論文

A Study of Mother Teresa's Life and Work through "Compound Eyes"

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Summary

This article explains why Mother Teresa and her Sisters' activities are categorized as those of Contemplatives, although they work like other Active congregations. Mother Teresa spoke of her activity not as social work, but as Contemplation in Action.

Key word Mother Teresa, Compound Eyes, International Social Work

Introduction

Professor Tatsuru Akimoto, a renowned authority in International Social Welfare who was attached to the Faculty of Integrated Arts and Social Sciences of Japan Women's University, once wrote the following sentences:

All international Social Work practitioners and researchers are expected to view things not just with the eyes of their own country, but with the eyes of other countries as well, and they need to view the whole. That is, not just the exterior, but also the interior.¹⁾

He referred to this type of viewing as looking through "compound eyes." These words became a key phrase in my study of Mother Teresa's life and work, especially with regard to the doctoral dissertation I submitted in the city of Skopje in Macedonia.

On September 14, 1988, on my first visit to India, I met Mother Teresa at her congregation's Mother House in Calcutta. Her institutions to which volunteers from several countries come and

work are mainly three, namely Shishu Bhawan, which translates as 'Children's Home,' and where more than 400 orphans live, Nirmal Hriday, which means 'Pure Heart,' and which has the English name of 'Home for Dying Destitutes,' and 'Prem Dan,' meaning 'Gift of Love,' an institution for the mentally handicapped. The volunteers who hailed from within and outside India were required to be registered with the nun in charge of the Mother House, and they were subsequently assigned to one or other of the above institutions.

I personally realized that the road I needed to follow was to acquire the experience of caring and working for the sick and dying, those who were carried from the streets of the city to the Home for Dying Destitutes.

In April of the following year, with the purpose of conducting research both on Mother Teresa herself and the charitable work that she voluntarily undertook, I entered the Master's course of the graduate school of Japan Women's University, which forms part of the Social Welfare Graduate Program, of the Graduate Division of the School of Integrated Arts and Social Sciences. Later on

January 29, 1990, I again visited India, and this time I went with the purpose both of receiving baptism at the side of Mother Teresa and thereby becoming a Christian, and of carrying out the fieldwork needed in order to write my Master's thesis on Social Welfare. My visits to India have been as follows:

1990, January 27~March 24 1990, December 12~1991, January 23 1991, December 13~1992, January 22 1992, November 23~1993, January 18 1993, November 21~1994, February 13 1994, November 20~1995, February 19 1995, December 19~1996, January 21 1996, December 16~1997, January 13 1997, September 9~19

I shall now describe the manner whereby my perception of Mother Teresa developed, and carry out an analysis of the activities I undertook for her during the past 22 years.

1. My Doctoral Thesis

The title of my doctoral thesis was the 'Socio-Humanitarian Work and Mission of Mother Teresa — A Saint from Skopje.' My Ph.D. degree was on Social Work and Social Policy, and it was granted by the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Saints Cyril and Methodius, located in the city of Skopje in Macedonia. Here, I probed the 87 years that comprised Mother Teresa's life from both sides, namely her 18 years of family life in Skopje, and her 69 years as a missionary nun in India.

Fr. Don Lush Gjergji, the parish priest of St. Anthony's Church in Bincha who had published

many books and a biography of Mother Teresa, remarked as follows:

"Mother Theresa comes from Skopje. She's of Albanian descent. She is a Catholic. She lived through all the changes and dimensions of her hometown of Skopje, which was at that time under Turkish rule. Gonxha Bojaxhiu witnessed the formation of the first Yugoslavia. She actually felt what all those changes and problems meant. Beginning with the changes in the family, the school, and the Catholic Church, Mother Teresa had the whole world in small dimensions.

"That's when she began to communicate with others that had different points of view as to language, culture, and religion. However, in all those differences, Mother Teresa began to understand that love is the only thing that reduces the differences and gives us all a chance to live well with all those differences.

"Later, when Mother Teresa came to Calcutta and saw all the poverty there, she remembered Skopje, where she washed the wounds of desolate women with her mother Drona. In other words, the family life had remained with her as something secure and inspirational. Assured and permanent roots which gave Mother Teresa an opportunity to develop and to erupt as a phenomenon of goodness and love." ²⁾

"Live well with all those differences." In light of the fact that she was a child of an ethnic Albanian mother and was born in Skopje in Macedonia, these words were to become a key phrase in her life.

Through the "compound eyes" spoken of by Professor Akimoto, I analyzed in the first chapter of my thesis the reasons why Mother Teresa came to be looked upon and revered as a "Mother of India," but it was done solely from the standpoint of herself. As I stated earlier, she was blessed with the gift of 'living well with differences,' a gift that came down to her via the influence of history, the pressures and constraints encountered within her hometown of Skopje, and her family background.

In the second chapter I explained the fact that this gift cultivated in her hometown blossomed within the multi-religious settings of India, and I also spoke of the support she received from Jesuits like Fr. Van Exem, who helped nurture this gift of hers. I am inclined to believe that her ability to cultivate this gift in an appropriate growth milieu was due to the support she received from these Jesuits. Without them it would have remained a seed never to bloom, since she herself did not realize the value of the gift she possessed.

In the final chapter I probed the issue as to why the government of India decided to conduct a state funeral for this Roman Catholic nun from Europe, on the lines of that conducted for Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Indian Nation. Perhaps the unanimous approval of the Indian cabinet was obtained because she was internationally famous, and a citizen of India. Although all the cabinet members eventually gave their approval, yet some bureaucrats are said to have voiced doubts as to whether it was proper to conduct the funeral of a citizen who was not a politician, as a state funeral. To this, Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral the current Prime Minister of India replied, "Gandhiji too was given a

state funeral in 1948, although the Father of the nation held no office of state."

A Divergence of Views Concerning her Social Work

I intended carrying out my research on Mother Teresa from the standpoint of social welfare, and I planned on doing so against the setting of my past study on her. It is a sad truth that scholars currently carrying out research on her are few, for as far as my knowledge goes there is only one other person in Macedonia who has written a thesis on her.30 and that person too specializes in social welfare. I guess serious theological analysis and research on her will soon begin, but I am presently unaware of any academic thesis on her written from the standpoint of theology. After years of thought I arrived at the conclusion that classifying Mother Teresa's work as social welfare and analyzing it from that angle alone, would be improper. It took me thirteen years to reach this conclusion, and the reasons for this are as follows.

Mother Teresa herself remarked that researching her work from the viewpoint of social welfare was meaningless. The first research I conducted on her was from 1989 to 1992, and my purpose then was to obtain material for my Master's thesis in social welfare. At that time when I met her in Calcutta, she remarked:

"I am not a social worker. What we are doing is not work, but Christ's love in action. So I think our work for God is not to be studied in order to write a social work treatise. The activity that we are doing is not work. Serving Christ in the poor is the same as Adoration in the chapel."

On a certain occasion, I was informed that she said to a nun who had watched over a patient the entire night without sleeping, "You have done 24 hours of Adoration." Her favorite expression was, "You did it to me." She referred to this as palm preaching or five fingers preaching. She would bend each of her five fingers with the words "You. Did. It, To, Me," and then she would ask people she met to do the same. She even taught me this five fingers preaching. These words come from the Gospel of Matthew 25:40, where Christ says, "Truly. I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." These words present us with a basic idea of her activity, and as I stated earlier, in all her works she seemed to put these words into action.

I found it hard to grasp her meaning when she said, "We are not social workers though we do social work." Yet, I did not give up on my purpose of conducting research on her and her work, in order to write a treatise on social welfare. On another occasion she said to me.

"Once I had an offer from the ministry of health and welfare department in Delhi, to train their social workers for 3 months. The officers thought we had found new skills for social work. They came and observed our work, and finally gave up sending their workers to us. Maybe they thought that our God's work and their work were different. Therefore, what we do may not be helpful for writing a thesis on social welfare."

To study the religious and social activities that missionaries and Church people perform in their service of the poor and underprivileged and other relief works, is not new in social welfare study. However, what Mother emphasized was that it was irrelevant and wrong to study only their 'activity,' that is, to only pay attention to their practice and disregard the spirit that motivated them. Fr. Le Joly narrates the following episode where Mother Teresa came to him for counsel:

"I met in Delhi an official of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation who is very much impressed by our work. He gives us all the help he can. Now he has written to me, asking if I could train some of his officers. He would send a batch of some twenty to be trained by us for three months and would pay all their expenses. He hopes that thus they would imbibe our spirit and follow our methods. Do you think I should accept? And would you give them lectures if they came here? I cannot do the whole work myself."

To this, Fr. Le Joly replied:

"Mother, I would suggest that you inform this gentleman that what activates your sisters is their motivation, which cannot be passed on to professional people who do not believe in Christ." 4)

Fr. Anselmo Mataix, a Spanish Jesuit and former Vice-President of Sophia University in Tokyo, also declares as follows:

"Mother is not a nurse. Furthermore, she is not a welfare worker, a person following the principle of human rights, or a social worker either. She herself has said so. You have to direct your attention to the source of her faith which is 'the love of Jesus,' for it is that which made the practice of self-sacrifice rational." ⁵⁾

He urged that we pay heed to the meaning of faith, that is, to the source of her activity, and not the activity itself. However, I noted a spirit of acceptance and a non-judgmental attitude in Mother, chiefly in her maxim of 'living well with differences.' Acceptance and a non-judgmental attitude are key points in The Casework Relationship, the 'Bible' of all caseworkers and professionals of social welfare, a work by Fr. Felix Paul Biestek SJ.⁶⁾ About Mother Teresa's attitude. Fr. Mataix remarked, "She did not change her attitude with reference to people no matter what status they may have." 7 To this attitude mentioned by Fr. Mataix, those who focus on psychology and counseling may apply the 'unconditioned positive regards' of the client-centered approach of Carl Rogers, 8) but specialists in social welfare may apply Biestek's "individualization" of the "casework relationship."

I realized that Mother Teresa did not aim at doing social work. Yet, I felt that if I analyzed her attitude towards the people of India from the standpoint of social welfare technology, an unconscious performance of the "casework relationship" which is believed to be the compass of the confidential liaison between the social worker and the client, would appear, and I thought also that this was the reason for the success of her

activity.

I also earlier believed that the fact that she was a European and a Christian nun would serve as a negative element, calling forth the hostility of the Indian people who had suffered a long and painful history of colonial rule. Why was it that Mother Teresa, who on both sides faced obstacles of religion and race, came to be revered by the Indians to the same degree as Mahatma Gandhi? The reason usually given for this is that it was due to her selfless relief work for the poor and destitute. Yet, even assuming this was true, if the people rejected her, she would not have been able to continue. When I reflect over the fact that her activity was not confined to Calcutta but expanded to the whole of India, I feel the reason why she was accepted by the Indians and gained their respect, was because she had unconsciously adopted the type of professional attitude required for assistance. and developed a bond of confidence with others.

My analysis reveals that this acceptance and non-judgmental stance towards the cultures, customs, and religions of India, was the key issue in the success of her work in the country. In particular, in her desire to respect the freedom of others in choosing their faith and never forcing them to become Christians, the concept of "client self-determination" 9) is applicable. For example, she never baptized the children at the Shishu Bhawan orphanage, because the children were adopted not just by Christians but Muslim and Hindu families as well. She always had in mind the welfare of the children so that they may be adopted without resistance by families of any religion, and she also wanted to give them a chance to choose their own religion when they grew up.

Fr. Biestek in *The Casework Relationship* writes as follows:

"The medieval saint Francis of Assisi, who had what may be described as a casework intuition to a high degree, saw through the external appearance what a man really was and used psychological means to help liberate the human soul." 10)

This could also be applied to Mother Teresa. It is well known that in the crowds that came to see her, she spared more time in speaking to the poor than to courtesy visitors. However, I believe she was also blessed with what Fr. Biestek describes as "casework intuition," that is, an intuition to pinpoint those who suffered from mental hunger. In fact, she even perceived this hunger in tourists and volunteers from wealthy countries, who came to visit her convent.

I feel that by her self-effacing work for the poor, she exemplifies an ideal social worker. Her manner of service was evocative of the manner of Mary Ellen Richmond, 11) the "mother of social case work." Richmond's book What is Social Case Work? 12) is a never-fading textbook for social workers. Besides the fact that she was the first person to address the poor as "clients," Richmond never viewed them as slothful but treated them with the respect due to human beings. Her modest professional outlook led to a growth in the Charity Organization Society's activities and contributed to the evolution of casework skills, and also built up a basic theory of social work. Mother Teresa's welfare activities have points in common with the first intention of Richmond, something we social workers should not forget. She and her Sisters have a professional attitude overflowing with kindness, sympathy, and love, so much so that if they are not social workers, then we would truly have none worthy to be declared a social worker. Hence, even though Mother Teresa claimed not to be a social worker, I feel we social workers could indeed learn many things from her.

On completing my Master's thesis, whenever I had a chance I tried in my presentations 13) to view her activities and herself from the standpoint of social welfare study. I considered the case of many non-Christians who write on matters useful for average social workers of Japan, and I stressed the fact that their views were expressed in the form of case studies, in order that the religious element may not be stressed. In particular, I singled out the fact that Mother Teresa used the word "serving" instead of "helping," for this was a vital issue that those working in assisting others ought not to forget. I mentioned the characteristics Mother Teresa shared with Mary Ellen Richmond and Fr. Felix P. Biestek, and insisted that her modest attitude was an ideal we all needed to aspire to. However, I had to endure various trials and experienced failure for over 13 years, 14) and thus I came to see that exploring her activity solely on the basis of social welfare, was ill advised. If the activity of Mother Teresa were compared to a tree, then the fruits that appear would be "active social welfare," but the roots that support the tree would be "contemplation in action."

3. Contemplatives or Actionists?

Mother Teresa's Beatification ceremony¹⁵⁾ was held on October 19, 2003, at 10:00 AM, in St.

Peter's Square of Vatican City, and in the course of the ceremony the following words of hers were quoted:

"I believe that we are not really social workers. We may be doing social work in the eyes of the people but we are really contemplatives in the heart of the world." ¹⁶⁾

The priority of Mother Teresa and her Sisters was not social work, and as she herself stated they were not social workers. Yet, they were not an Active congregation either. Catholic religious congregations are divided into Contemplative and Active. Generally monks and nuns live in monasteries or convents, and in the case of contemplative orders like the Carmelites, their contact with the world is severed. There are however groups that lead a community life and yet have contact with people outside a monastery, through activities such as education, medical treatment, social welfare and so on. Among these we have the Society of Jesus, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, the Loretto congregation of Mary Ward, and others. The Missionaries of Charity that Mother Teresa founded would also fall in this category.

Mother Teresa, who sought to serve Christ with perfect devotion, was not just Martha, but also Mary (Luke 11:39-42).¹⁷⁾ For her these two positions were compatible and in no way contradictory to each other, and so she strove to put this idea into practice in her daily life. The form and practice of the congregation was active, but what she aimed at in reality was the contemplative aspect. Accordingly, she adopted the constitution of the

Carmelites in part and sought spiritual guidance at the Carmel convent in Calcutta, with the aim of incorporating the spirituality of the Carmelites into her own congregation.

Judging from the inquiry carried out for her Beatification and Canonization, ¹⁸⁾ it is obvious that she not only received directions from God for what we call her Second Vocation, ¹⁹⁾ but also had dialogues with God. The letter she sent on January 13, 1947 to Archbishop Ferdinand Perrier²⁰⁾ was shown to the public after the inquiry. It said that she received a revelation, what we call a Second Vocation, from God, while she was traveling in the night train to Darjeeling for her annual retreat (a period of prayer and meditation), on September 10, 1946.

From this letter one understands that God conversed with Mother Teresa frequently even after the revelation in the train, and each time He gave her directions. The following sentence is from the letter of hers to the Archbishop, and it contains the words God spoke to her.

"I want Indian nuns, victims of my love, who would be Mary and Martha, who would be so very united to me as to radiate my love on souls."²¹⁾

From this letter it is clear that God ordered Mother Teresa and her Sisters to "become both Mary and Martha." She followed His instructions throughout her life, and practiced them faithfully through her numerous activities.

Fr. Brian Kolodiejchuk MC, the Superior General of the male branch of the Missionaries of Charity and postulator for the canonization of Mother Teresa, revealed yet another expression of hers in a report entitled *The things that Mother Teresa left*, and this was published in a Japanese magazine called *Katorikku Seikatsu (Catholic Life)*. The expression is, "contemplatives in the heart of the world." ²²⁾ Judging from this I believe we have no choice but to accept the fact that Mother Teresa and her Sisters are Contemplatives, although they resemble other Active congregations.

4. The Use of Compound Eyes

Most of the research on India and Asian countries in the field of International Social Welfare is based on the development assistance theory, and it would not be an overstatement to say that research on Asia from the viewpoint of welfare focuses mainly on development assistance. Papers in my area of expertise, namely social welfare, are mostly an analysis of Mother Teresa's charitable activities in India, and the assistance methodology of Japan. However, during these ten years, I have had the feeling that there was some incongruity about this, and I wondered where this incongruity lay.

I got my answer through an opinion poll²³⁾ I conducted among the foreign volunteers at Mother Teresa's facilities. I conducted the poll for six years from 1991 to 1997, and personal interviews were conducted with about 140 volunteers. Most of those who finished their volunteer work and went back to their countries, said that they had either become richer in spirituality or had gained in confidence. That is, through their volunteer work, their self-assurance and piety had increased. Mother Teresa said that the greatest poverty was not hunger or illness, but the feeling of being unwanted. Through

interviews I conducted for six years I arrived at the conclusion that those of advanced countries (including myself) who came to work at her institutes as volunteers are afflicted with the poverty that she spoke about, which cannot be healed with bread. Through serving the underprivileged and the suffering, such people got the feeling that their existence was of value, and that they were needed. We volunteers were not an especially generous set but we were hungry for acceptance, and we were able to heal this hunger through working at her institutes. I initially tried to assist in material ways by carrying out the transportation and distribution of relief goods each year, but I slowly arrived at the conclusion that this way of serving the poor smacked of arrogance. For a person like me who hailed from a first world country, to serve the poor only economically, was in my view rather snooty and impolite. I felt I needed to appreciate the fact that I received more than what I gave, for we of the first world cannot hope to build a confidential relationship with a neighboring nation and its citizens, without a perception of this truth.²⁴⁾

Dr. Yoshiaki Ishizawa the president of Sophia University in Tokyo, states as follows in his work Daigaku ni okeru Ajia Kyouiku no Kanosei, or The Possibility of Asian Studies in the University, a publication brought about by the University's Institute of Asian Cultures.

"The relationship between Japan and the Asian countries has been built mainly on an economical plane. However, one may point out here a lack of respect for the people of those countries." ²⁵⁾

He further declares, "we need to have an attitude of empathy and esteem for those peoples and their societies." 26) If we look upon the nations of Asia including India merely as poor and as recipients of aid, then our own viewpoint is indeed to be pitied. Through knowledge of the wisdom and culture of the Asian countries and through acquiring an understanding of their history, we will come to both respect their people and society, and evoke within ourselves a feeling of rapport with them. On studying Mother Teresa's personal history, I was blessed to realize the mood of acceptance and reconciliation that pervaded the hearts of the Indian people, and when she said, Ami Bharater Bharat Amar (I am Indian and India is my country). I believe she did so with genuine feelings of pride. By her generous and appeasing attitude, and her resolve to accept and live with differences, one may say that she sincerely came to look upon India as her homeland.

I personally believe that the flexibility of the Indian spirit, namely India's people with their spirit of nobility and concord, played a key role in the success of Mother Teresa. From her distant home in Skopje the grace of God tenderly drew her to serve the teeming millions of the metropolis of Calcutta, home to the saintly Hindu mystic Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, ²⁷⁾ and his eminent disciple Swami Vivekananda. ²⁸⁾

What I intended bringing out in this thesis is the fact that although Mother was amply blessed with talent and moved by the grace of God, she nonetheless embarked upon her work in an appropriate environment, encircled by many who loyally supported her. All the essential conditions were present for her to acquire the veneration of the world. Her selfless devotion to God and her strivings for the welfare of her fellowmen did indeed lead her to glory, but it was a glory achieved with the wholehearted collaboration and backing of others.

The life and work of Mother Teresa informs us that we are expected to view reality not just through our own eyes or the eyes of our own nation and culture, but through the eyes of other nations and cultures as well. Also, this is not an issue limited to practitioners and researchers of Social Work, for it concerns all researchers wherever they may be. We need to get a view not just of the exterior but of the interior as well, or as Professor Akimoto would perhaps say, we need to view reality through "compound eyes."

NOTES

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- 8) 1902-1987
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- 10) Biestek, Felix P. SJ, The Casework Relationship,
- 11) She was born in 1861 and died in 1928.
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- her Divine Vocation, Saitama, Journal of the Urawa Junior College, Vol. 29, Urawa Junior College, 161-183.
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- 14) Fr. Felix P. Biestek SJ is a Catholic priest.

 There are in Japan certain teachers who hesitate to teach their students *The Casework Relationship*. The personal information about Fr. Felix P. Biestek SJ as given in the textbook is that he is a professor at Loyola University in Chicago. No texts mention that he is a priest. However, in the original English book we find that he is a Jesuit priest.
- 15) Beatification is a process in the Catholic Church where a person of exceptional virtue is declared to be a 'Blessed.' It is a preliminary step in declaring the person a Saint.
- 16) Beatificazione di Madre Teresa di Calcutta Piazza San Pietro 19 Ottobre 2003 (2003), Roma, Tipografia Vaticana, 51.
- 17) Mary and Martha were two sisters who lived as a family along with their brother Lazarus, and who were close to Jesus Christ. While Mary was drawn to contemplation, Martha who was the elder was more oriented towards an active life.
- 18) Canonization is a process in the Catholic Church where a person is declared to be a Saint.
- 19) The Second Vocation of Mother Teresa was her vocation to start the new religious

- congregation of the Missionaries of Charity. Her vocation to be a Loretto nun was her first vocation.
- Ferdinand Perrier served as the Archbishop of Calcutta from 1924-6-23 to 1960-8-12.
- 21) Kolodiejchuk, Brian, MC(2002), The Soul of Mother Teresa: Part 1, Hidden Aspects of her Interior Life, http://www.zenit.org/, November 28.
- 22) Kolodiejchuk, Brian, MC (2003), VITA CATTOLICA Maza-Teresa no Nokoshitamono: What Mother Teresa left, Tokyo, Don Boscosya, December, 8. The translation is by the Author.
- 23) Kudo, Hiromi (2002), The Mother Teresa's welfare activities in Calcutta, Tokyo, Journal of the Study Travel Section of the Japan Association of Human Relations, Vol.1, Japan Association of Human Relations. (Single work)
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- 24) I would like to attach a portion entitled Volunteers—see poverty as a kind of richness from my thesis entitled Analyzing The Welfare Activities of Mother Teresa from a Social Welfare Perspective and Her journey to receive Divine Vocation.
- 25) Translated by the Author
- 26) Terada, Takefumi and Veliath, Cyril SJ (1990), Daigakuniokeru Asia kyouiku no kanousei, Asian studies Programs for Japanese

- universities, Vol.1, Sophia University Institute of Asian Cultures, pp. 4~5. The translation of the sentence by Dr. Yoshiaki Ishizawa was by the author.
- 27) An eminent Hindu mystic of the 19th century, who claimed to have had a mystical experience of Jesus Christ.
- 28) Swami Vivekananda was the foremost disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and the founder of the Ramakrishna Mission. He is ranked among the leading thinkers of modern India.

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