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Mother Teresa was used by India: Author

By Rashmee Z. Ahmed

Mother Teresa was the 20th century's chief propaganda guru for the Catholic faith, the very concept of Christian charity and the chaotic compassion of a newly-independent Indian state, a bold new book has claimed.

In what many are calling a controversial revival of a 30-year-old debate about the diminutive nun's real worth, Teresa's compatriot, Dr Gëzim Alpion, tries to find out why she was supported by nearly all Indian governments after 1950.

This, despite her being a white western Catholic female and despite India's minuscule Christian population totalling just two per cent, points out Alpion, in his forthcoming volume, *Biased Discourse: The Case for Mother Teresa*.

Alpion insists he is less carping critic than bemused admirer of his fellow Albanian who was hailed worldwide for her selfless work among the sick

and poor in contemporary Calcutta's black holes. "How come we don't know much about Mother Teresa when she wasn't in India; her 'sainthood' started in Albania," he told TOI on Friday. He claimed that the nun was "used" by the Indian government to promote an image of unity in diversity, after India's recent, bitter experience of Partition. "The Indian establishment felt, we have a white, European, Catholic".

Alpion's study, the first by someone of Mother Teresa's ethnicity, offers an interesting twist in the nun's extraordinary saga. It says the world's media deliberately refused to recognise her Balkan roots, after Malcolm Muggeridge discovered Mother Teresa in 1968. He says it's time to take an informed and impartial look at how the tiny nun went on to become an iconic image embraced by royalty and rough-sleepers alike. There could have been no Mother without the media. Her myth was carefully crafted over the years by the Roman Catholic Church, numerous Indian governments and several White House administrations, he declares.

Somewhat controversially for the nun's legions of admirers worldwide, he adds that Teresa was hardly passive in this international image-making process. She always had a say in what should and should not be said about her.