

Everyone's sister

There is a tremendous light from a quite small physical body in the world today, and has actually been so for more than the past 112 years, and that is through the form of the very loving, simple and sincere Chinese-born Teresa Hsu! It must give everyone great hope and comfort simply to know about the very existence of Teresa Hsu – about her wonderful life and work. I can think of no better living ideal for humankind at present, and I deem it a great honour to have this opportunity to try to put into words a little bit of the immense glory pertaining to Teresa Hsu.

I hope she will forgive my using all these – certainly well earned – big words about her, which are most probably not in her own vocabulary or at least not in her own thoughts about herself in her own mind. But that is exactly something of what impresses me most about her – her simple, unassuming and fully natural being and conduct. She is the very incarnation of selfless service, which in Sanskrit is called 'Seva'. 'Seva' is selfless service for the sake of service only, without any concern about good deeds or harvesting the sweet fruits thereof; i.e. one does what is most needed then and there and yields wholeheartedly and accordingly to the fullest of one's capacity in pure love of life. I believe this is her very life and mission in a nutshell.

I said at the beginning that her physical body is quite small, but let no-one be fooled by a lack of size: Her mind and heart are boundless and completely universal in their outlook! And that is another very impressive characteristic about her. She does not adhere to any particular religion, spiritual trend or philosophical school. She is fully above all this just because she is so perfectly natural. She is what in Truth each and everyone really is by nature – what we truly are in our innermost being, unaffected by the bewilderments of our minds. Only such a free and great soul (Mahatma) can utter words like this:

“The whole world is my home, all living beings are my brothers and sisters, selfless service is my religion.”

With these most simple and clear words, which to almost anyone instantly feel familiar and to which they can subscribe, she sums up the whole ideal of human life and living in the fullest harmony of wisdom, love and service. As my teacher-friend from India, Swami Paramananda (1954-1999), used to say: “We do not need more religions – we need humanity”. Teresa, already many years before the birth of my teacher-friend, implemented this truth into her life and by her example made it practical for each and everyone of us.

In one of her quotations published on her foundation's web pages (hearttoheart.org), she says: “No one has ever explained religion or spirituality satisfactorily to me. **My religion is my conscience, and my conscience guides me.**” Only a truly spiritual person can utter words like this, have the pure mind to realize the truth of it and the tremendous strength actually to follow it in daily life. Because spirituality is all about simplicity, unity and naturalness. It is the feeling and realization that “the same heart beats in all”, no matter what seeming differences on the surface of life there appear to be. My teacher-friend Paramananda said that in the realm of spirituality there are three things without which there is no spirituality: Wisdom, Love and Sacrifice. A spiritual person will have both wisdom and love (universal, without distinction), and the outcome of this will be sacrifice or selfless service. Anyone who is established in this does not need to adhere to any religion. He or she, like

Teresa, simply follows their conscience, which is the voice of Perfection – awakened in some, but dormant in others. I am truly glad Teresa has spoken like this because it gives hope to many that one can live a good and noble life without having to adopt a religion or to follow a particular spiritual tradition. “A good conscience is the best divinity”, says an old, wise English proverb. And I would like to add that there is no humanity, or even no human development at all, without the active prevalence of conscience.

As for ‘religion’ it is a misleading word, making for separation between God and man. The Sanskrit word ‘Dharma’, which is quite different but usually mistakenly translated as ‘religion’ in English, is far more descriptive of what people feel when they are thinking in these terms: It is that principle of life which accelerates its development and makes it excel and manifest as art of life. It uplifts everything and brings life to perfection. And the driving force in this is our awake and active conscience!

By the grace of my teacher-friend I was invited to attend as one of three key speakers at the international peace symposium “Pathways to Peace” at the Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia, in September 2003. There I had the great fortune to meet Teresa and her co-worker Sharana Rao. Teresa quickly won the sympathy of the audience by her ready, sweet smile and her ringing, infectious laughter. And this is a third characteristic which I would like to emphasize about Teresa Hsu: Her wonderful wit and humour – always being positive, cheerful and jolly. In addition, she has a brilliant, humorous way of narrating any story, easily capturing the full attention of her listeners. All so very, very sweetly with the greatest affection, friendliness and love. Having spent many years in India I was used to call any woman, young or old, ‘mother’ – so I called Teresa ‘mother’. But she related to me as a sister, and a true sister in the spirit she certainly is.

Being a Norwegian living in Norway where every year the Noble Peace Prize is awarded to someone more or less worthy of that great honour, and sometimes, sad to say, completely unworthy of such a unique distinction, I cannot help thinking that Teresa Hsu would be the very best candidate in the whole wide world for this highest of human honours. No doubt she personally deserves it, though she would hardly, I believe, accept such a fuss being made about herself. But for her work and for the public recognition of her example such an act would trigger a great symbolical effect all over the globe. And it would give inspiration and a practical ideal for all of humankind.

Whether receiving awards or not, the important thing now is that the world is in dire need of the appearance of many active, consciously awakened, conscientious, independent and strong sisters like Teresa, who will work, speak, think and relate to fellow humans, life and the whole world just like Teresa Hsu.

I pray to all these sisters that your love, work and goodwill must go on for ever and ever!

By
a loving brother,
Bjørn Pettersen.

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