

# Mother Teresa: Option for the Poor

by Father Patrick Gomes

Something very divine inspirational happened to her which made her come out of the convent walls and start to lead a life radically chosen for the service to the poor

bleasing and constant intercession of Virgin Mary.

4) To go to the poor and the destitute with her heart full of love, compassion and charity. Yes, she went to the slums, to the streets to be the compassionate, eat what they eat. She gave them human dignity and love. She saw Christ in them.

5) To be with the Lord God praying for hours. And that is her strength to have complete confidence in God.

6) To offer each and everything to the poor. She accepted the noble prize to be used for the poor.

7) To remain simple, humble and most ordinary. And virtue made her extraordinary.

**A Consecrated Religious:** Two very important words directly speaks about the identity of Mother Teresa. Religious and Consecrated. A person who takes the life of consecration is religious. This is the consecration through the evangelical vows of religious life. The essential characteristic of this vocation is the free offering of a person to God and men in order to be the living sign of God's love and charity in the midst of the world; money, power and pleasure. The religious, priest or nun/sister/brother, living in a community decides to follow Jesus in his poverty, chastity, obedience as witness of love against the hate of sin. Briefly speaking, consecrated obedience is complete acceptance of the will of God. The person with the vow of obedience commits himself to fulfil the plan of God always and everywhere, through persons, situations and events of life. Consecrated chastity embraced for the sake of the kingdom of God manifests the power of Christ as a sign of the world to come and

source of a greater service. Consecrated chastity springs from payers and becomes communion with our brothers and sisters. Chastity generates concern for the less loved. Religious poverty, in completed confidence in God. It is solidarity with our brothers and sisters, particularly with those who are suffering. Poverty in fighting for human dignity. Poverty is service. The model of all evangelical poverty is Jesus on the cross. After having embraced these three vows a religious enters into a religious institute/congregation recognized by the Church. When one enters into this state of life, he consecrates himself freely, radically and unconditionally. In the sense, Mother Teresa was a true and authentic religious, a consecrated person.

**Mother's Inspiration and Radical Actualization:** First she belonged to the religious congregation. In a traditional way she was following the rules and regulations leading a convent life. Than something very divine inspirational happened to her which made her come out of the convent walls and start to lead a life radically chosen for the service of the poor. She remained a religious; yet her radical choice was to fulfil very literally Christ's words "Go, sell out everything and come and follow me." (cf. Holy Bible, New Testament, Gospel of St Mathew 19:16-22).

She took these words literally and made her life a choice, and option for the poor. With this radical choice Mother's revolution to demonstrate love and charity for the poor, the unloved and the destitute began. Yes, the mother took and option and that was radically for the poor! In a world of materialism



and consumerism the result of which is the yawning gap between the few rich and vast poor. Mother Teresa began to play a prophetic role making her life a symbol to this modern world. Such an option shocked each and everyone and moved everyone's conscience.

**From Feeling to Reality:** The slums of Calcutta, intolerable hunger, unwanted children, people dying without food and human dignity, drug addicted people confused about moral values, people with AIDS — she looked at, observed, felt and was moved. And this inner spiritual sensation of mother for these poor and destitute existing all over the world did not remain at the level of her feel-

ing only; it further activated and pushed her to the field of charity in action. She saw Jesus born and lying in a manger only to expose his love for the poor. She literally went to the slums, to the poor, to the dying, to those who are poor in many ways only to embrace them in love and charity. She saw Christ's suffering in the suffering of the poor. What was her conviction? I believe, she said to herself that she had made a radical choice to follow Christ, and her ideals must be those of Christ. As a religious nun/sister, if one's identity is a consecrated woman, then this must come out through the action of love and charity. Jesus coming to this world consecrated Himself totally for the salvation of mankind by healing the sick, forgiving the sinners, above all by his suffering and death on the cross and by his glorious resurrection. She must therefore do something to change the situation of the poor. This is a divine inspiration, we can certainly call a vocation that Mother received this way of Christ. She saw the suffering Christ in the bitter reality of poverty. She touched Christ when feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked. All that she was, all that she had was never for herself but for the others: the poor! The whole world supported her in various manner. She received much, that much was for others. She emptied herself only to fill abundantly the empty ones!

**Missionary Nature of Vocation:** Etymologically mission means "to be sent". A person who is sent with a mission. A religious when sent is always for the kingdom of God. The signs of the kingdom of God are: over powering of sin and death, a new kind of human relationship, justice and peace... The aspects of a missionary are: 1) Solidarity with the people he works with, to be open to the realities around him and to listen to the cries of the poor, to proclaim in his words, and especially in his deeds, that just cause of the poor, the hungry, the afflicted is God's cause. 2) A

simple life style in order to have the freedom to serve people, the missionary does not compromise with possessions and power. 3) Availability: to leave his own family, country, culture... in order to serve and suffer for the building of a just world. 4) The gospel values that motivate a missionary must be interiorized. They must be part of life. And this requires prayer. And Mother Teresa was a true missionary in the very core of the meaning of the word!

**Source of Strength:** Where did she receive such a strength to bring out such a revolution of love and charity in action? She says: Union with God through prayers and contemplation, through daily holy mass she received the heavenly food, the Christ in consecrated bread. Therefore, hopelessness, despair, agony never could impact Mother Teresa, no curfew or any such political or social obstacles or even any human crisis could stop Mother to march forward with the charity and love for the poor.

**Universal Character of her Charity:** She by her loving charity embraced the whole world, offered her charity to all peoples irrespective of caste and religion. A Muslim, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Christian, even and atheist in equal to her. And that is why the whole world pays tribute to her: calls her a "living saint"! From the beginning as Sr. Teresa she became Mother Teresa — a mother of all.

**From One Shout Comes Many:** Mother started the journey. Many joined her. There was something very authentic, very meaningful for life that attracted others. To them she offered only one invitation: "Come with me with your love and charity and let us spread out to the whole world the gospel of love." She became the founder of the Congregation of Missionaries of Charity which has its branches almost all over the world. And naturally Charity becomes the only charisma and standard of value of this congregation.

**The World Continues:** Mother Teresa has left the world but has left such an impact of her life of love and charity here in this world that will never be wiped off rather will ever remain as the source of inspiration to continue her ministry. Now not only are there thousands of sisters belonging to her Congregation of Missionaries of Charity but there are Priests and Brothers who have chosen to follow the path of Mother Teresa.

**Dying to Live for Ever:** She died peacefully. People from all over the world come to pay tribute to her. The poor, orphan feel the absence of their Mother, the whole world felt her saintly presence in the world. They call her "angel of the poor", "mother of the universe", "a living saint"... Thus she remains alive in the hearts of each one of us. Her tomb is the symbol of her eternal presence. She is ever alive! How and the children forget their mother? She hears the welcoming word from the heavenly Father: "Now enter into the home of bliss which has been prepared for you."

We all pray to God: May the departed soul of Mother Teresa rest in peace; may she be one among many saints in heaven adoring God. We pray to Mother Teresa that she may bless all her children she has left under the care of her Missionaries of Charity!

# Famine in Slow Motion?

by ASM Nurunnabi

ACCORDING to a senior United Nations official, who recently returned from North Korea, and its remote areas, after seven days of travel, North Korea has been experiencing "a famine in slow motion." The North Koreans were surely starving, he said, they did not appear "on the verge of death tomorrow." No dead bodies could be seen in the countryside, he added. The UN official, who is Director of the UN World Food Programme's transport and logistics unit, said that compared to war-torn famines in desert countries like Somalia and the Sudan — where mass death occurs in a matter of weeks — people have survived so far using sophisticated coping tactics, such as eating leaves, bark, corn cobs and other available materials. Media reports of cannibalism by starving peasants were difficult to believe, he said.

The official described the next couple of months as "the crucial critical period" for North Korea as government grain stocks for distribution were nearly gone and the population must survive until the October harvest. The UN official said that the country faces an immediate deficit of 2.3 million tonnes of grain.

Communist North Korea with its secretive political and social code, tried every means at its disposal to keep from the view of the outside world the distress of the people when afflicted with chronic food shortage. When the basic needs of the people could not be met, the rulers of that country embarked on grandiose schemes to show off their military might, as noted by observers. With a decimated economy, its rulers gave priority to the construction of impressive public buildings, to beautifying their spacious boulevards and displaying other outward signs of prosperity. They seemed to enter a competition with South Korea in presenting an impressive image of their country.

For a long time, Western observers had been expressing concern about the delicate economic condition of North Korea. This was compounded lately by the widespread food shortage in that country which began with disastrous flooding in 1995 and 1996. This was followed by what analysts called poor organisation.

According to an initial fact-finding survey of the situation in that country, which was funded by the US government and the Congress and undertaken by US Rep Tony Hall, everywhere he looked in that country, there were signs of horrors. The Congressman urged the world to do sufficiently more to help North Korea, despite the many faults of its secretive communist government. He further made the plea that the "time has come for the United States, European nations, officials of the United Nations and private aid organisations to devise a comprehensive plan to help the people of North Korea escape starvation."

This bleak picture of food shortage in North Korea had acquired added poignancy subsequently from the report presented by a vice-president for World Vision, a US relief and development organisation. He said he was struck by the absence of North Koreans over 50 on the streets of Pyongyang and outside the city, and children under 5 were the hardest hit by

acute food shortages. A senior North Korean official reportedly told the visiting official of the US relief organisation that the above-50 population of that country remained indoors because they were for the most part too weak to go outside. It was further said that acute malnutrition was affecting up to 40 per cent of children visited by him at a Pyongyang centre for abandoned and orphaned children that was described as the best in the country.

During a two-hour drive to the north of Pyongyang, the US relief official saw no other vehicle reflecting an acute gasoline shortage and no animals with some bare exceptions. The shortage of animals suggested widespread slaughters had taken place for human consumption.

Recommending a massive infusion of additional aid immediately by the donor countries, the US relief organisation noted that in response to two UN World Programme appeals this year, the Clinton administration had pledged about 72,000 tonnes of food aid, some of which was already delivered to that country. The US relief organisation is, however, urging a US donation of 3,000,000



tonnes. That relief organisation, however, rejected the argument in some quarters that North Korea should be denied food aid because this would only strengthen the North Korean army.

The third of the pledge of the Clinton administration came on July 14 last when a commitment of 27 million dollars was made for delivery of corn and other items. At the subsequent stage the World Food Programme appealed for an additional 46 million dollars in emergency aid. The Executive Director of the WFP said the WFP needed enriched baby food for North Korean children who were too malnourished to digest the customary relief food, ground-up corn.

Pictures have since released through international media show how close North Korea has come to genuine famine with depiction of famished children.

Later there were some welcome developments in the matter of grant of food aid. Though initially Japan refused to join the US and South Korea in extending food aid to North Korea via the United Nations, citing bilateral humanitarian problems arising from withholding of the return of Japanese women nationals by Pyongyang agents, but subsequently Tokyo softened its stand following the latest agreement which signalled Pyongyang's wish to improve ties. Meanwhile, Vietnam, one of the world's biggest rice exporters, has come forward with an offer to give 10,000 tonnes of the commodity to that country.

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## by Jim Davis



HAIRBALLS FROM OUTER SPACE! NOT EVERY CAT CAN WEAR TIGHTS



IN THE PRE-DAWN DARKNESS, THE CRAFT RISES EXPLOSIVELY FROM THE DEEP... LIKE RIDING A POLARIS MISSILE—EH, JAMES?

## Soil fertility in Sonargaon declines due to overuse of chemical fertilisers

By Sharier Khan back from Sonargaon

The production capacity of soil in Sonargaon thana of Narayanganj district has decreased by more than two folds in the last 20 years due to overuse of chemical fertilisers, according to local farmers.

In addition, the cost of production of crop has increased by at least sixty per cent, but the prices of crops have not increased proportionately, four farmers told this correspondent in three villages under Sonargaon thana on Friday.

They said that the quality of imported chemical fertilisers was much lower than the locally manufactured ones, and imported fertilisers were damaging the fertility of the soil.

"When we cultivated jute in one kani land in 1978, we used to get a production of 8 to 9 maunds. The only chemical fertiliser we needed to use for that much of land was about 10 kg of urea," said Rafiqul Islam of village Sonakhali in Sonargaon. "The total cost was negligible," he added.

"In contrast, now we use 25 to 30 kg of urea, 15 kg of TSP and about 10 kg of potash to get a maximum production of 4 to 5 maunds of jute in one kani land," he told this correspondent.

The total input cost for jute production in one kani land now comes to around Tk 3,600, while a farmer can hardly sell a maund of jute for Tk 200.

"Which makes production of jute a total loss. We are aware that jute is totally a losing concern, but we still do it to keep the soil clean and for the straw," said Rafiqul, a farmer who has studied up to degree level.

All Akkas Mollah and Anis of village Jangal of the same district said that the production cost of IRRI cultivation and sales return were not in favour of the farmers. The cost is more

## Metropolitan



Studio Gallery-71, a private art centre of Kalidas Karmakar, opened in the city yesterday.

## ASA chief elected chairman of APDC advisory council

A regional workshop on "Developing Capacity for Sustainable Micro-finance Technologies" organised by APDC-APRACA was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia recently, says a press release.

ASA chief executive, Md Shaiful Haque Choudhury was unanimously elected chairman of APDC Microcredit Advisory Council. APDC is an inter-governmental organisation of 10-member countries.

## Schoolgirl commits suicide

KHULNA, Sept 14. Muslima Khanam Tuli, 18, of Cantonment Public School, allegedly committed suicide on Saturday night by falling under the wheels of a running train near Ail Jute Mills.

Police said Muslima, a student of class nine, was expelled from the examination hall five hours before the suicide for adopting unfair means.

## The Statesman editorial says

## Khaleda's stand on price-hike of oil to hurt BNP's interest

The stand of Bangladesh's opposition leader Khaleda Zia over the increase in prices of petroleum products will hurt the interest of her party and it will prove counter-productive, the Indian daily, The Statesman, said in an editorial yesterday, reports BSS.

## Rupganj Thana AL leader expelled

Shahjahan Bhuiyan and Abdul Aziz, general secretary and a member of the executive committee of Rupganj Thana Awami League have been expelled from the organisation for their anti-party activities, reports BSS.

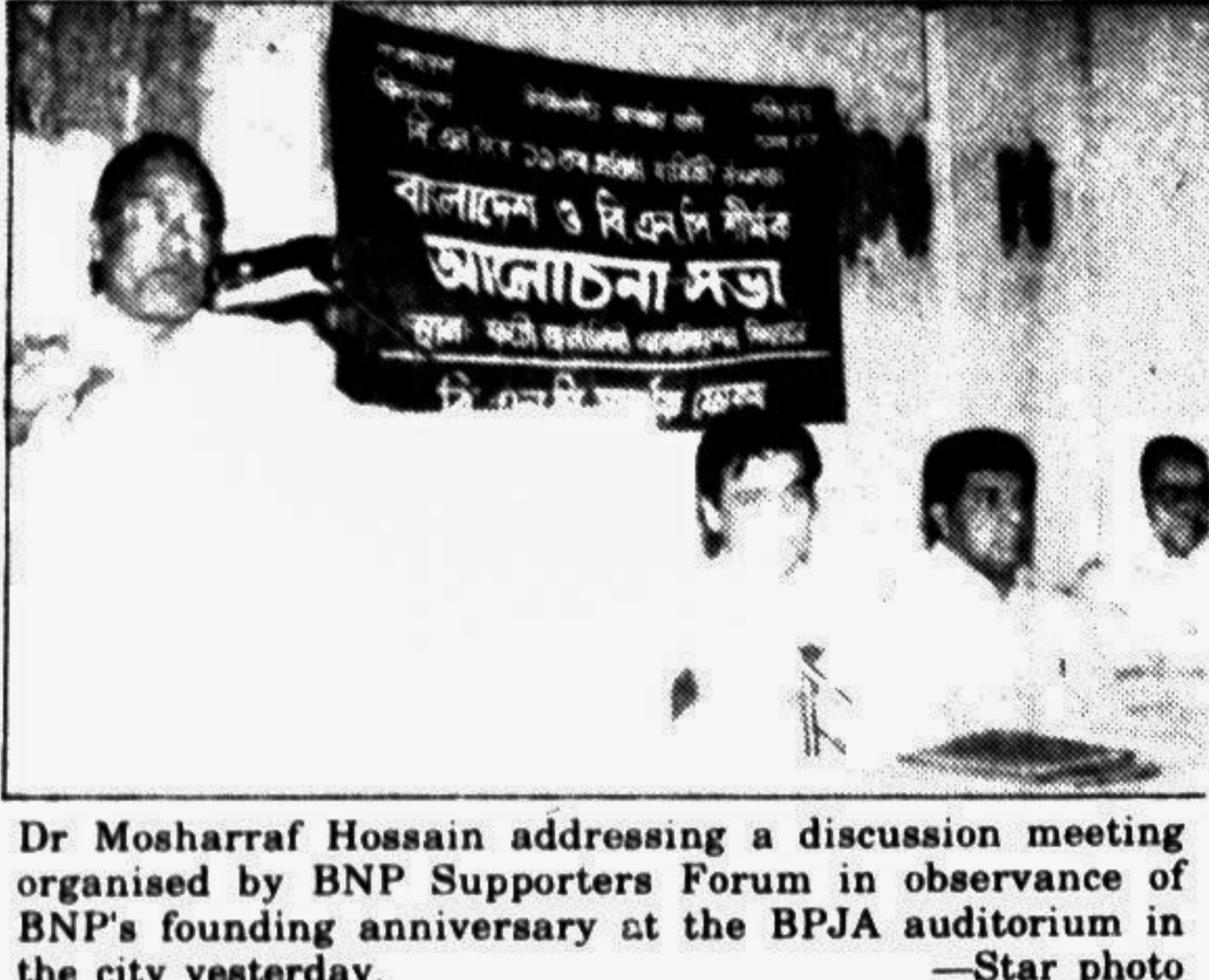
The Thana Awami League at its executive committee meeting held at Sohag Community Centre in the city yesterday with its president, Abdul Motalib in the chair expelled Shahjahan Bhuiyan and Abdul Aziz for an indefinite period as per the party constitution.

The meeting entrusted the joint secretary Advocate Mofiz Uddin Ahmed with the task of performing the responsibility of the general secretary.

## BL college students gherao power sub-station

KHULNA, Sept 14: Students of Government B L University College brought out a procession today protesting load shedding for three consecutive days in the college.

They gheraoed the Daulatpur power sub-station office for three hours demanding uninterrupted power supply.



Dr Mosharrif Hossain addressing a discussion meeting organised by BNP Supporters Forum in observance of BNP's founding anniversary at the BPJA auditorium in the city yesterday. —Star photo