

## ELIMINATING GLOBAL POVERTY

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I read with great interest articles written recently on ending global poverty that exists on a massive scale. How could we accomplish this goal?

Mahatma Gandhi once said: “We have enough for everyone’s need but we do not have enough for everyone’s greed.”

This discussion of poverty brought back many memories for me. Over 25 years ago, I participated in a conference in India on global poverty organized by the United Nations and Institute of Cultural Affairs. It was attended by 650 people from 55 nations around the world, to look at approaches that work in eliminating poverty. Another experience was working with refugees to prepare them for life after their time in the camp in Thailand ended.

First, I believe we need to look at the causes of poverty. They include the following:

- We have made power and wealth into false gods that are maintained at the expense of millions who are struggling to survive.
- Racism and classism are rampant across the globe, and they create tiers of power and privilege that dominate and leave millions without power to live decent lives.  
People from all backgrounds are searching for new definitions to reflect their experience and not just the color of their skin.
- The billions spent on wars and violence diverts needed resources from human needs and only bring on more violence. People and lands devastated by current and past wars leave scars that can never be fully erased and leave people without hope of a viable future. I recently read that we have spent over one trillion dollars on Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Imagine what that could do to eliminate poverty and enable people to live a decent human life.
- The global marketplace that is aimed at maximizing profits for a few deprives millions of needed resources and a future for the next generations.
- Lack of good and ethical governance leaves people powerless and without the necessary skills and education to provide for themselves and their families and communities.
- Lack of moral guidance that leaves people without any vision of the reign of God, the connectedness of all people across the globe, the moral responsibility to care for all of creation and to make moral

choices for the benefit of all, especially the most abandoned and neglected on our planet.

#### WHAT ARE SOME SOLUTIONS TO FREE THE WORLD FROM POVERTY?

- We need to name the false gods in our lives, power, wealth, greed, and move toward a simplified life style. Replace the false gods with compassion, care for people across lines of color, creed and other distinctions. This would result in people claiming their spiritual heritage, without which people will wander aimlessly without any concern for the millions who daily die of hunger, health care or other basic resources for themselves and their families.
- Convince national and global leaders to give up wars as a means of solving problems. War and violence only lead to more violence and leave lands and people devastated. Some of the money used for war could be used for small scale local development effort, with local control to help people get an education and development skills to get resources for the maintenance of themselves and their families. Create a system where capital can be shared so that the majority of people on the planet can live decent human lives. Allowing people to have local control and developing programs where they can earn a living and keep the profits within their own communities can help people regain confidence that they can have a viable future.
- Restore ethics to government, business and all areas of life. We are all spiritual beings and cannot live a full human life without fulfilling and living that aspect of our lives.
- Create inclusive, pluralistic societies for the good of all. Recognize that laws, rules and goals have been created by the dominant culture and need to be changed to include input from all levels of people in society including women. We also need to walk with those who are impoverished – the lepers, people dying of AIDS, those dying of hunger and disease, and those devastated by wars, learn from them and hold out some hope for a better future.
- The common good must be the measuring rod in all decisions made at a political and economic and any other level. None are beyond moral scrutiny. Women too, must be treated with respect.
- Preserving our natural resources and care of all creation is a moral imperative for all.

All of the problems we now experience were created by humans and can be remedied by humans. The responsibility falls on all of us. There is no effort too small to make a difference. Let us begin today with courage and hope to create a new and renewed moral foundation for the benefit of all. Human development, not military solutions will lead to lasting peace. Let us regenerate our imagination and our will to bring it about.