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Mother Teresa: Empire of Charity or Cult of Suffering?

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MOTHER TERESA: EMPIRE OF CHARITY OR CULT OF SUFFERING?

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At the age of 33, Monica Besra, a tribal woman in West Bengal, began to feel a pain in her abdomen. Soon after, she was diagnosed with an abdominal tumor. Besra underwent an expensive and arduous medication process, visiting many different physicians and government hospitals. However, despite having visited a number of hospitals and doctors, she was not showing any signs of improvement. Soon, the medication and hospital visits became too expensive for Besra to afford, forcing her to mortgage her land in order to keep herself afloat. As time went on, Besra became desperate to find some relief in her pain and suffering. With the progression of her illness, her body began to deteriorate until she was too ill to eat.

Finally, in May of 1998, Besra was admitted to the home of the Missionaries of Charity order in the town of Patiram. By the time Besra was admitted to the care of the Missionaries of Charity, the tumor in her abdomen had caused her stomach to swell. The Sisters of Missionaries of Charity took her to a nearby doctor in Siliguri; however, due to her fragile condition, the doctors were unable to operate safely, and her surgery was put off for another three months.

On September 4, 1998, the day before Mother Teresa's first death anniversary, Besra recalled how the sisters went to the chapel to say their prayers. Too sick to even move, Besra was supported by two Sisters and a photo of Mother Teresa in the chapel. Upon entering the Church, Besra recalls how she felt a beam of light emanating from the photograph of Mother Teresa envelop her, although she was too ill to know what was going on at the moment. Besra was taken back to her bed shortly after and that evening, two sisters of the order tied a medallion with Mother Teresa's picture around Besra's waist and prayed to Mother Teresa for help and relief. Although Besra prayed to Mother Teresa frequently before that day, her severe pain from her illness kept her up most nights. However, the night the sisters prayed over her she slept peacefully after months of painful sleeplessness. When she woke up the next morning to go to the bathroom, she looked in the mirror and was amazed at what she saw in her reflection. Besra's stomach was flat and the doctors confirmed that her tumor was gone. For the first time in many months, she was no longer suffering from any pain.

Although Monica Besra said she immediately knew that it was Mother Teresa that healed her of her tumor, her case has been countered by several doctors who believe that she was cured due to medication. Even Besra's husband openly believed that it was the medicine that led to her recovery, not a miracle. While many in the medical field have been skeptical about Besra's miracle, they have also not been able to explain the healing of the tumor within a matter of eight hours. Due to this unexplainable mystery, the medical committee of the Congregation for the Causes for the Saints, made up of five physicians, claimed that the case of Monica Besra was most convincing (Gowen, 2016; Banerjee, 2016).

The path in becoming a saint can be a long one. Beatification of a candidate is the first step that eventually leads to a candidate's canonization on the performance of a second miracle. The process traditionally begins at a minimum of 5 years after death, and requires two miracles to pave the way of the beatification

process to show that the candidate is in heaven and holds the power of intercession. However, Mother Teresa was an exception to this law, and was beatified only 2 years after her death. The overnight recovery of Monica Besra was confirmed to be the first miracle performed by Mother Teresa. Historically, saints have been canonized many years after their death -- for example, St. Bede was not declared a saint until 1,164 years after his death. The beatification of Mother Teresa took place on October 19, 2003. The case of Monica Besra helped expedite the beatification of Mother Teresa, making it one of the fastest in the history of the Catholic Church (Rocca, 2015; Ulick & Shin, 2016).

THE CREATION OF A HERO

Following the death of Mother Teresa, the legacy of a transcendent hero was born. In his novel *Mother Teresa: The Final Verdict*, Dr. Aroup Chatterjee, a physician born and raised in Kolkata, criticizes how the world-wide attention drawn to the work of Mother Teresa falsely painted Kolkata as “one of the most desperate places on Earth”. In fact, Kolkata, the capital of the British Indian Empire for 140 years, is considered one of India’s “crown jewels”. Although Dr. Chatterjee did in fact work as a physician in some of the city’s “most dire” districts, he noted that during his time seeing patients in these areas of Kolkata, he never saw nuns in the slums in which he worked. Dr. Chatterjee attempted to reveal the extreme frugal nature of Mother Teresa’s work in the Missionaries of Charity, citing the reuse of unsterilized needles as well as primitive facilities with poor patient care. However, despite the attempts to “challenge” the myth behind Mother Teresa’s work, she is still known today as a global icon of peace, faith, and charity.

This chapter explores the common selfless perceptions behind Mother Teresa’s empire of charity, yet how her philosophies behind her actions simultaneously created a cult of suffering. Additionally, this chapter will explore the heroic perceptions behind Mother Teresa, and how her status of a transcendent hero came to be not only so universally known, but also one that very few have come to question today despite conflicting evidence. It is evident that millennials today have complex thoughts on Mother Teresa’s work, and in particular whether she is deserving of her global title as a saint. While this chapter aims to consider evidence for both heroic and villainous traits in Mother Teresa, I will leave it up

to the reader to determine whether Mother Teresa either created an empire of charity or a cult of suffering.

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Childhood and Life in Skopje

Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born to Nikolle and Dranafle Bojaxhiu in Skopje, Yugoslavia on August 28, 1910. Agnes was baptized the next day, which she considers her “true birthday”. Her father was a successful entrepreneur, and her mother was an active participant in local church activities and was a strong member of the local community. The Bojaxhiu family had a good status within their local community, and were able to provide for their three children and have two houses. Both Nikolle and Dranafle were very involved in city politics and issues such as Albanian independence, which is believed to possibly have contributed to Nikolle’s sudden death when Agnes was just eight years old.

Drana Bojaxhiu’s Influence: Beginning a Life of Charity

Due to the Nikoelle’s sudden death, Drana put up a textile business, sewing wedding dresses and making embroidery to provide for Agnes and her two siblings, Aga and Lazar. Although the family did not have the resources they once did when Nikoelle was alive, Drana was always able to provide her family with food and shelter. With the sudden passing of her father, Agnes grew very close with Drana.

Morgenroth et al. (2015) examines how role models influence goals and motivation in others and propose the idea that role models function as behavioral models, representing the possible, and being inspiration. During her younger years, Drana served as a role model, introducing to her daughter the importance of having a deep commitment to religion and charity at a young age. Drana’s strong involvement with local church activities also influenced Agnes to become involved with the Church throughout her childhood. The Bojaxhiu family prayed every evening and went to church almost every day. Although their family were not wealthy by any means, Drana often invited impoverished citizens to eat meals with them at their home, advising her daughter to “never eat a single mouthful unless you are sharing it with others.” Drana also took care of local

impoverished community members, washing and feeding alcoholic women, as well as widows and their children. When one widow in her community passed away, Drana took in her six children and raised them as part of her own family.

According to Campbell (1949), mentors play a large role in shaping heroes during their journey, preparing heroes for their future mentoring duties. Additionally, Walker (2017) examines the foundation for moral heroism. Previous studies have shown that early life experiences, specifically formative relationships in childhood, set the foundation for moral heroism (Dunn, 2014; Thompson, 2009; Walker & Frimer, 2011). Analysis of data from a previous study on brave versus caring heroes (Walker & Frimer, 2007) revealed that both brave and caring heroes showed more evidence of having engaged in more secure attachments in early-life relationships. Based on evidence from previous studies, Walker proposes that engaging in a secure, nurturing, and scaffolding relationship with an influential mentor at an early age may serve the purpose of helping foster the developmental roots of moral heroism.

It is evident that Drana's generosity and care for the less fortunate made a great impact on Agnes's life. Evidence from studies on the importance of role models in the development of a hero suggests that Agnes's close relationship with her mother may have served a purpose in fostering an identity that encompasses a sense of efficacy, prosocial motivation, and a pervasive commitment to moral concerns (Walker, 2017). Through her ability to lead by example, Drana prepared Agnes to be a leader and mentor herself in the future.

First Spiritual Calling: Becoming Mother Teresa

Throughout her childhood, Agnes sang in the Sacred Heart choir, a group that held annual pilgrimages to the Church of the Black Madonna in Letnice, which she participated in frequently. It was during one of these pilgrimages when Agnes felt her first deep calling to live a religious life at the age of 12. It was during this age when Agnes knew that it was her life's mission to dedicate herself to living out a life of religion. Six years later, Agnes moved to Ireland, became a nun at the age of 18, and decided to call herself Sister Mary Teresa after Saint Therese of Lisieux after joining the Loreto Sister of Dublin. One year later, Sister Teresa traveled to Darjeeling, India, where she made her First Profession of Vows in May of 1931.

It was after her first vows when she was sent to Calcutta, where she taught the city's poorest Bengali families at Saint Mary's School and decided to dedicate herself to alleviating girls' poverty through education. After taking her Final Profession of Vows to a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience in 1937, Agnes took on the name of "Mother", a more formal title given to nuns, and has been known as Mother Teresa since. Mother Teresa continued teaching at St. Mary's School, later becoming the school's principal in 1944. Throughout her time at St. Mary's, Mother Teresa was dedicated to leading her students to a life devoted to Christ, famously writing in prayer "Give me the strength to be ever the light of their lives, so that I may lead them at last to you" (Spink, 2011).

First Major Setback: Bengal Famine of 1943

During her time of teaching at St. Mary's, a famine struck the Bengal province of British India during World War II, killing about 3 million people to starvation, malnutrition, and disease. Although the famine brought misery and death in the city, and the sisters and students suffered from the food shortages, Mother Teresa trusted that God would not refuse anything to her. During this time, Mother Teresa witnessed a great amount of suffering, malnutrition and disease, all which had a profound impact on her life. Witnessing how many lives were impacted and ended from the food shortages during the famine while teaching in Calcutta affected Mother Teresa deeply, showing her that her desire was to help those suffering. This moment served as a setback for Mother Teresa during her time teaching as it showed her that teaching might not be where she is truly "needed" (Kolodiejchuk, 2007).

Second Spiritual Calling: the "Call within a Call"

Shortly after the Bengal Famine of 1943, Mother Teresa found her second calling, which she named her "call within a call". On a train ride, Mother Teresa heard Christ speak to her to abandon teaching in order to serve the sick and poor in the slums of Calcutta. "I want Indian Nuns, Missionaries of Charity, who would be my fire of love amongst the poor, the sick, the dying and the little children. You are I know the most incapable person—weak and sinful but just because you are that -- I want to use You for My glory. Wilt thou refuse?" It was these words that she heard Christ say to her on the train that day that influenced her to leave St. Mary's. It took a year and a half of lobbying before Mother Teresa

was gained official permission to pursue her calling. She left the convent with the goal of aiding “the unwanted, the unloved, and uncared for” in January of 1948. In August, she left the Loreto convent and wandered out into the city. It was then when she first put on the iconic blue and white sari that she would be seen wearing for the rest of her life.

Return: The Missionaries of Charity

To pursue her calling to help the poor, Mother Teresa established the Missionaries of Charity, a religious community in Calcutta that was run by a handful of members with the goal of providing free service to the city’s poorest of the poor. Those cared for in the missionary included refugees, abandoned children, patients with AIDS, and the mentally ill. The missionary aimed to serve the community’s needs by freely educating children, feeding the hungry, and providing homes to the sick and homeless when no one else would. Mother Teresa won canonical recognition for her work in the Missionaries of Charity in 1950, causing her congregation to gain more attention from around the world (Spink, 1981).

Second Major Setback: Hindu-Muslim Violence in 1946

In August 1946, riots broke out from the Hindu-Muslim conflict, unleashing a great deal of violence in Calcutta. The riots left five thousand dead, and injured many more in Calcutta; it was later known as “The Day of Great Killing”. Despite the dangerous conditions in Calcutta during the riots, Mother Teresa left the safety of the convent walls to search for food for her pupils. This was an example of a situation when Mother Teresa emerged herself into perilous situations by choice to tend to the needs of others. It is during situations where Mother Teresa willingly sacrificed her own safety in order to help others that reveals her Great Eight trait of selflessness (Allison & Goethals, 2011; Allison, Goethals, & Kramer, 2017).

Expansion of Missionaries of Charity

As her congregation expanded at a rapid pace, Mother Teresa expanded her charitable activities further from the work of the Missionaries of Charity, establishing a leper colony, orphanage, nursing home, as well as many family and health clinics. During her first trip to America in 1971, and later she opened Gift

of Love, a home to care for those infected with HIV and AIDS. In 1965, Pope Paul VI bestowed the Decree of Praise upon the Missionaries of Charity, causing the congregation to begin to gain more and more international praise and recognition. This prompted an even larger expansion of the congregation. By the time of her death in 1997, the Missionaries of Charity was made up of more than 4,000 volunteers, with 610 foundations in 123 countries around the world (“Relic of Mother Teresa,” 2016).

HONORS AND WORLDWIDE RECOGNITION

Mother Teresa received various honors for her work in charity following the Decree of Praise that the Pope bestowed upon her. She was awarded the most valued honor bestowed on Indian civilians, the Jewel of Honor, as well as the Soviet Union’s Gold Medal of the Soviet Peace Committee. Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 in recognition of her work “in bringing help to suffering humanity”. Upon receiving the award, Mother Teresa asked the money from her award be given to the poor instead of having the ceremonial banquet in her honor. Among other honors, she received the Kennedy Prize in 1971, the first Pope John XXIII Peace Prize, The United States Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Congressional Gold Medal. Additionally, she received the 1978 Balzan prize and the Nehru Prize in 1972 for her efforts in promoting peace, humanity, and brotherhood among people.

While the countless awards and recognitions that Mother Teresa received for her charitable work emphasize her Great Eight trait of selflessness, it can be argued that her increasing amounts of recognition by others also gave her the fame and resources to expand and build upon her already growing empire. Although Mother Teresa’s ability to build her empire of charity from the ground up can be seen as a sign of her great heroism, the high amount of fame and recognition she received consequently can be perceived as a selfish act of “empire-building”.

CONTROVERSY

Stance on Abortion

Despite the global praise she has received for her charities, Mother Teresa has attracted much criticism. In particular, she has been condemned for strongly endorsing some of the controversial doctrines of the Catholic Church such as strong opposition to contraception, abortion, and divorce. During her 1979 Nobel lecture, Mother Teresa said “I feel the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion.” She went on to shock the crowd as she went further, describing abortion as “killing” in efforts to give a major moral statement on abortion. Mother Teresa tirelessly worked to change the minds of politicians such as Hillary Clinton, openly disagreeing with her pro-choice stance on abortion for women. Mother Teresa’s worldwide recognition gave her great influence and power, which she used in attempt to spread her beliefs to others. Mother Teresa’s dogmatic views on abortions, contraception, and divorce have been heavily criticized in more progressive circles, putting her at odds with the feminist movement. Additionally, Mother Teresa has been accused of attempting to convert those she served to Christianity, although the Missionaries of Charity firmly rejects this accusation (Nobel Prize Foundation, 1979).

According to a recent poll from the Washington Times, 36 percent of millennials self-identify as pro-life, while 48 percent of millennials identify as pro-choice (Richardson, 2016). Millennials’ pro-choice stances on abortion oppose Mother Teresa’s strong pro-life viewpoints, which may explain their tendency to believe in Mother Teresa’s villainy.

The Museum of Poverty: Poor Medical Treatment

Mother Teresa is famously known for her missions, where care is provided to the poorest of the poor as well as the sick and dying. Despite the positive recognition that she has been given for selflessly caring for those who need it at no cost, outside volunteers of the Missionaries of Charity were appalled at the poor levels of hygiene and medical care. One volunteer, Hemley Gonzalez did not meet Mother Teresa personally, but said that the organization did not check him or any of the other volunteers who were giving care to the sick. According to Gonzales, none of the volunteers, including himself, had any past medical

experience or training before working at the hospice. This is not the first person who called into question the conditions of the hospice. There are many reports of volunteers who claimed to see nuns routinely reusing unsterilized needles, merely rinsing the needles in tap water before using them on a patient.

Additionally, many claimed that the clothes of the patients were soiled with urine and feces, and cooking utensils were hand washed side by side in the same unsanitary room. Gonzales and other volunteers have claimed that there was not a single medically trained nurse or doctor at the hospice. Patients suffering from respiratory diseases were forced to bathe in freezing water due to the lack of water heaters. When Gonzales offered to install a water heater, he was given negative responses from the nuns who said “We don’t do that here. This is the way Jesus wants it” (Kapur, 2016). While Mother Teresa clearly demonstrates heroic virtues such as selflessness while caring for those in need, evidence of her irresponsible and careless ways of implementing her selfless goals may account for millennials’ complex thoughts on Mother Teresa’s heroism and villainy.

The redemptive value of suffering is emphasized in many spiritual traditions as well as in Catholic and Christian beliefs:

To suffer means to become particularly susceptible, particularly open to the working of the salvific powers of God, offered to humanity in Christ. In him God has confirmed his desire to act especially through suffering, which is a man’s weakness and emptying of self, and he wishes to make his power known precisely in this weakness and emptying of self. -- John Paul II (1995)

The redemptive value of suffering is evident in many of the Catholic traditions and teachings, as is believed to foster humility, provide meaning and response, as well as encourage social union (Allison & Setterberg, 2016). While this viewpoint is a positive view of suffering, taken to the extreme can lead to its glorification, a negative distortion of suffering.

In his documentary “Mother Teresa: Hell’s Angel,” Christopher Hitchens cites Mother Teresa speaking at a press conference in Washington shortly before her death in 1997: “I think it is very beautiful for the poor to accept their lot, to share it with the passion of Christ. I think the world is being much helped by the suffering of the poor people” (Hitchens, 2012). This quote was used as

an example of how Mother Teresa glorified suffering and poverty instead of providing adequate care for the sick and dying. In his documentary, Hitchens argued that Mother Teresa glorified poverty for her own ends and provided a justification for the preservation of institutions and beliefs that sustained widespread poverty. This notion that the suffering of the poor is considered to “help” the world is a concept that has been evidently adopted by the Missionaries of Charity in a very literal matter. The acceptance of these beliefs by the nuns in the Missionaries is linked to the vow of poverty to which all Missionaries of Charity nuns adhere to, causing many to link these vows to the reason why many patients are allowed to suffer despite it being entirely avoidable.

Misuse of Funds and Questionable Political Contacts

Mother Teresa’s motivations were put into question when researchers from Montreal and Ottawa universities raised questions about her “questionable” political contacts. Mother Teresa was accused of accepting a financial grant from the Duvalier dictatorship, who is deemed responsible for the murders of over 30,000 Haitians between 1957 and 1986. Additionally, it was brought to light that much of Mother Teresa’s saintly public image was shaped by the BBC journalist Malcolm Muggeridge, who shared her conservative catholic views, particularly on abortion, and whose promotion of her led to the nun’s international fame.

This began a series of research conducted on documents surrounded Mother Teresa’s life, revealing suspicious financial arrangements where large sums of money were transferred into unknown, “secret” bank accounts. Throughout her lifetime, Mother Teresa raised hundreds of millions of dollars due to her worldwide recognition; however, it appeared as if much of the money seemed to vanish into these secret bank accounts. She was also under fire for the poor and unfit conditions seen in her missions where she sheltered the poor and dying. Many argued that these conditions could not have been due to a lack of funding because of the large sums of money Mother Teresa was able to raise from around the world. Although it is unknown what Mother Teresa used her funds for, the reveal of her secret bank accounts caused many to raise the question of why the conditions of her missions could not be improved despite the large amounts of funds she received from others. Additionally, researchers have

questioned why Mother Teresa did not provide direct monetary aid to victims of natural disasters in India despite only offering prayers and medallions. The lack of transparency of her organization has called Mother Teresa's saintly image into question, leaving many to ask the question of where the millions of dollars for the "poorest of the poor" have gone. If the Missionaries of Charity is so wealthy and seemingly committed to helping the poor, why are conditions so unsanitary, and why are patients still suffering needlessly?

CREATION OF A HERO: MOTHER TERESA

Heroic Image of Mother Teresa

On September 4, 2016, Pope Francis canonized Mother Teresa as a Saint of the Roman Catholic Church. Now known as Saint Teresa, the Pope praised her as a merciful Saint who "defended the lives of the unborn, sick and abandoned." Mother Teresa was praised by the Pope for taking in the city's "most unwanted", citing her work in developing and expanding the Missionaries of Charity (CBS News, 2016). By declaring her a Saint, Mother Teresa now serves as the model for the Catholic Church. Most importantly, this newly given title solidifies Mother Teresa's legacy as a transcendent hero, one whose influence transcends time past her death (Goethals & Allison, 2012).

Although Mother Teresa is admired for working extensively with the sick and dying, finding homes for abandoned children, and defending the unwanted and unborn, it can be argued that her work was not particularly exceptional, especially for a nun. Mother Teresa was a cradle Catholic, raised in a generous home who found her calling to become a nun at an early age. In comparison to St. Paul's dramatic conversion or St. Augustine's dramatic sexual confessions, Mother Teresa's path to canonization seems very ordinary. It is undeniable that Mother Teresa was a devout Catholic; however, there are many others who can be found doing the same things that she had done. Therefore, as a woman whose charitable work is solely what brought her to fame, one may bring into question what makes Mother Teresa stand apart from others who can be found doing similar work.

Decter-Frain et al. (2017) recently provided an analysis of why and how groups create moral heroes. These scholars argue that heroes are not individuals who are discovered by followers; instead, followers manufacture the idea of moral heroism in ordinary individuals. It seems almost impossible to label Mother Teresa as an “ordinary individual”. However, Mother Teresa follows the model for a hero that is created by a group. According to Decter-Frain et al., there are three ways that groups elevate an individual’s status to a heroic one: giving her titles and awards, propagating her heroic image, and by encouraging her to give inspirational speeches. Throughout her life, Mother Teresa has been given numerous titles and awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize, at which time she gave a famous acceptance speech. By declaring Mother Teresa a Saint after her death, her heroic image has been solidified and transcends time. Her sainthood also propagates her heroic image and her heroic legacy after her death, ensuring that those in the future will fondly remember Mother Teresa as a hero whose work is transcendent on many levels.

According to Decter-Frain et al. (2017), there are many benefits that groups obtain by declaring an individual a hero. By elevating an individual’s status to a hero, groups benefit from a hero’s ability to strengthen in-group ties, enforce cooperation, and model good behavior. It is apparent that Mother Teresa’s heroism is consistent with social identity theory, which states that followers are able to recognize a certain beneficial quality in a group member and elevate that individual to heroic status. By elevating her status to one of a Saint, the Pope is providing the followers of the Catholic Church a model for how people should live their lives. Mother Teresa’s stances on abortion, divorce, and contraception are ones that model the Catholic Church’s beliefs, and therefore her heroic status encourages followers of the Catholic Church to model her beliefs. Additionally, by bringing to light her work in the Missionaries of Charity, Mother Teresa serves as a model to followers for how to live a selfless life dedicated to religious faith through serving those who need help the most. By elevating her status to a hero, the Pope offers followers of the Catholic Church a symbol and image after which they may model their own lives. Mother Teresa’s beliefs, values, morals serve to give followers of the Catholic Church a clear, common goal and purpose to follow, thus strengthening the in-group ties and bonds within the Catholic community.

Evidence of Heroism

In a recent article, Kinsella et al. (2017) examined the essential characteristics of heroes as well as the important functions that heroes serve. The authors propose an EMP model to explain the function of heroes. The model that heroes serve an enhancing function, a moral modeling function, and a protective function. It is with this model that we can see Mother Teresa's heroic mission, even after her death. Mother Teresa's charitable work served to motivate and inspire followers to strive to be a better and more selfless person, as well as giving followers a behavioral model to follow. Additionally, by putting herself in perilous situations, Mother Teresa protected her followers. Mother Teresa was famously known for leaving the safe walls of her convent to search for food for her followers during the Hindu-Muslim riots, putting herself in harm's way. However, on a more general sense, Mother Teresa worked to protect her followers by doing something that no one else wanted to do -- working with the community's poorest and sickest members and frequently exposing herself to disease and famine.

Franco (2017) explored heroic leadership in times of crises and the tactical behaviors used by crisis leaders to effect heroic outcomes. According to Franco, the Bengal Famine of 1943 and the Hindu/Muslim violence meet the definition of a crisis, which is "an event/occasion in which things that are widely valued by human social systems are deeply threatened in an unanticipated manner, and the demand for resources to address the catastrophic event outstrips available capacity." While taking actions that risked her own life for the lives of others, Mother Teresa used the action strategy "The Gamble" when acting as a heroic leader during these crises. Additionally, Mother Teresa applied the action strategy "Order of Magnitude" when stepping up and embracing roles that fall outside of her role as a nun when caring for the sick and starving.

Allison and his colleagues (2011, 2017) provided eight concrete categories of traits to describe heroes: smart, strong, selfless, caring, charismatic, resilient, reliable, and inspiring. According to Allison et al., it is not necessary for a hero to contain all of these qualities, but they must embody some of the "great eight" traits to be deemed a hero. It is evident that through Mother Teresa's dedication to charity and serving the poor, she embodied selfless and caring traits. Additionally,

Mother Teresa's ability to overcome setbacks in her life such as the death of her father, the Bengal Famine, and the Hindu-Muslim riots, revealed her resilient qualities. Additionally, her will to serve the population that no one else was willing to help serves as inspiration to others on how to live their lives as well as well as showing others what it looks like to devote one's life to religion. Her heroic image is one that has extended well beyond her life to the present day, making her a transcendent hero and religious figure that followers still look up to today.

Evidence of Villainy

In his study on the foundation of moral heroism, Walker (2017) proposes an interactive effect between agency and communion that may reflect some cooperation between the two different motives. While agency is defined as "self-promoting motives of power and achievement," communion can be defined as "other-promoting motives of benevolence and universalism (Frimer et al., 2011). According to Walker, while those considered moral heroes were found to use their agency in order to promote communal causes, villains displayed more agency than communion.

While the rapid expansion of the Missionaries of Charity can be seen as a sign of Mother Teresa's great heroism, there may also be evidence suggesting agentic motives behind her "empire-building". Through expanding her charitable activities further from the Missionaries of Charity, Mother Teresa showed some evidence that her initial motives were communal. However, as her empire of charity expanded rapidly, Mother Teresa's congregation began to gain a large amount of international fame and recognition, which prompted an even larger expansion of her congregation. Additionally, the expansion of her congregation gained Mother Teresa international praise and attention, which earned her many prizes, such as the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 as well as the Decree of Praise. This worldwide recognition triggered a large pool of donations towards Mother Teresa's work. However, Mother Teresa's questionable political contacts and lack of monetary transparency in her congregation raised many red flags. As donations increased, the low quality of patient care for those under the care of the Missionaries of Charity remained unchanged during her lifetime.

The questions raised on the purpose of her "museum of poverty" causes many critiques of Mother Teresa to question whether her motivations were as selfless

as they appeared to be. Amongst her critics, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, head of the Hindu Nationalist Group criticized Mother Teresa for having an ulterior motive. Sangh argued that Mother Teresa had a hidden motive to convert those being cared for under her congregation in developing countries to Christianity (Najar, 2015). In his recent book, *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice*, Christopher Hitchens (2012) argues that Mother Teresa was “a crafty user of public relations” who portrayed Kolkata as a poor, diseased land in order to attract donors to help fund her mission to convert the poor and illiterate of India to Christianity. While he did not explicitly make the same argument as Hitchens, in his novel *Mother Teresa: The Final Verdict*, Dr. Aroup Chatterjee (2003) also criticizes Mother Teresa for exaggerating on the conditions of Kolkata.

While the Missionaries of Charity have denied allegations of converting the poor to Catholicism by “stealth”, many have pointed out Mother Teresa’s use of her highly publicized speeches that pushed her strong pro-life stances on abortion and contraception on others. Her 1979 Nobel lecture is a notable example. Additionally, in Mother Teresa’s 1994 speech to the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington D.C., she further argued on behalf of her pro-life stance, stating that to have an abortion is equivalent to “murder by the mother herself”. Additionally, her open attempts to change pro-choice politicians such as Hillary Clinton only causes her critics to question her motives behind her political contacts even further.

The belief among Mother Teresa’s critics that she used communion as a means to achieve her own agency. These critics have argued that her empire of charity was merely a cult of suffering in disguise, used to promote and glorify suffering instead of truly helping those in need without any ulterior motives.

CONCLUSION

According to Green et al. (2017), there is a self-evident social nature of heroes. Just as meaning and purpose are almost always embedded in individuals through their social interactions, the creation of heroes is a process that often involves interactions with important figures in one’s family, culture, and community. It is this observation that shows the importance of social connections in the creation

of a hero. Green et al. argues that heroes are perceived as great based on the degree of impact they are able have on others. If this argument is true, then why are there so many mixed reviews about Mother Teresa's heroic status?

Parks (2017) argues that there are purposeful impediments to heroism, or ways in which other individuals purposely discourage a heroic act by others. Among them is how heroes are commonly stereotyped by others as a selfish individual. One study that analyzed motivation for donations to charities revealed that some individuals had agentic motives behind donating money to charity (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011), thus revealing there is a legitimate basis for skepticism about a hero's motives. A study conducted by Raihani (2014) reveals how some heroes are aware of this wary perception by others. Upon analysis of a fundraising website, it was found that donors preferred keeping their identity anonymous when making unusually large donations. This then raises the possibility that either an individual who chooses to perform heroic actions despite the risk of negative perceptions by others is committing a brave act of social heroism by putting their reputation at risk, or others are justifiably labeling a hero's actions as selfish.

Interestingly enough, Allison & Goethals (2011) found that within the Great Eight heroic traits, students rated the trait of selflessness as one of the most important heroic characteristics. Therefore, being openly skeptical of a hero's selfless actions may put one at risk for high amounts of criticism as well. When Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh openly criticized Mother Teresa for having selfish and ulterior motives behind helping others through the Missionaries of Charity, Sangh was subject to large amounts of hate and disapproval by the public. This may also be due to the finding that heroes affirm our meaning structures, and are therefore treasured accordingly (Allison & Goethals, 2011). According to Green et al. (2017), heroes serve as a reminder that we can be remembered after our death and that we are connected to God or other religious entities, which is argued to relieve the anxiety and dread that comes with thoughts on one's own mortality. Devaluing a hero's actions after their death may be controversial as it serves as an impediment in overcoming mortality-related terror, as proposed by terror management theory (Schmeichel et al., 2009).

It is undeniable that Western media plays a large role in the construction of Mother Teresa's heroic image. While media channels have allowed the world to communicate efficiently with one another, it can be argued that communication through media is not most effective. While the media has the ability of raising awareness of heroic behavior on a global level, it also holds the possibility of warping one's perspective of the "truth". Despite the mass criticism surrounding Mother Teresa's actions, the Vatican ignored speculation and Mother Teresa was declared a saint.

While it may be true that Mother Teresa's heroic image may have been constructed, the only "hard facts" that can exist is from consequences that stemmed directly from one's actions. As Baumeister (2012) points out, there is often a gap between perception and reality when it comes to how others perceive and interpret actions as either heroic or evil. While it seems legitimate that others can mistakenly perceive an individual's as having either heroic or villainous motives behind their actions, categorizing an individual as either a hero or a villain solely based on their accomplishments seems incomplete. We choose our heroes in our society based on meaning (Green et al., 2017), however it also seems almost impossible to label one as either a hero or a villain without assigning meaning to others' actions. While assessing whether or not an individual embodies the Great Eight traits of heroism can be seen an objective way of defining a hero, important traits such as selflessness are assessed in a subjective manner.

While it is easy to believe that our world contains only heroes and villains, a difference perspective can reveal evidence that a hero and a villain lie within each of us. As Kocher (2016) argues, we are often both the hero and the villain of our own story, and it is our ability to gain self-awareness and reflect upon our own lives in a larger context that determines the narrative of our own lives. It is up to each of us to choose the heroes and villains in our lives, but how we choose to interpret other's narrations may reveal more about our own life's narrative than anything else.

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