

# Daraja La Tumaini

EMPOWERMENT FOR A BETTER FUTURE

## **Hans Nielsen Hauge, Follower of Jesus, Example of Empowerment**

(By Øistein Garcia de Presno)

In our seminar today we will look at a follower of Jesus whose passion for the Word of God and empowering the poor is credited as being one of the factors leading to the transformation of Norway to what it is today.

Hans Nielsen Hauge had a life transforming encounter with Jesus on the fields of his father's farm and became a serious follower of Jesus. After his conversion, he travelled all over his country, Norway, preaching the Gospel, calling people to follow Christ. . Daraja La Tumaini is a network of followers of Jesus here in Kenya. We work to spread the Good News about Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus calls us the same way he called his disciples, like Simon and his brother Andrew when he said, "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men". Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. Just as crowds followed Jesus in Galilee, we believe crowds will also follow Jesus in the slums of Nairobi.

Daraja La Tumaini and, I believe, all of us gathered here want to see transformation happen here in Kenya. The big question is, "How do we go about it?" Our brother Øistein from Norway has told us about a simple and poor Christian who lived 200 years ago under the same circumstances of poverty as we see in the slums of Nairobi today. We in Daraja La Tumaini have discovered that we have so much to learn from this man, Hans Nielsen Hauge. He, like us, served Jesus and in doing so, had tremendous impact on the poor. He showed a way out of poverty for the crowds of poor people in Norway.

He combined spiritual teaching and worship with social action and business development. We believe his holistic approach has a lot to teach us. He was a poor person himself, yet brought many out of poverty. We desire to do the same. We thank God for this man, Hans Nielsen Hauge, who helped transform the lives of so many poor people. As he followed Jesus, he helped others. We can learn from Hauge as we follow Jesus. We can see how we can specifically help ourselves and our poor sisters and brothers climb out of poverty. We still have much to learn about poverty eradication and Christian action that we can share with others. But God has given us this example to learn from. Because Hauge's example is so relevant to our situation some of us sometimes claim, "We are Haugians. Follow us." But we should always add,  
"As we follow Jesus!"

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## **Empowerment for a Better Future**

The Haugian Societies of Friends and How They Worked

By

Sigbjorn Ravnaasen

Where were the Haugian Societies of Friends found?

They were found everywhere in the footsteps of Hauge's preaching ministry: in rural areas, in towns, mountain villages, near the sea in the west and north.

The Societies of Friends were made up and marked by the Haugian members:

- They worked hard.
- .-They studied the Bible.
- They showed generosity.
- Their lived cautiously and carefully.
- They lived according to their teaching.
- They used their time talking to each other about spiritual things, shared experiences with each other, and uplifted each other through reading spiritual and devotional books.

### **Fellowships of love with a spirit of unity.**

The Societies of Friends functioned as brothers and sisters fellowships in which they helped each other with both worldly and spiritual needs.

In most of the country, the members of the societies of friends became known as "Haugians" or "Readers" as many called them. Even though Hauge was the obvious spiritual leader, he delegated responsibility to others on a local level. In the so-called "**Hitra-letter**," which Hauge wrote in 1802, he gave local spiritual leadership responsibility to designated persons, both men and women.

The fact that Hauge also appointed women as leaders of the societies was sensational for the time. Equality between men and women came naturally from his understanding of the Bible. On this point, Hauge was "ahead of his time." For him, the question of gender was unimportant. The deciding factor was to find the right person for the right position and location.

Lay people began to take responsibility for both national and foreign mission work. Lay people also gradually began to influence the church's activities, because more and more young people with roots in Christian organizations began to study theology and become pastors in the Norwegian church. Thus, the spiritual legacy of Hans Nielsen Hauge was carried on further in new generations.

### **Practical and holistic service**

He was a practical man who developed his ethical thought models from the Bible, and realized them by practicing them in his daily life. ***My calling is to love God and my neighbour*** was Hauge's vision for his work in Norway. This was the incentive behind his

preaching work and his many business establishments. He was not just a lay preacher, and not just a business leader. The spiritual side of the person must be taken care of, but the responsibility for material and social circumstances for our fellow human beings must also be taken seriously. This view was practised and became a trademark of The Haugian Societies of Friends revealing a holistic ministry where spirit and hand go together.

### **Fighting unemployment**

The rate of unemployment was at that time very high, and Hauge saw that many of the poor did not have work that produced income. To help this need within the population was the basis for the establishment of businesses by him and his friends. By using the expression, “**so idle hands can obtain work,**” Hauge revealed a social thinking and the basis for Haugian business activities. It is anticipated that Hauge and his friends created 9000 workplaces during the first eight years of ministry and the Society of Friends played an important role.

### **Weaving and knitting**

The need for extra income could be urgent in many families, because poverty was widespread. In a letter Hauge wrote in Bergen, he gave a basis for why he would stimulate the starting of, among other things, weaving businesses. He wrote: “**Weaving would be very useful. The poor could get something in life from their work instead of begging**”.

This quote shows that Hauge regarded weaving as an important activity that could provide income and work, especially for women. He had several weaving rooms in Trondheim and other places. He also inspired and taught many to do knitting of stockings and other useful products. He saw that such income could be of vital help especially for women in helping their families to climb out of poverty.

Hauge’s whole life was occupied by the problem of poverty. After his prison experience, he got an assignment as inspector for the poor in an area of Kristiania; a job he was very committed to. He helped poor people in many ways to make their living. Through this socially beneficial work, Hauge won public recognition, and he got many new friends.

### **Haugian businesses as spiritual centres**

One of the most well known Haugian businesses was Eiker Paper Mill. It serves as a good example on how the Haugians businesses also functioned as a Society of Friends. How was the inner life of this well known mill, who worked there and how were the work relationships?

50 people resided at the mill, 21 women, 17 men, and 12 youths, some of whom were under 17 years old. One of the named workers had “old age infirmity,” and some of the others were handicapped. This was completely unusual, but the thought behind it was that everyone should have the opportunity to have meaningful work and live in community with others.

The majority of those who worked, lived at the paper mill and had their board and provisions met. Those costs were paid for through an adjustment in their wages. Mikkel Hauge’s wife, who was called Mother Inger, had responsibility for the household. She was a uniting force for socialization in the mill, and encouraged correct behaviour in such a way that the employees knew they were part of a community. Several young women came to Mother Inger for work. They learned cooking, hygiene, and sewing. Some of them later used these skills when they moved home or to other places.

**What characterized the Haugian Societies of Friends?**      Some key words:

### **1. Care and Fellowship.**

In his letters to his friends, Hauge put great emphasis on the aspect of caring. To show care and concern for others is, in many instances, the basis for an individual's growth, development, and contribution to society. People are equipped in different ways. They cannot be dealt with the same way, and can therefore not be given the same responsibilities. Tasks must be adapted to a person's qualifications. To impose tasks that are too large or heavy on someone may very well lead to failure. Hauge was clear about this, and in both his spoken and written work he urged his friends to be caring, serving others through good works, bearing each other's burdens, showing respect to each other, and being wise in conduct.

### **2. Strong spiritual fellowships**

Strong spiritual fellowships grew within the Haugian movement through home meetings through reading the Bible and other devotional literature. There was also prayer and the singing of hymns. These Haugian fellowships gradually became known as the Societies of Friends. These spiritual communities resulted in a strong unity among the members, along with an attitude that they should support and help each other not just spiritually, but also in practical things. Hauge's beliefs were that love of neighbour, brotherhood, and helpfulness were decisive qualifications in order for the community to function well.

### **3. "The Good Purpose"**

What is "the good purpose?" The struggle for the good in life is not easy. Hauge believed that we must stand together in order to obtain "the good purpose." The more who gather together to encourage a worthy cause, the greater the possibility of success. He said, *When we go forth in goodness, it takes away the evil forces*. He meant that the good must be on the offensive if one is to break down the evil in life and within the community.

### **4. Moderation**

Hauge admonished his friends to be moderate, which means that human beings should be wise and cautious in all that they prevail over. By showing moderation and exercise simple lifestyle one can save much-needed money for investments, or have some remaining for the needs of us and others. Moderation is often attached to generosity and hospitality. For Hauge, moderation is a positive attitude which one should strive for, as opposed to stinginess, which is something to be avoided.

Moderation always has something to give, while a stingy person only saves for his own benefit. Many times Hauge was irritated about well-off people who lived lavish and egotistic lives, while many around them were in need. But he made the same demands regarding moderation towards all people regardless of their position or occupation, rich or poor.

### **5. Brotherhood**

In Hauge's form of brotherhood, there was a strong appeal to the Friends that they should support each other economically in difficult times, lend each other money when there was a need for it, and help each other in all situations. In this way, they lived as true brothers and sisters. These ethics of brotherhood should not just be limited to the Societies of Friends. **"Everyone is my neighbour"**, said Hauge, and he went a step further and maintained that it was a Christian duty to help all those who suffer, to try and make their lives better. We see also a general brotherhood ethics in the Hauge movement. To create work for the unemployed was for Hauge a natural consequence of the ethics of brotherhood.

### **6. A Mind of Service "Our willingness to work and to serve is something that should shine" (Hauge).**

In this quote, which is taken from one of Hauge's letters to his friends, he emphasized the power of example, that of being a good role model. In the same connection, Hauge uses the term "to light," clearly inspired by Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount: *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* (Matthew 5:16)

It is, according to Hauge, important for one's trustworthiness as a Christian in the world that there is accordance between the faith one defends and the actions one does. It was his wish that people would see that, among the Haugians, there was agreement between spirit and hand. Therefore he urged his friends to be a "light" in all that they did.

**Did the Haugian Societies of Friends experience problems?** Yes, just like everyone else does.

### 1. The snare of Egoism

Worship of self is a great danger, said Hauge. Those who follow in Jesus' footsteps must show both humble and serving attitudes toward their fellow human beings. Hauge himself did not use the word "egoism." But he emphasized the danger of being too self absorbed and too occupied with protecting one's own economic status in society. Hauge said that ***the more we get, the more we want.***

*He did not blame those who gather riches for material support, but the danger arises when human passion and desire prevail. Often this will happen at the expense of consideration for others. Such egotistic attitudes can break down a community's opportunities for positive development. Hauge believed that God created people to serve their neighbours. If that perspective is lost, the whole foundation for Hauge's vision would crumble away.*

About his call, he said; ***My calling is to love God and my neighbour.*** Sources say that Hauge's ideas on fellowship and a mind of service really did take root in the circle of friends, and that these attitudes influenced them for many decades after his death.

### 2. Laziness

The danger of laziness is also very obvious. Hauge made repeated requests for the individual to take seriously the call of service to take care of the world. He often used the word "diligent" in his letters and writings. ***Be diligent in good works,*** he wrote, and further: ***Let us now strive to be diligent, where diligence is demanded.*** Laziness was, in Hauge's eyes, a great and destructive vice, something his friends must stay far away from. He constantly came back to the value of work. He impressed upon his friends the fact that work is a virtue. In one of his books, Hauge put the spotlight on both himself and his fellow workers (free translation): ***I and all who take part should commit ourselves to be faithful, work diligently, and live simply rather than being idle and enjoying ourselves.*** He did not neglect to mention himself first. It is clear; he realized that his friends considered him to be their natural spiritual leader throughout the whole nation-wide Haugian network.

### 3. The good example.

The Haugian Societies of Friends and Hauge himself had to endure much criticism from priests and other persons of authority. As a counterbalance against harmful accusations and vicious rumors, Hauge admonished his friends that they must be good role models. He believed that wickedness could not be defeated through arguments and verbal confrontations, but through standing for something positive and showing it to others by the way they lived.

## Summary

Hans Nielsen Hauge laid the foundation for the establishment of many Societies of Friends in several areas in Norway. These Societies became a powerful source for the faithful, and a stimulus for change within society. In these Societies, the members helped each other with spiritual and practical questions. The growth of free Christian organizations in Norway in the mid 1800`s started with the Haugian Societies of Friends. They were also attached together in an economic network over the whole country, which resulted in them becoming an important factor in society in several ways. These liberated Christian Friends also took responsibility in society by establishing businesses which gave work to several thousand people in a country with great poverty. The Haugians also gradually gained political influence and took part in laying the foundation for democratic development in Norway in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **What can we learn from the Haugian Societies of Friends?**

In the discussion groups we would like you to consider what is relevant for the churches represented in this gathering.

#### **Keywords for discussion in groups**

- 1. Caring -**
- 2. Fellowship**
- 3. The Good Purpose**
- 4. Moderation**
- 5. Brotherhood**
- 6. A Mind of Service**
- 7. Egoism**
- 8. Laziness**
- 9. The Good Example**

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