



Mother Teresa's Nobel Lecture: A Critique of the Existing Society and Her Noble Messages

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ABSTRACT

This is an age of viruses infecting the human psyche so severely that nothing but a Noah's ark seems to bring the world back to its normalcy. They have spread so deep into the human blood that nothing but the Great Flood appears to rescue the globe. Today life is marked by ever increasing political violence, social injustice, cultural degradation and moral degeneration, as if the cancer-affected humanity moving towards its final stage. Yet, there is a hope. There may be a panacea for all the diseases. A great many personalities have sacrificed their selves to redeem mankind from its impending doom. Mother Teresa is one of them. Her services towards the suffering humanity constitute her entire life. Accordingly, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her untiring efforts to promote international peace and understanding. This paper briefly discusses her Nobel Lecture as a critique of the existing society along with her noble messages reflected therein.

KEYWORDS : Peace, Love, Poor, Share etc.

If the inventor of dynamite can be the origin of Nobel Peace Prize, the world can also be changed, however affected it may be. Only 'will' power is needed. A simple, commonly dressed lady has "done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses" and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. As per the custom of the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony, she delivered her Nobel Lecture on 10 December in Oslo, the capital of Norway, explaining her field of work. The Nobel Foundation has made many attempts to make such precious lectures available to the people. Accordingly, the World Scientific Publishing Co. has come up with a collection of the Nobel speeches by different Nobel Laureates entitled *Nobel Lectures, Peace 1971-1980*. The lecture delivered by Mother Teresa, now a fine piece of prose work (*Nobel Lecture*), embodies her aims and aspirations, her missions and visions that are still vibrant and relevant.

Probing deep into the human heart and exploring the feeling of love to its numerous possibilities, Mother Teresa, in her *Nobel Lecture*, brings out her findings along with some invaluable suggestions the following of which is very necessary in the present day world. Today life is full of tension and brisk activities. A cat and mouse competition prevails in every sphere of life, giving birth to hatred, enmity, class-conflict, violence and subsequent misery and suffering. We have hardly any time or scope or wish to smile at one another even at home. As if we have forgotten to laugh. The feeling of love has become more physical today. So Mother Teresa urges, "let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love, and once we begin to love each other naturally we want to do something". She also opines, "Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the action that we do". Starting at home and then spreading to the world, love should be abundantly put into every human action. Whatever happens, we must not give up loving one another. Mother states how "he [Jesus Christ] died on the cross to show that greater love, and he died for you and for me and for the leper and for the man dying in hunger and that naked person lying in the street". Here, Mother hints at the true nature of love. According to her, "this is very important to realize that love, to be true, has to hurt". She is also aware of man's pretention of loving God without having any feeling of association for his next door people. So she explains, "It is not enough for us to say: I love God but I do not love my neighbor. St John says you are a liar if you say you love God and you don't love your neighbour." If one is to love God, he or she must love others, as man is made in the image of God. A P J Abdul Kalam holds the selfsame view in his auto-biography when he mentions how his father once explained the significance of man in relation to God: "In his own time, in his own place, in what he really is, and in the stage he has reached- good or bad- every human being is a specific element within the whole of the manifest divine Being."

Mother's clarion call for 'giving' and underlining the 'joy of sharing' add to the 'melting' of the heart of the modern 'Giants' leading to the realization: "How selfish I have been!" Today people are concerned

only with receiving from others. But Mother tries to make us realize that giving begets more pleasure than getting. And we need to give until it hurts. Giving from abundance does not reflect our true love, as well expressed in Tagore's *Gitanjali*: "What hast thou to give to me?/ Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg! I/ was confused and stood undecided, and then from my wallet I slowly/ took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee./ But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on/ the floor to find a least little gram of gold among the poor heap. I/ bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all." Mother Teresa conveys her message through examples. A 4 years old boy abstained himself from eating sugar, which was then scarce, for three days only to share it among the have-nots. Likewise, a patient, who had been on his bed for 20 years, sacrificed his only companion smoking for 1 week and shared 15 dollars to the poor. Again, a Hindu mother who had 8 children, all starving for long, happened to manage some rice; and she immediately divided it and shared with a Muslim family. Simple yet forceful, these references touch the heart of the readers, inspiring them to generosity.

"How is universal peace to be established? By the education of the public with the sentiments of peace. Today the full realization of universal peace is the panacea of every disease." (*Peace: More Than an End to War*) A lady dedicating her life for the promotion of international peace, Mother Teresa says a lot about peace in her lecture. At the very opening of her speech, she mentions the prayer of St Francis of Assisi which starts thus: "Lord, make a channel of Thy peace that, where is hatred, I may bring love". Then she goes on describing how God became man to give the good news, something that we all want- the peace of heart. Again and again, she stresses the need of peace throughout the lecture. If Jesus Christ is the 'Prince of Priest', Mother may be rightly be regarded the greatest Messenger of Peace in human manifestation.

"Abortions were performed at a rate of more than 27 every single day last year [2014]." (<http://www.lifenews.com/>) And Mother Teresa observes, "I feel the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion." She considers it to be a "direct war, a direct killing- direct murder by the mother herself". Here, Mother criticizes the prevalent practice of killing unborn children who should be made 'wanted'. Religiously considered, abortion is a war against God, as everyone is 'carved in the palm of His hand'. Mother also states how she fought against this social malady by adoption as well as by the teaching of natural family planning. Mother had done what she could have and now it is our turn.

Another destroyer of peace criticized by Mother Teresa is negligence of children by their parents. With the rapid growth of women education, 'house wives', or rather mothers are becoming engaged in some institutions, doing jobs as 'husbands' do. The parents, who always prefer the nuclear family to the joint one, can hardly manage any time for their children. Thus neglected, the children feel themselves unwanted, alienated. As a result, they easily fall victim to addiction

to alcohol, drugs etc. This is termed by Mother as 'the poverty of the West', though no less a poverty of the East now.

If a child somehow escapes abortion and is born, he has to face parental negligence until he becomes 'mature' enough to send them to an old age home. As per Indian Express on 3rd October 2012, the "number of Old Age Homes doubles in the last three years", but just after two years, on 24 Oct 2014 The Times of India says, "It's houseful in old-age homes". Mother Teresa had an experience of visiting such a home. There she was that the old men and women had everything to enjoy worldly pleasure, but each of them was looking towards the door and none had smile in their on their face. Soon she came to learn that they were expecting that a son or a daughter might visit them in vain. They were forgotten by their young ones. Thus neglected, they felt sad and got hurt. The portrayal of this gloomy picture of the old age serves to point out the existing social degeneration, thereby suggesting the crying need of love, love that begins at 'home'. She opines, "May be in our own family we have somebody who is feeling lonely, who is feeling sick, who is feeling worried..." and we are to receive them first. Mother has shown the path, now it is on us.

A great humanitarian, Mother encourages us to be kind to the poor who are 'very great people'. They may be sick, hungry, starved, orphaned, naked or dying, but they can 'teach us so many beautiful things' like love, control, sacrifice and humanity. As if 'to be poor is to be blessed'. A homeless lady, whom Mother picked up in a wretched condition, put on a beautiful smile on her face, took hold of Mother's hand, said only 'Thank you' and died. And the dying man picked up from the drain 'half eaten with worms' uttered, "I have lived like an animal in the street, but I am going to die like an angel, loved and cared for." Indeed, it is only the poor, the great people who can speak like that and who can die like that without blaming anybody, in spite of having been the worst sufferers. These facts are touching enough in generating kindness, fellow feeling and love for the poor among the readers.

Thus, Mother Teresa's *Nobel Lecture* is today's lecture. Smile, love and peace are the crying need of the day. We are to realize that the joy of having and receiving something is nothing when compared to that of giving and sharing the same. And we should give not to show off but to be true in our sharing. Mother also vehemently criticizes some the existing social maladies, like abortion, parental negligence and the system of old age home. Her call for extending our hand to the poor, the wretched, the unwanted is quite inspiring. All these make the text a good critique of the society and noble either.

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