

The law and the state must function on a basis of justice for everyone. One ancient nation was warned in the Qur'an that even a thirsty camel has its drinking rites (Al Qur'an, 54:23-30).

Individual, responsible action is encouraged: positive behaviour is preferred over destructive conduct. We are promised: "Anyone who comes with a fine deed will have ten more like it, while anyone who comes with an evil deed will only be rewarded with its like; they will not be harmed (Al Qur'an, 6:161).

Constructive conduct is encouraged: first with close relatives, then women, children (especially orphans), the poor, feeble minded and wayfarers; all need care and compassion.

Sathya Sai Baba

Whatever talent a person has should be dedicated to the service of the rest of humanity; indeed to all living beings. There in lies fulfilment. All men are kin; they are the same likeness, the same build, moulded out of the same material, with the same divine essence in each. Service to man will help your divinity to bloom, for it will gladden your heart and make you feel that life has been worthwhile. **Service to man is service to God**, for He is in every man and every living being and every stone and stump.

Offer your talents at the feet of God; let every act be a flower, free from creeping worms of envy and egoism, and full of the fragrance of love and sacrifice. If you have the talent for dramatic roles, well use it for the glorification of God for the uplifting of man.

Sikh

God, in Your Mercy You care for all beings and creatures.
You produce grain and water in abundance;
You eliminate pain and poverty
And carry all beings across.
God the great giver heard our prayer
and the world is cooled and comforted.
Take me into Your Embrace and take away all my pain.
Nanak says meditate on the Naam, the Name of the Lord
The House of God is fruitful and prosperous.

Guru Granth Sahib P.1251

Interfaith Annual Gathering 2005



Year of Microcredit

**"Improving the Quality
of Life – For All"**



Baha'i

"... the world of humanity is in need of great improvement ... Consider how the greatest men in the world – whether among prophets or philosophers – all have forfeited their own comfort, have sacrificed their own pleasure for the well-being of humanity ... They have sacrificed their own wealth for that of the general welfare ... forfeited their own honour for the honour of mankind. Therefore it becomes evident that this is the highest attainment for the world of humanity.

We ask God to endow human souls with justice so that they may be fair, and may strive to provide for the comfort of all, that each member of humanity may pass his life in the utmost comfort and welfare ... live in the utmost joy, happiness and gladness ... We must all strive and concentrate all our thoughts in order that such happiness may accrue to the world of humanity ..."

Baha'i Writings

Brahma Kumaris

The value of the International Year of Microcredit from a spiritual perspective is that micro credit can play an invaluable role in restoring the self-respect of people in societies, particularly women. A damaging consequence of low self-respect is that women come to accept their nominated status and are easily influenced by others.

Studies have found that micro credit can enable women to own key assets, play an important role in decision-making and even take on leadership roles. Self-respect, or knowing and valuing the truth of one's identity, as spirit or soul, originally peaceful, is important regardless of the role of the male or the female.

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However, although in each and every soul, both masculine and feminine principles are to be found, currently, the feminine principle of virtue – such as mercy, love, patience and truth – plays an important role in enabling, especially others, to move forward – and in the right way.

Buddhist

The sixth realisation in Buddha's *Discourse on the Eight Realisations of the Great Being* is the awareness that poverty creates hatred and anger, which creates a vicious cycle of negative thoughts and actions. From the Buddhist point of view, to reduce poverty is one way to reduce hatred and anger in the world and thus helps stop people harbouring negative thoughts and doing harmful actions. The emphasis of the United Nations theme for 2005 "the Year of Microcredit" is to develop and empower the potential of poor and low income people by institutions like banks, offering very small, readily repayable loans. Microcredit can help them meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life. When one is more or less satisfied with one's life, one tends to be more tolerant towards and more co-operative with the world. This is a very effective way to achieve social justice for everyone.

Christian

Although poverty will never be overcome totally, Christians are challenged to stand up against it. Jesus called the poor and needy "my brothers". What we do to others Jesus said, we do to Him. (Matthew 25:31-46) If we want to serve God, we should serve the people in need.

The Bible is frank: worship without corresponding care for the poor is hollow. We are told, "If you do away with the yoke of oppression...and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness..." (Isaiah 58:9-10).

Paul encourages Christians: "In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults." (1. Corinthians 14:20) Combating poverty should be done with compassion, intelligence, knowledge and skill. Helping people help themselves is best, because it strengthens the self-esteem of the recipient and has a higher chance of success.

Hindu

Hindu philosophy of 'Sanatana Dharma' meaning Universal Pathway shows that improved quality of life is easy to achieve. Happiness is derived from contentment. If we are grateful to the universe for what we receive, we are contented. This leads to happiness. People chase after money thinking that money can buy happiness. In most cases they are proved wrong.

Mahatma Gandhi, said, "The resources in this world are sufficient for the needs of all people. However, it may not satisfy the desire of one person". We could have unlimited desires. But, our needs are limited. To enjoy happiness, a balance between desires and wants is essential.

When we are in harmony with fellow humans and other living objects including plants, animals and Mother Nature, we can strengthen relationships at different levels. Happiness and improved relationships leads to improved quality of life.

Jewish

When Moses parted the Red Sea long ago and delivered the Israelites freedom from slavery, no greater gift could have been given to his people than the return of their own free will, choice and empowerment. Moses' famous achievement has echoed through the ages as an example for us all to help others. The United Nations Year of Microcredit allows banks to assist and empower the potential of the poor, low income and disenfranchised people with low interest loans and an ability to make a huge difference socially and financially. Such modern day actions are rare, but powerful. "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Muslim

Everyone has obligations to his family and towards society. Only God's commanding presence makes us acutely aware of our individual duty throughout the world. Welfare tax redistributes wealth among the poor and needy enabling society to function in a just manner.

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