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Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa (26 August 1910 – 5 September 1997) birth name Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu (Albanian), commonly known as Mother Teresa of Calcutta , was an ethnic Roman Catholic nun. For over 45 years, Mother Teresa cared the sick, orphaned, poor and dying, while guiding the Missionaries of Charity's expansion, first throughout Calcutta India and then in other countries. Her beatification by Pope John Paul II following her death gave her the title "Blessed Teresa of Calcutta".

In late 2003, she was beatified, the third step toward possible sainthood. A second miracle credited to Mother Teresa is required before she can be recognized as a saint by the Catholic church.

Mother Teresa was fluent in five languages: Bengali, the local language of the people of Kolkata, Albanian, Serbo-Croatian, English, and Hindi.

Mother Teresa founded the Missionaries of Charity, a Roman Catholic religious congregation, which in 2012 consisted of over 4,500 sisters and is active in 133 countries. Members of the order must adhere to the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, and the fourth vow, to give "Wholehearted and Free service to the poorest of the poor". The Missionaries of Charity at the time of her death had 610 missions in 123 countries including hospices and homes for people with HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis, soup kitchens, children's and family counselling programmes, orphanages and schools. For over 45 years, she ministered to the poor, sick, orphaned, and dying, while guiding the Missionaries of Charity's expansion, first throughout India and then in other countries. Her beatification by Pope John Paul II following her death gave her the title "Blessed Teresa of Calcutta".

She was the recipient of numerous honours including the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize. She refused the conventional ceremonial banquet given to laureates, and asked that the \$192,000 funds be given to the poor in India. Her awards include the first Pope John XXIII Peace Prize, the Philippines-based Ramon Magsaysay Award, the Pacem in Terris Award, an honorary Companion of the Order of Australia, the Order of Merit from both the United Kingdom and the United States, Albania's Golden Honour of the Nation, honorary degrees, the Balzan Prize, and the Albert Schweitzer International Prize amongst many others.

Mother Teresa stated that earthly rewards were important only if they helped her help the world's needy. When Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize, she was asked, "What can we do to promote world peace?" She answered "Go home and love your family." In her Nobel Lecture, she said: "Around the world, not only in the poor countries, but I found the poverty of the West so much more difficult to remove. When I pick up a person from the street, hungry, I give him a plate of rice, a piece of bread, I have satisfied. I have removed that hunger. But a person that is shut out, that feels unwanted, unloved, terrified, the person that has been thrown out from society—that poverty is so hurtful and so much, and I find that very difficult." She also singled out abortion as 'the greatest destroyer of peace in the world'.

During her lifetime, Mother Teresa was named 18 times in the yearly Gallup's most admired man and woman poll as one of the ten women around the world that Americans admired most. In 1999, a poll of Americans ranked her first in Gallup's List of Most Widely Admired People of the 20th Century. In that survey, she out-pollled all other volunteered answers by a wide margin, and was in first place in all major demographic categories except the very young.

Early life

Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu (gonxha meaning "rosebud" or "little flower" in Albanian) was born on 26 August 1910, but she considered 27 August, the day she was baptized, to be her "true birthday". She was born in Skopje, now capital of the Republic of Macedonia, but at the time part of the Ottoman Empire.

She was the youngest of the children of a family from Shkodër, Albania, born to Nikollë and Drana Bojaxhiu. Her father, who was involved in Albanian politics, died in 1919 when she was eight years old. After her father's death, her mother raised her as a Roman Catholic. Her father, Nikollë Bojaxhiu was possibly from Prizren, Kosovo[a] while her mother was possibly from a village near Đakovica, Kosovo.

According to a biography by Joan Graff Clucas, in her early years Agnes was fascinated by stories of the lives of missionaries and their service in Bengal, and by age 12 was convinced that she should commit herself to a religious life. Her final resolution was taken on 15 August 1928, while praying at the shrine of the Black Madonna of Letnice, where she often went on pilgrimage.

She left home at age 18 to join the Sisters of Loreto as a missionary. She never again saw her mother or sister.

Agnes initially went to the Loreto Abbey in Rathfarnham, Ireland, to learn English, the language the Sisters of Loreto used to teach school children in India. She arrived in India in 1929, and began her novitiate in Darjeeling, near the Himalayan mountains, where she learnt Bengali and taught at the St. Teresa's School, a schoolhouse close to her convent. She took her first religious vows as a nun on 24 May 1931. At that time she chose to be named after Thérèse de Lisieux, the patron saint of missionaries, but because one nun in the convent had already chosen that name, Agnes opted for the Spanish spelling Teresa. She took her solemn vows on 14 May 1937, while serving as a teacher at the Loreto convent school in Entally, eastern Calcutta. Teresa served there for almost twenty years and in 1944 was appointed headmistress.

Although Teresa enjoyed teaching at the school, she was increasingly disturbed by the poverty surrounding her in Calcutta (Kolkata). The Bengal famine of 1943 brought misery and death to the city; and the outbreak of Hindu/Muslim violence in August 1946 plunged the city into despair and horror.

Missionaries of Charity

On 10 September 1946, Teresa experienced what she later described as "the call within the call" while traveling by train to the Loreto convent in Darjeeling from Calcutta for her annual retreat. "I was to leave the convent and help the poor while living among them. It was an order. To fail would have been to break the faith." As one author later noted, "Though no one knew it at the time, Sister Teresa had just become Mother Teresa". She began her missionary work with the poor in 1948, replacing her traditional Loreto habit with a simple white cotton sari decorated with a blue border. Mother Teresa adopted

Indian citizenship, spent a few months in Patna to receive a basic medical training in the Holy Family Hospital and then ventured out into the slums. Initially she started a school in Motijhil (Calcutta); soon she started tending to the needs of the destitute and starving. In the beginning of 1949 she was joined in her effort by a group of young women and laid the foundations to create a new religious community helping the “poorest among the poor”. Her efforts quickly caught the attention of Indian officials, including the prime minister, who expressed his appreciation.

Teresa wrote in her diary that her first year was fraught with difficulties. She had no income and had to resort to begging for food and supplies. Teresa experienced doubt, loneliness and the temptation to return to the comfort of convent life during these early months. She wrote in her diary:

Our Lord wants me to be a free nun covered with the poverty of the cross. Today I learned a good lesson. The poverty of the poor must be so hard for them. While looking for a home I walked and walked till my arms and legs ached. I thought how much they must ache in body and soul, looking for a home, food and health. Then the comfort of Loreto [her former order] came to tempt me. ‘You have only to say the word and all that will be yours again,’ the Tempter kept on saying ... Of free choice, my God, and out of love for you, I desire to remain and do whatever be your Holy will in my regard. I did not let a single tear come. Teresa received Vatican permission on 7 October 1950 to start the diocesan congregation that would become the Missionaries of Charity. Its mission was to care for, in her own words, “the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, the lepers, all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society, people that have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone.”

It began as a small order with 13 members in Calcutta; by 1997 it had grown to more than 4,000 sisters running orphanages, AIDS hospices and charity centers worldwide, and caring for refugees, the blind, disabled, aged, alcoholics, the poor and homeless, and victims of floods, epidemics, and famine.

In 1952 Mother Teresa opened the first Home for the Dying in space made available by the city of Calcutta (Kolkata). With the help of Indian officials she converted an abandoned Hindu temple into the Kalighat Home for the Dying, a free hospice for the poor. She renamed it Kalighat, the Home of the Pure Heart (Nirmal Hriday). Those brought to the home received medical attention and were afforded the opportunity to die with dignity, according to the rituals of their faith; Muslims were read the Quran, Hindus received water from the Ganges, and Catholics received the Last Rites. “A beautiful death,” she said, “is for people who lived like animals to die like angels—loved and wanted.”

Mother Teresa soon opened a home for those suffering from Hansen’s disease, commonly known as leprosy, and called the hospice Shanti Nagar (City of Peace). The Missionaries of Charity also established several leprosy outreach clinics throughout Calcutta, providing medication, bandages and food.

As the Missionaries of Charity took in increasing numbers of lost children, Mother Teresa felt the need to create a home for them. In 1955 she opened the Nirmala Shishu Bhavan, the Children’s Home of the Immaculate Heart, as a haven for orphans and homeless youth. The order soon began to attract both recruits and charitable donations, and by the 1960s had opened hospices, orphanages and leper houses all over India. Mother Teresa then expanded the order throughout the globe. Its first house outside India opened in Venezuela

in 1965 with five sisters. Others followed in Rome, Tanzania, and Austria in 1968; during the 1970s the order opened houses and foundations in dozens of countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the United States.

The Missionaries of Charity Brothers was founded in 1963, and a contemplative branch of the Sisters followed in 1976. Lay Catholics and non-Catholics were enrolled in the Co-Workers of Mother Teresa, the Sick and Suffering Co-Workers, and the Lay Missionaries of Charity. In answer to the requests of many priests, in 1981 Mother Teresa also began the Corpus Christi Movement for Priests, and in 1984 founded with Fr. Joseph Langford the Missionaries of Charity Fathers to combine the vocational aims of the Missionaries of Charity with the resources of the ministerial priesthood. By 2007 the Missionaries of Charity numbered approximately 450 brothers and 5,000 sisters worldwide, operating 600 missions, schools and shelters in 120 countries.

International charity

In 1982, at the height of the Siege of Beirut, Mother Teresa rescued 37 children trapped in a front line hospital by brokering a temporary cease-fire between the Israeli army and Palestinian guerrillas. Accompanied by Red Cross workers, she traveled through the war zone to the devastated hospital to evacuate the young patients.

When Eastern Europe experienced increased openness in the late 1980s, she expanded her efforts to Communist countries that had previously rejected the Missionaries of Charity, embarking on dozens of projects. She was undeterred by criticism about her firm stand against abortion and divorce stating, "No matter who says what, you should accept it with a smile and do your own work." She visited the Soviet republic of Armenia following the 1988 Spitak earthquake, and met with Nikolai Ryzhkov, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Mother Teresa traveled to assist and minister to the hungry in Ethiopia, radiation victims at Chernobyl, and earthquake victims in Armenia. In 1991, Mother Teresa returned for the first time to her homeland and opened a Missionaries of Charity Brothers home in Tirana, Albania.

By 1996, she was operating 517 missions in more than 100 countries. Over the years, Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity grew from twelve to thousands serving the "poorest of the poor" in 450 centers around the world. The first Missionaries of Charity home in the United States was established in the South Bronx, New York; by 1984 the order operated 19 establishments throughout the country.

Declining health and death

Mother Teresa suffered a heart attack in Rome in 1983, while visiting Pope John Paul II. After a second attack in 1989, she received an artificial pacemaker. In 1991, after a battle with pneumonia while in Mexico, she suffered further heart problems. She offered to resign her position as head of the Missionaries of Charity, but the sisters of the order, in a secret ballot, voted for her to stay. Mother Teresa agreed to continue her work as head of the order.

In April 1996, Mother Teresa fell and broke her collar bone. In August she suffered from malaria and failure of the left heart ventricle. She had heart surgery but it was clear that her health was declining. The Archbishop of Calcutta, Henry Sebastian D'Souza, said he ordered a priest to perform an exorcism on Mother Teresa with her permission when she was first hospitalised with cardiac problems because he thought she may be under attack by the

devil.

On 13 March 1997, she stepped down from the head of Missionaries of Charity. She died on 5 September 1997.

At the time of her death, Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity had over 4,000 sisters, and an associated brotherhood of 300 members, operating 610 missions in 123 countries. These included hospices and homes for people with HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis, soup kitchens, children's and family counseling programs, personal helpers, orphanages, and schools. The Missionaries of Charity were also aided by Co-Workers, who numbered over 1 million by the 1990s.

Mother Teresa lay in repose in St Thomas, Kolkata for one week prior to her funeral, in September 1997. She was granted a state funeral by the Indian government in gratitude for her services to the poor of all religions in India. Her death was mourned in both secular and religious communities. In tribute, Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan said that she was "a rare and unique individual who lived long for higher purposes. Her life-long devotion to the care of the poor, the sick, and the disadvantaged was one of the highest examples of service to our humanity." The former U.N. Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said: "She is the United Nations. She is peace in the world."

Recognition and reception

In India : Mother Teresa had first been recognised by the Indian government more than a third of a century earlier when she was awarded the Padma Shri in 1962 and the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1969. She continued to receive major Indian awards in subsequent years, including India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna, in both 1972 and 1980. Her official biography was authored by an Indian civil servant, Navin Chawla, and published in 1992.

On 28 August 2010, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of her birth, the government of India issued a special 5 Rupee coin, being the sum she first arrived in India with. President Pratibha Patil said of Mother Teresa, "Clad in a white sari with a blue border, she and the sisters of Missionaries of Charity became a symbol of hope to many – the aged, the destitute, the unemployed, the diseased, the terminally ill, and those abandoned by their families.

Indian views on Mother Teresa were not uniformly favourable. Her critic Aroup Chatterjee, who was born and raised in Calcutta but lived in London, reports that "she was not a significant entity in Calcutta in her lifetime". Chatterjee blames Mother Teresa for promoting a negative image of Calcutta, exaggerating the work done by her Mission, and misusing the funds and privileges at her disposal. Her presence and profile grated in parts of the Indian political world, as she often opposed the Hindu Right. The Bharatiya Janata Party clashed with her over the Christian Dalits, but praised her in death, sending a representative to her funeral. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, on the other hand, opposed the government's decision to grant her a state funeral. Its secretary Giriraj Kishore said that "her first duty was to the Church and social service was incidental" and accused her of favouring Christians and conducting "secret baptisms" of the dying. But, in its front page tribute, the Indian fortnightly Frontline dismissed these charges as "patently false" and said that they had "made no impact on the public perception of her work, especially in Calcutta". Although praising her "selfless caring", energy and bravery, the author of the tribute was

critical of Mother Teresa's public campaigning against abortion and that she claimed to be non-political when doing so.

In the rest of the world

In 1962, Mother Teresa received the Philippines-based Ramon Magsaysay Award for International Understanding, given for work in South or East Asia. The citation said that "the Board of Trustees recognizes her merciful cognizance of the abject poor of a foreign land, in whose service she has led a new congregation". By the early 1970s, Mother Teresa had become an international celebrity. Her fame can be in large part attributed to the 1969 documentary *Something Beautiful for God*, which was filmed by Malcolm Muggeridge and his 1971 book of the same title. Muggeridge was undergoing a spiritual journey of his own at the time. During the filming of the documentary, footage taken in poor lighting conditions, particularly the Home for the Dying, was thought unlikely to be of usable quality by the crew. After returning from India, however, the footage was found to be extremely well lit. Muggeridge claimed this was a miracle of "divine light" from Mother Teresa herself. Others in the crew thought it was due to a new type of ultra-sensitive Kodak film. Muggeridge later converted to Catholicism.

Around this time, the Catholic world began to honor Mother Teresa publicly. In 1971, Paul VI awarded her the first Pope John XXIII Peace Prize, commending her for her work with the poor, display of Christian charity and efforts for peace. She later received the *Pacem in Terris* Award (1976). Since her death, Mother Teresa has progressed rapidly along the steps towards sainthood, currently having reached the stage of having been beatified. Mother Teresa was honoured by both governments and civilian organisations. She was appointed an honorary Companion of the Order of Australia in 1982, "for service to the community of Australia and humanity at large." The United Kingdom and the United States each repeatedly granted awards, culminating in the Order of Merit in 1983, and honorary citizenship of the United States received on 16 November 1996. Mother Teresa's Albanian homeland granted her the Golden Honour of the Nation in 1994. Her acceptance of this and another honour granted by the Haitian government proved controversial. Mother Teresa attracted criticism from a number of people for implicitly giving support to the Duvaliers and to corrupt businessmen such as Charles Keating and Robert Maxwell. In Keating's case she wrote to the judge of his trial asking for clemency to be shown.

Universities in both the West and in India granted her honorary degrees. Other civilian awards include the Balzan Prize for promoting humanity, peace and brotherhood among peoples (1978), and the Albert Schweitzer International Prize (1975).

In 1979, Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, "for work undertaken in the struggle to overcome poverty and distress, which also constitutes a threat to peace." She refused the conventional ceremonial banquet given to laureates, and asked that the \$192,000 funds be given to the poor in India, stating that earthly rewards were important only if they helped her help the world's needy. When Mother Teresa received the prize, she was asked, "What can we do to promote world peace?" She answered "Go home and love your family." Building on this theme in her Nobel Lecture, she said: "Around the world, not only in the poor countries, but I found the poverty of the West so much more difficult to remove. When I pick up a person from the street, hungry, I give him a plate of rice, a piece of bread, I have satisfied. I have removed that hunger. But a person that is shut out, that feels unwanted, unloved, terrified, the person that has been thrown out from society—that

poverty is so hurtable and so much, and I find that very difficult.” She also singled out abortion as ‘the greatest destroyer of peace in the world’.

During her lifetime, Mother Teresa was named 18 times in the yearly Gallup’s most admired man and woman poll as one of the ten women around the world that Americans admired most, finishing first several times in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1999, a poll of Americans ranked her first in Gallup’s List of Most Widely Admired People of the 20th Century. In that survey, she out-pollled all other volunteered answers by a wide margin, and was in first place in all major demographic categories except the very young.

Criticism

Main article: Criticism of Mother Teresa

Towards the end of her life, Mother Teresa attracted some negative attention in the Western media. The journalist Christopher Hitchens was one of her most active critics. He was commissioned to co-write and narrate the documentary *Hell’s Angel* about her for the British Channel 4 after Aroup Chatterjee encouraged the making of such a programme, although Chatterjee was unhappy with the “sensationalist approach” of the final product. Hitchens expanded his criticism in a 1995 book, *The Missionary Position*.

Chatterjee writes that while she was alive Mother Teresa and her official biographers refused to collaborate with his own investigations and that she failed to defend herself against critical coverage in the Western press. He gives as examples a report in *The Guardian* in Britain whose “stringent (and quite detailed) attack on conditions in her orphanages ... charges of gross neglect and physical and emotional abuse”, and another documentary *Mother Teresa: Time for Change?* broadcast in several European countries. The German magazine *Stern* published a critical article on the first anniversary of Mother Teresa’s death. This concerned allegations regarding financial matters and the spending of donations. The medical press has also published criticism of her, arising from very different outlooks and priorities on patients’ needs. Other critics include Tariq Ali of the *New Left Review* and the Irish investigative journalist Donal MacIntyre.

She has also been criticized for her view on suffering. She felt that suffering would bring people closer to Jesus. Sanal Edamaruku, President of Rationalist International, criticised the failure to give painkillers, writing that in her *Homes for the Dying*, one could “hear the screams of people having maggots tweezered from their open wounds without pain relief. On principle, strong painkillers were not administered even in severe cases. According to Mother Teresa’s philosophy, it is ‘the most beautiful gift for a person that he can participate in the sufferings of Christ.’”

The quality of care offered to terminally ill patients in the *Homes for the Dying* has been criticised in the medical press. The *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* reported the reuse of hypodermic needles, poor living conditions, including the use of cold baths for all patients, and an approach to illness and suffering that precluded the use of many elements of modern medical care, such as systematic diagnosis. Dr. Robin Fox, editor of *The Lancet*, described the medical care as “haphazard”, as volunteers without medical knowledge had to make decisions about patient care, because of the lack of doctors. He observed that her order did not distinguish between curable and incurable patients, so that people who could otherwise survive would be at risk of dying from infections and lack of treatment. Dr. Fox makes it a point to contrast the term “hospice”, on the one hand, with what he calls “Mother Teresa’s Care for the Dying” on the other hand; noting that, while hospice emphasizes

minimizing suffering with professional medical care and attention to expressed needs and wishes of the patient, her approach does not.

Colette Livermore, a former Missionary of Charity, describes her reasons for leaving the order in her book *Hope Endures: Leaving Mother Teresa, Losing Faith, and Searching for Meaning*. Livermore found what she called Mother Teresa's "theology of suffering" to be flawed, despite being a good and courageous person. Though Mother Teresa instructed her followers on the importance of spreading the Gospel through actions rather than theological lessons, Livermore could not reconcile this with some of the practices of the organization. Examples she gives include unnecessarily refusing to help the needy when they approached the sisters at the wrong time according to the prescribed schedule, discouraging sisters from seeking medical training to deal with the illnesses they encountered (with the justification that God empowers the weak and ignorant), and imposition of "unjust" punishments, such as being transferred away from friends. Livermore says that the Missionaries of Charity "infantilized" its sisters by prohibiting the reading of secular books and newspapers, and emphasizing obedience over independent thinking and problem-solving.

Hitchens and Stern have said Mother Teresa did not focus donated money on alleviating poverty or improving the conditions of her hospices, but on opening new convents and increasing missionary work. Mother Teresa accepted donations from the autocratic and corrupt Duvalier family in Haiti and openly praised them. She accepted \$1.25 million from Charles Keating, involved in the fraud and corruption scheme known as the Keating Five scandal and supported him before and after his arrest. The Deputy District Attorney for Los Angeles, Paul Turley, wrote to Mother Teresa asking her to return the donated money to the people Keating had stolen from, one of whom was "a poor carpenter". The donated money was not accounted for, and Turley did not receive a reply.

Spiritual life

Analyzing her deeds and achievements, John Paul II asked: "Where did Mother Teresa find the strength and perseverance to place herself completely at the service of others? She found it in prayer and in the silent contemplation of Jesus Christ, his Holy Face, his Sacred Heart." Privately, Mother Teresa experienced doubts and struggles over her religious beliefs which lasted nearly 50 years until the end of her life, during which "she felt no presence of God whatsoever", "neither in her heart or in the eucharist" as put by her postulator Rev. Brian Kolodiejchuk. Mother Teresa expressed grave doubts about God's existence and pain over her lack of faith:

Where is my faith? Even deep down ... there is nothing but emptiness and darkness ... If there be God—please forgive me. When I try to raise my thoughts to Heaven, there is such convicting emptiness that those very thoughts return like sharp knives and hurt my very soul ... How painful is this unknown pain—I have no Faith. Repulsed, empty, no faith, no love, no zeal, ... What do I labor for? If there be no God, there can be no soul. If there be no soul then, Jesus, You also are not true.

With reference to the above words, the Rev. Brian Kolodiejchuk, her postulator (the official responsible for gathering the evidence for her sanctification) indicated there was a risk that some might misinterpret her meaning, but her faith that God was working through her remained undiminished, and that while she pined for the lost sentiment of closeness with God, she did not question his existence. and that she may have experienced something

similar to what is believed of Jesus Christ when crucified who was heard to say “Eli Eli lama sabachthani?” which is translated to “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Many other saints had similar experiences of spiritual dryness, or what Catholics believe to be spiritual tests (“passive purifications”), such as Mother Teresa’s namesake, St. Therese of Lisieux, who called it a “night of nothingness.” Contrary to the mistaken belief by some that the doubts she expressed would be an impediment to canonization, just the opposite is true; it is very consistent with the experience of canonized mystics.

Mother Teresa described, after ten years of doubt, a short period of renewed faith. At the time of the death of Pope Pius XII in the fall of 1958, praying for him at a requiem mass, she said she had been relieved of “the long darkness: that strange suffering.” However, five weeks later, she described returning to her difficulties in believing.

Mother Teresa wrote many letters to her confessors and superiors over a 66-year period. She had asked that her letters be destroyed, concerned that “people will think more of me—less of Jesus.” However, despite this request, the correspondences have been compiled in *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light* (Doubleday). In one publicly released letter to a spiritual confidant, the Rev. Michael van der Peet, she wrote, “Jesus has a very special love for you. [But] as for me, the silence and the emptiness is so great, that I look and do not see,—Listen and do not hear—the tongue moves [in prayer] but does not speak ... I want you to pray for me—that I let Him have [a] free hand.”

Many news outlets have referred to Mother Teresa’s writings as an indication of a “crisis of faith.” Christopher Hitchens wrote: “So, which is the more striking: that the faithful should bravely confront the fact that one of their heroines all but lost her own faith, or that the Church should have gone on deploying, as an icon of favorable publicity, a confused old lady who it knew had for all practical purposes ceased to believe?” However, others such as Brian Kolodiejchuk, *Come Be My Light*’s editor, draw comparisons to the 16th century mystic St. John of the Cross, who coined the term the “dark night of the soul” to describe a particular stage in the growth of some spiritual masters. The Vatican has indicated that the letters would not affect her path to sainthood. In fact, the book is edited by the Rev. Kolodiejchuk, her postulator.

In his first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, Benedict XVI mentioned Teresa of Calcutta three times and he also used her life to clarify one of his main points of the encyclical. “In the example of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta we have a clear illustration of the fact that time devoted to God in prayer not only does not detract from effective and loving service to our neighbour but is in fact the inexhaustible source of that service.” Mother Teresa specified that “It is only by mental prayer and spiritual reading that we can cultivate the gift of prayer.”

Although there was no direct connection between Mother Teresa’s order and the Franciscan orders, she was known as a great admirer of St. Francis of Assisi. Accordingly, her influence and life show influences of Franciscan spirituality. The Sisters of Charity recite the peace prayer of St. Francis every morning during thanksgiving after Communion and many of the vows and emphasis of her ministry are similar. St. Francis emphasized poverty, chastity, obedience and submission to Christ. He also devoted much of his own life to service of the poor, especially lepers in the area where he lived.

Source: <http://desipedia.desibantu.com/mother-teresa>

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Mahatma Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (2nd October, 1869 – 30th January, 1948) commonly known as Mahatma Gandhi, Bapu, Father of the nation, was the preeminent leader who led India to its Independence from British rule.

Gandhiji was born to Karamchand Gandhi (father) and Putlibai (mother) in a Hindu Bania family (Vaishya Sect), on October 2, 1869, at Porbandar, a small town on the western coast of Gujarat, India.

- Parents: Mother: Putlibai (1839 – 1891) ~ Father: Karamchand Gandhi (1822–1885)
- Born: 2 October, 1869 – Porbandar (Kathiawar Agency) now in Gujarat, India.
- Died: 30 January 1948 (aged 78) – New Delhi, India.
- Cause of Death: Assassination by Shooting.
- Spouse: Kasturba Gandhi (11 April, 1869 – 22 February, 1944) .
- Children (Sons): Harilal ; Manilal ; Ramdas ; Devdas

Mahatma Gandhi popularly known as Father of Nation played a stellar role in India's freedom struggle. The title Mahatma came to be associated with his name much later during his struggle and contributions for India's freedom. Before Gandhiji's arrival on the Indian political scene, freedom struggle was limited only to the intelligentsia. Mahatma Gandhi's main contribution lay in the fact that he bridged the gulf between the intelligentsia and the masses and widened the concept of Swaraj to include almost every aspect of social and moral regeneration. Paying tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his death, famous scientist Albert Einstein said, "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a man as this walked the earth in flesh and blood".

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi Gandhiji was a mediocre student and was excessively shy and timid.

Gandhiji was truthful in his conduct right from the childhood. There is a very famous incident in this regard. A British school inspector once came to Gandhiji's class and set a spelling test. Gandhiji spelled all the words correctly except kettle. The class teacher noticed the mistake and gestured Gandhiji to copy the correct spelling from the boy sitting next to him. Gandhiji refused to take the hint and was later scolded for his "stupidity". Gandhiji was married at the age of thirteen to Kasturbai. He was in high school at that time. Later on in his life, Gandhiji denounced the custom of child marriage and termed it as cruel. After matriculating from the high school, Gandhiji joined the Samaldas College in Bhavnagar. After the death of Gandhiji's father in 1885, a family suggested that if Gandhiji hoped to take his father's place in the state service he had better become a barrister which he could do in England in three years. Gandhi welcomed the idea but his mother was objected to the idea of going abroad. To win his mother's approval Gandhiji took a solemn vow not to touch wine, women and meat and remained true to it throughout his stay in England.

Gandhiji sailed for England on September 4, 1888. Initially he had difficulty in adjusting to English customs and weather but soon he overcame it. Gandhiji completed his Law degree

in 1891 and returned to India. He decided to set up legal practice in Bombay but couldn't establish himself. Gandhiji returned to Rajkot but here also he could not make much headway. At this time Gandhiji received an offer from Dada Abdulla & Co. to proceed to South Africa on their behalf to instruct their counsel in a lawsuit. Gandhiji jumped at the idea and sailed for South Africa in April 1893.

It was in South Africa that Gandhiji's transformation from Mohandas to Mahatma took place. Gandhiji landed at Durban and soon he realized the oppressive atmosphere of racial snobbishness against Indians who were settled in South Africa in large numbers. After about a week's stay in Durban Gandhiji left for Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal, in connection with a lawsuit. When the train reached Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal, at about 9 p.m. a white passenger who boarded the train objected to the presence of a "coloured" man in the compartment and Gandhiji was ordered by a railway official to shift to a third class. When he refused to do so, a constable pushed him out and his luggage was taken away by the railway authorities. It was winter and bitterly cold. This incident changed Gandhiji's life forever. He decided to fight for the rights of Indians. Gandhiji organised the Indian community in South Africa and asked them to forget all distinctions of religion and caste. He suggested the formation of an association to look after the Indian settlers and offered his free time and services.

During his stay in South Africa, Gandhiji's life underwent a change and he developed most of his political ideas. Gandhiji decided to dedicate himself completely to the service of humanity. He realized that absolute continence or brahmacharya was indispensable for the purpose as one could not live both after the flesh and the spirit. In 1906, Gandhiji took a vow of absolute continence. In the course of his struggle in South Africa, Gandhiji, developed the concepts of Ahimsa (non-violence) and Satyagraha (holding fast to truth or firmness in a righteous cause). Gandhiji's struggle bore fruit and in 1914 in an agreement between Gandhiji and South African Government, the main Indian demands were conceded.

Gandhiji returned to India in 1915 and on the advice of his political guru Gopal Krishna Gokhale, spent the first year touring throughout the country to know the real India. After an year of wandering, Gandhiji settled down on the bank of the river Sabarmati, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, where he founded an ashram called Satyagraha Ashram.

Gandhiji's first satyagraha in India was in Champaran, in Bihar, where he went in 1917 at the request of a poor peasants to inquire into the grievances of the much exploited peasants of that district, who were compelled by British indigo planters to grow indigo on 15 percent of their land and part with the whole crop for rent. Gandhiji's Satyagraha forced British government to set up a inquiry into the condition of tenant farmers. The report of the committee of which Gandhi was a member went in favour of the tenant farmers. The success of his first experiment in satyagraha in India greatly enhanced Gandhiji's reputation in the country.

In 1921, Gandhiji gave the call for Non-cooperation movement against the ills of British rule. Gandhiji's call roused the sleeping nation. Many Indians renounced their titles and honours, lawyers gave up their practice, and students left colleges and schools. Non-cooperation movement also brought women into the domain of freedom struggle for the first time. Non-cooperation movement severely jolted the British government. But the movement ended in an anti-climax in February 1922. An outbreak of mob violence in Chauri Chaura so shocked

and pained Gandhi that he refused to continue the campaign and undertook a fast for five days to atone for a crime committed by others in a state of mob hysteria.

Gandhiji was sentenced to six years imprisonment but was released in 1924 on medical grounds. For the next five years Gandhi seemingly retired from active agitational politics and devoted himself to the propagation of what he regarded as the basic national needs, namely, Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, equality of women, popularization of hand-spinning and the reconstruction of village economy.

On March 12, 1930 Gandhiji started the historic Dandi March to break the law which had deprived the poor man of his right to make his own salt. On April 6, 1930 Gandhiji broke the Salt law at the sea beach at Dandi. This simple act was immediately followed by a nation-wide defiance of the law. This movement galvanized the whole nation and came to be known as "Civil Disobedience Movement". Within a few weeks about a hundred thousand men and women were in jail, throwing mighty machinery of the British Government out of gear. This forced the then Viceroy Lord Irwin to call Gandhiji for talks. On March 5, 1931 Gandhi Irwin Pact was signed. Soon after signing the pact Gandhiji went to England to attend the First Round Table Conference. Soon after his return from England Gandhiji was arrested without trial.

After the outbreak of Second World War in 1939, Gandhiji again became active in the political arena. British Government wanted India's help in the war and Congress in return wanted a clear-cut promise of independence from British government. But British government dithered in its response and on August 8, 1942 Gandhiji gave the call for Quit India Movement. Soon the British Government arrested Gandhiji and other top leaders of Congress. Disorders broke out immediately all over India and many violent demonstrations took place. While Gandhiji was in jail his wife Kasturbai passed away. Gandhiji too had a severe attack of Malaria. In view of his deteriorating health he was released from the jail in May 1944.

Second World War ended in 1945 and Britain emerged victorious. In the general elections held in Britain in 1945, Labour Party came to power, and Atlee became the Prime Minister. He promised an early realization of self Government in India. A Cabinet Mission arrived from England to discuss with Indian leaders the future shape of a free and united India, but failed to bring the Congress and Muslims together. India attained independence but Jinnah's intransigence resulted in the partition of the country. Communal riots between Hindus and Muslims broke out in the country in the aftermath of partition. Tales of atrocities on Hindus in Pakistan provoked Hindus in India and they targeted Muslims. Gandhiji worked ceaselessly to promote unity between Hindus and Muslims. This angered some Hindu fundamentalists and on January 30, 1948 Gandhiji was shot dead by one such fundamentalist Nathu Ram Godse while he was going for his evening prayers. The last words on the lips of Gandhiji were Hey Ram.

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