



Mother Teresa



*Hallowed Be
Thy Name*



4th Sept. 2016

Dedicated to my parents

Late Ashit & Juthica Mukerji

Acknowledgement

Shri Amit Dasgupta

The Bridge

I have become You, You have become me.

I have become life, You have become body.

From now on, let no one say that

I am the other and You are another.

- Amir Khusrau (1253 - 1325)

It had been a most unusual journey together.

One was a path-breaker - God's own journey-woman who traversed through contrived confluences of uncharted ways and contemporary constraints. The other was a follower, the original impersonal person.

Mother Teresa and Shourabh Mukerji.

The former gets remembered here; the latter gets to tell the anecdotes. There had been many a story, beyond a few from among them, all others have receded into a haze. Unspooling memories of their twenty-five year relationship, these vignettes of intimately personal narratives shed light on a very familiar but still enigmatic life of our times - a Mother then and a Saint now. These are not historical relics. They are not intended to be either. However these anecdotes illuminate .



You have been a wonderful instrument of God's Love.

The sun had just slipped behind the majestic building of the century old St. Xavier's College on Park Street in Kolkata. Tiny emaciated children streamed past the glittering eateries crowded with the rich revelers and quietly entered the college compound. It was Christmas eve. Some over enthusiastic students of the college had organised a party for these underprivileged children from the adjacent slums. There were cakes and sweets for them. And games. And for each child there was a Christmas gift wrapped in shiny coloured paper. They were overjoyed. Their eyes shone. The student organisers took every care to oversee and ensure that the kids were taken care of. Shourabh Mukerji, an undergrad first year student was one of the organising

fraternity. Like his peers he was very tired but contented. He was standing at the gate to supervise the safe return of the kids to their homes in the slum. Suddenly a thin hand with a strong grip clasped his hands and whispered, " Jesus is very happy. This is the best Christmas party in the city this evening ". Her eyes glistened. The tall lanky boy stood awe-struck. This was the very first time that he saw Mother Teresa face to face. Back home, deep into the night, still mesmerized, he scribbled in his personal diary : Met Mother Teresa. 24.12.1967. Hardly did he know that the spell wouldn't go, it would last a lifetime. Nor did he know that he was an awakened one.



Unite us in Love and Service to one another.

Soon thereafter the young boy beyond his college hours devoted himself to help the afflicted. Mother Teresa had a small school for the poor at Ahiripukur. Shourabh would often serve there as a volunteer. He formed a team with a few college friends and others and began distributing bread and milk to the slum children of Beltala in South Kolkata in lieu of their coming to impromptu morning classes. Thus the seeds of the Night School on the premises of St. Lawrence High School were sown. This endeavor was a big success. Mother Teresa would always be there for the Prize Day Ceremony of the Night School.

She sat in the third row and thoroughly enjoyed the programme presented by the children.



God our Refuge.

Winter was setting in Kolkata. A thin pall of mist kept the evenings wrapped. But the winter was not as severe as in the north. Both literally as well as metaphorically. The winter in the north is always far more extreme and ruthless. Moreover the whole of India particularly the northern states were then reeling under a draconian declaration of state emergency. In the name of turning conflict into order dissent was exiled. Freedom of all forms, as enshrined in the Indian Constitution, was forced out of the public domain. Life had become cold and deathly.

Kolkata in large parts is a refugee city. Influx of emigres from all over sought shelter in various settlements. It was in November 1975 that on the pretext of building a high rise for government staff, one such sprawling slum at Beltala in South Kolkata peopled by several thousands was to be uprooted. Worried about the condition of the slum dwellers of Beltala, Shourabh rushed to his only refuge - Mother Teresa. She was touched by his desperation.

Shortly before noon, Mother Teresa together with Shourabh entered the portals of power of the Bengal Government - the Writers Building. There was no attempt made to secure a prior appointment. Nor was there any time or need for it. The response was electric. Every single

person welcomed her with utmost reverence. She was ushered into the Chief Minister's chamber. Siddhartha Shankar Ray the then Chief Minister patiently heard through Shourabh's complaints. Mother expressed her stern displeasure in no uncertain terms. The exasperated Chief Minister immediately instructed the police to stop the eviction. Beltala's urban poor got a reprieve.



I don't Quit. I Stick.

Mother didn't rest there. Any humiliation of the poorest made her cringe. She had a keen eye for such deprivations that destroyed the natural spirit of the underprivileged. Giving love was an addiction from early on. In Shourabh she found her companion. More schools were needed to carry quality education to the poor. She on her own persuaded the noted industrialist Shree K. K. Birla and the Managing Director of the Tata Group in Kolkata Mr. S. L. Das for donations. Rupees two lakhs was thus collected. The American Club also chipped in. In the year 1974 the first unit of the Young Horizons School was established at Theatre Road. It was merely a beginning. In September 1976 she personally contributed a sum of Rupees five thousand to consecrate the plot at Taratala. It was here that the first unit of Children's Foundation School was inaugurated, six years later, on the 18th of February 1982. Mother Teresa was in retreat at the Leper Centre. Her associate sisters would not let anyone meet her during retreat. But she came because she had promised Shourabh that she would. On that occasion of deep auspice she dedicated a medical van to cater to the poor. She was happy and accommodating as always.



*God is before, behind and
beyond us.*



On the twenty sixth of February 1976 a mammoth road show was organised under the aegis of YMWS. It was christened Miles for Millions. Once again Mother Teresa blessed this innovative awareness drive of Shourabh and participated in the long walk from the Ramakrishna Mission Cultural Centre at Gol Park in South Kolkata to the Maidan at the heart of the city.

Ministers of the West Bengal government such as Shree Bholanath Sen and Shree Shankar Ghosh also joined in.



*Nothing is too broken to God 's transformation.
No one can flee from God's Love.*



Shourabh, just thirty, had decided to break the social, religious and parochial barriers and marry Nanoo. It was by no means a usual wedding. He took a step too far. This offended many. Eye brows were raised. Stunned relatives of the groom completely shunned the engagement slated for the 12th of January 1979. Isn't dissent often exiled? But nature never lets void to stay. Others substituted for the offended absentees. Mother Teresa excepting her own imposition attended the engagement ceremony and blessed the courageous couple. Such was her love for Shourabh. Cardinal Lawrence Picachy, Bishop Brian, Sister Camelius, Maitrayee Devi, Renuka Roy were among the other celebrity celebrants who joyfully stood witness.



How deep are Your Consoles, how great Your Beacon.



Night was just falling over a green and tranquil stretch of South Kolkata. The autumn had long set in. The festivities were just over. Life was languid and content. But not at a nursing home where on the 19th of October 1979 Nanoo had given birth to Shourabh's first child - a healthy beautiful daughter. But natural rejoicing was held at bay. The atmosphere was sombre. Due to post natal complication the mother was bleeding to death. Every attempt of the panel of experts and doctors had failed. Life was slowly ebbing away. As the shadows exited and night grew dark Gopal Sharkhel an old confidant of Shourabh suggested that they should seek Mother Teresa's intervention. They rushed to the Mother House. It was past midnight. The lights had long been turned off. They woke up the attending sisters. But they would not let them go to Mother. Their tearful pleas proved futile. The commotion however woke up Mother. She met them. And immediately decided to

leave for the nursing home. The sisters blocked her way. They wouldn't budge. Helpless Mother Teresa went to the chapel. She was in prayer. Hours passed. At long last she returned with a small bottle containing the sacred water from the river Jordan that she had brought back from her recent trip abroad. Oscillating between undying hope and debilitating despair they came back to the nursing centre.

The patient had completely collapsed. Shourabh with great tenderness smeared the water on his lifeless wife's cold forehead. Slowly life returned. It was a miracle. Nanoo opened her eyes. A new day was breaking. The first bird started chirping. So did the new born. She was hungry.



*I am wonderfully made. Before we are made
we do not know what is in store.*

In 1990 the city of Kolkata was celebrating its tercentenary. Shourabh like many of his citymates was quite excited and as his habit is got thoroughly involved with the celebration A multimural four day festival was organised in the month of January.

Shourabh had as usual invited Mother Teresa to the grand celebration to be held at the iconic Cathedral of Saint Paul. Mother had given her consent. But President Gorbachev the father of perestroika had invited Mother Teresa to bestow upon her the highest honour of the Russian nation.

Mother had already committed herself to the function at the Cathedral. So she let the Russian president know of her preoccupation and politely got herself excused. She flew to New Delhi and accepted the award at an austere ceremony at the Russian embassy. She hurried back to Kolkata to be in time for the programme as she did not want to stay away from the tercentenary celebration of the city. She never quit from her commitment.



Seek God's Company.

Such was Mother's passionate involvement with the philanthropic projects of Shourabh that she visited his many institutions no less than nine times. She also got Shourabh introduced to Rev, Michale Mayne, the future Dean of Westminster. This relationship has been mutually very beneficial.



*The Body is more than
flesh. And Life is more
than raiments.*

Mother Teresa had her quota of irresponsible criticism. Attempts were made to malign her. None of those had made any difference to her during her lifetime. The very people who had mocked at and excoriated her later tried to deify her. It should not bother her even in the after life. She is beyond all these. She is being absorbed in the pantheon. But to devotees like Shourabh Mukerji, whose involvement with her legend is so irrevocable, she will always be a Mother - real, personal and perennial.





54A, Lower Circular Road, Calcutta-16.

"As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, You did it to Me"

26th September, 1976.

Mr. Shourabh Mukherjee,
Young Men's Welfare Society,
55 Theatre Road,
Calcutta-17.

Dear Mr. Mukherjee,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 24th September and am happy to hear that your Society completes a decade of service next year. To share in your work of Love for the poor of the Behala area, I will give you Rs.5,000/- towards the building of a "Community Hall" and I will pray that through other sources, you will be able to get the remaining amount, so that soon the Community Hall will be a reality.

Wishing you every success,

*God bless you.
M Teresa M*



54A, Lower Circular Road, Calcutta-16.

"As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, You did it to Me"

14th January, 1978.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that I have known Shri Shourabh Mukerji for quite some time now. He is going abroad for a short period. Any help that you can give him will be greatly appreciated.

*God bless you
M Teresa M*

Missionaries of Charity
54A, Lower Circular Road,
Calcutta-16.



'As long as you did it to Me - these
My least brethren. You did it to Me'

54A, LOWER CIRCULAR ROAD,
CALCUTTA-700016

20 / 5 / 85

AS MUCH AS MAY CONCERN

The Young Men's Welfare Society is
doing great and beautiful work for the
people of Calcutta.

I hope and pray many will help them to
continue this beautiful work.

My gratitude to you
all is my prayer for
you & your families
God bless you
Lu Teresa me

Registered Charity C No. 37184 C, T, BE/14/54-55

Missionaries of Charity
54-A, Lower Circular Road
CALCUTTA-700016

19-4-85

Shourob & his family are very close
to me.

God bless you
Lu Teresa me

Young Men's Welfare Society
 Dear Shourabh,
 Let us thank God for
 the 25 years of love spent
 by the Young Men's Welfare
 Society in the service
 of the Poor.

26th Oct. 1992. God bless you
 M. Teresa M.



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"As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren. You did it to Me"

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I would be grateful if you would kindly grant
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 Affiliation to Young Horizons School, as soon
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 its students. My gratitude to you is my prayer for

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50th Milestone

This is our Golden Jubilee year. Rishi Aurobindo taught us that “all can be done if the God touch is there.” This truly has been the essence of YMWS which began with the blessings and patronage of Mother Teresa, Father A. Bruylants S.J and Canon Subir Biswas. His Holiness the Dalai Lama came for our 40th anniversary. Mrs. Salma Ansari and Dr. Abdul Kalam inspired us with their presence in December, 2011 & February, 2012. Civil Rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson was our Guest of Honour on a 4 day visit in February, 2014. The Dean, Rev. Dr. John Hall and Chapter of Westminster support our cause. We have a strong bonding with FEMI in Holland.

In the last five decades, we have spread our wings to 9 centres of learning imparting primary education to more than 70000 under-privileged children with an emphasis on quality and empathy. Three secondary schools, affiliated to the CISCE New Delhi and the West Bengal Board of

Secondary Education, have been added to our list of achievements. Our present roll strength is 4916 students. We have provided scholarships to more than 300 young people to pursue studies in school, university and vocational institutions. Job placements have been found for many.

Our response emanates from a deep reverence for life, and from the conviction that “not to be able to read, write, count or communicate is a tremendous deprivation of elementary freedom” (Dr. Amartya Sen, 2003).

Nobel Laureate Tagore held the view that “the imposing tower of misery which rests on the heart of India has its sole foundation in the absence of education”.

In rural South Bengal a comprehensive minimum needs programme has been launched in 46 villages in 3 blocks. A project to provide potable drinking water to 140 villages

has been completed. 886 families were supported to start self-help initiatives. An island in the Sunderbans is now being provided assistance on livelihoods.

2000 young people have joined leadership programmes fertilized by the culture of service, dedication and cleanliness in public life. A 13-member youth delegation went to Stuttgart, Germany in 2006 to participate in the UNESCO World Youth Festival. YMWS hosted an Asian Youth Festival for young people from the weaker sections of society in 2012. 700 young people from 18 states in India and 5 neighbouring countries took part. The next is slated for January 2017. Travel is education. It opens up the windows of the mind and expands one's horizon.

As a health provider we partnered with Indian Oxygen for 16 years to take health care to the mother and child in South Bengal. A few hundred thousand benefitted. What is now considered a serious boardroom agenda – corporate social

responsibility – was experimented in Kolkata as early as 1982. A breakfast-in-school project feeds more than a 1000 rural children 5 days a week. This will be expanded.

A 5-year research project with MCC - a group of 12 pediatricians from the Netherlands - is underway to monitor the health of 1500 children over a span of 5 years.

YMWS embraces the poor and marginalized. Our projects are slowly bringing about systemic changes at the base of our society. Charity is not in our scheme of things and we do not romanticize poverty.

Light, knowledge and technology have come into this world and every man to quote Martin Luther King "must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or the darkness of destructive selfishness." May the spark of reverence for life illuminate the light within us!





The rich
Will make temples for God
What shall I,
A poor man do?

My legs are pillars,
My body the shrine
The head a cupola
Of gold

Listen O Lord
Things standing shall fall
But the moving ever shall stay

- Basava (12th Century CE)

