a natural talent for organization, she lived out her consecration to Jesus, in the midst of her companions, with fidelity and joy.

MOTHER TERESA, A LEADER WITH CONVICTION

At this point of time when she received a call in a call as an inner command to go and serve the poor in the streets, she approached the situation with much meditation and consultation with her spiritual advisor Father Van Exem. She wanted to remain faithful to her catholic faith and not be seen as a " secular" that had abandoned her role as Mother. Years later with nothing more than three Saris and pennies she was on her way into the streets hoping to give love and hope where none existed and with a strong belief in her cause that God would be her provider.

This is a European woman that stepped out into the poorest of the poor streets of India with no money, no home and no guarantees. She has been ridiculed, starved had stones thrown at her, been threatened and persecuted. She is the one who started her first school in India with a twig that she drew out the Bengali alphabet in under a tree. She didn't believe in saving, as she always believed that God would provide. She never asked for donations, but sometimes would resort to begging as the poor did. Never for herself but always for others. The amazing thing about her was that she did it all on faith. Today there are homes created by her in over 130 countries including the U. S. Her Missionary Services called Missionaries of Charity continues to grow even after her death. There are Sisters and Brothers that serve and have all taken the poverty vow and live exactly like the poor. She always referred to herself as a mere instrument of God and all the work was done by God.

MOTHER TERESA, A LEADER WITH A STRONG VISION AND MISSION

One of the most important principles Mother Teresa lived by as a leader was her Vision. She realized that she was the voice of her vision. She had to state it clearly. The vision was kept simple and unambiguous and she believed in it and lived it every day—in everything she did. The vision motivated her every day and she embedded it deeply into the organization that she built. She also had a clear goal which was her mission for her whole life—to serve and to do God's will.

Her example of ethical use of power has become an example to those who have a great deal of persuasion in this world. She showed the world that one

does not need money, power, an office, staff, a dictatorial voice to change the world. Instead, all that is needed is a conviction, a heart of humility, and a life of devotion. Her work itself had profound effect in the most unlikely places and often at the highest places. For instance she was a tremendous force in the church. The pope always received her whenever she visited Rome, as he might receive his own child. The book talks about several instances where her requests to a country's President were granted immediately. She took initiatives during a famine in Ethiopia, spread the message to the then US President Ronald Reagan and he sent his help to the place with food and medicine. She was considered as the most powerful woman in the world, yet she remained humility itself.

The biography gives a direct account of the character of Mother Teresa. The author gives unaltered descriptions of events from which we can easily identify these character traits as our own. She comes across as a bold, determined, concentrated individual who don't dare to ask, to beg for the poor; a systematic person who knows how a hierarchy works, who knows priorities and the value of money. She was very simple, yet hardworking. A person with a vision and value the importance of prayer!

The author is highly moved by the fact that while most of us like to focus on the big idea, or the big vision, Mother Teresa focused on faithfulness in the smallest things. While we think about loving the whole world, she urged us to love our neighbor. While we focus on doing great things, she focused on doing small things with love. Ultimately, it is these small things that will determine if we will achieve anything big in our life.

MOTHER TERESA, AS A TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER

As a leader, the more one is willing to sacrifice and give up oneself for the larger vision, the greater the fruits one will bear. The more one sows in terms of effort, time and money, the more one will reap in one's life. Mother Teresa gave herself fully to alleviate the poverty around her by touching one life at a time, and she accomplished so much at the end of her life. Mother Teresa is a fine example of a leader in today's culture. Her profound humble ways and leadership has forever shaped the way this world looks at those who live without it. If not for her leadership qualities Mother Teresa would not have risen to great heights to win the hearts of the millions of people worldwide. She served the poor, orphaned and dying people for more than forty-five years and never ever was tired of her service. The real stories mentioned in the book touch and inspire our heart. When the people affected with leprosy were considered as untouchables, she extended her service to them and cared for them by starting many homes.

Mother Teresa was very humble and never cared about her own image, a rare quality that could hardly be seen in any leader around the world. Whenever she happened to travel in flights, she used to collect the leftover food from all the travelers on the plane and distributed the collected food to the hungry and needy people. Though she had no money many times, she never hesitated to beg to help people. She was extremely courageous in helping people suffering from leprosy. She never was tired in helping the refugees, blind, homeless, flood and famine victims and lepers. The poor and forlorn people were brought to the homes and they were given medical

attention. They were given an opportunity to die with dignity and during their last moments, the Muslims were read the verses from Quran, the Hindus received holy water from the Ganges and the Christians received the last rites. Though she was a Christian, this is just enough to portray the best leadership quality of generosity in her.

She was so simple and humble that she never cared for her own comforts. The sari she wore cost only one US dollar. The white sari with blue border has become a symbol of peace and solace to the poor and destitute. She knew very well that if she should heal other people she must suffer herself and this was what she stated to Princess Diana once when she met her.

According to Bass and Avolio (1993) transformational leadership is concerned with engaging the hearts and minds of others. It requires trust, concern and facilitation rather than direct control. The skills required are concerned with establishing a long-term vision, empowering people to control themselves, coaching, and developing others and challenging the culture to change. Mother Teresa was a woman who saved lives and changed them through the sheer force of her faith and determination. Clearly, Mother Teresa's leadership style was transformational. It was people like Mother Teresa who give a new meaning to life. Like a true leader she proved that one person can really make a difference in the lives of millions. Mother Teresa set examples for future generations to continue her work. This shows how much of an impact she truly had. She made a difference, not by helping everyone, but by making people stop and realize how they could do the same. She is one of the greatest leaders the world has seen.

MAHATMA GANDHI AND MOTHER TERESA

There is also a beautiful comparison in the book about the similarities between Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa. It was an interesting comparison, where both went out of their country for service, both were conservative when it comes to religious beliefs, but both had worked for the welfare of the people from all religion irrespective of caste and creed and the like.

MOTHER TERESA AND HER ACHIEVEMENTS

India honoured Mother Teresa by giving ' Padmashri' and the highest of honour, ' Bharat Ratna'. The world was competing to give the best of honour to her, including the ' Nobel Prize' for peace.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Mother Teresa was a multi dimensional figure, both simple and complex at the same time. Her faith, compassion and religion aside, Mother Teresa had all the qualities of a Manager - grit, determination and getting the odds to work for her. Her Management Model was " different". She ran the organization through people. She set up a base and then found people who would form a chain around that and work for her and that is how it expanded. Finally, " Mother Teresa by Navin Chawla" is a good book which can kindle our thoughts and support for the poor!

" What we are doing is nothing but a drop in the ocean. But if we didn't do it, the ocean would be less because of that missing drop. I do not agree with the big way of doing things. To me what matters is an individual" was the philosophy of Mother Teresa.