

Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education

# Spiritual Foundations for the Equality of Women and Men

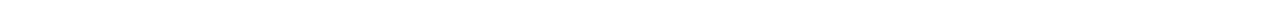


PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

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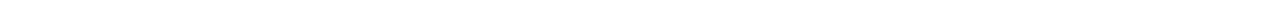
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## Devotions Equality and Oneness



God, my God! These are Thy feeble servants; they are Thy loyal bondsmen and Thy handmaidens, who have bowed themselves down before Thine exalted Utterance and humbled themselves at Thy Threshold of light, and borne witness to Thy oneness through which the Sun hath been made to shine in midday splendour. They have listened to the summons Thou didst raise from out Thy hidden Realm, and with hearts quivering with love and rapture, they have responded to Thy call.

Lord, shower upon them all the outpourings of Thy mercy, rain down upon them all the waters of Thy grace. Make them to grow as beauteous plants in the garden of heaven, and from the full and brimming clouds of Thy bestowals and out of the deep pools of Thine abounding grace make Thou this garden to flower and keep it ever green and lustrous, ever fresh and shimmering and fair.

Thou art verily the Mighty, the Exalted, the Powerful, He Who alone, in the heavens and on the earth, abideth unchanged. There is none other God save Thee, the Lord of manifest tokens and signs.

*ABDU'L-BAHÁ: SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ, PAGES 24-25*

O Thou kind Lord! O Thou Who art generous and merciful! We are the servants of Thy threshold and are gathered beneath the sheltering shadow of Thy divine unity. The sun of Thy mercy is shining upon all, and the clouds of Thy bounty shower upon all. Thy gifts encompass all, Thy loving providence sustains all, Thy protection overshadows all, and the glances of Thy favor are cast upon all. O Lord! Grant Thine infinite bestowals, and let the light of Thy guidance shine. Illumine the eyes, gladden the hearts with abiding joy. Confer a new spirit upon all people and bestow upon them eternal life. Unlock the gates of true understanding and let the light of faith shine resplendent. Gather all people beneath the shadow of Thy bounty and cause them to unite in harmony, so that they may become as the rays of one sun, as the waves of one ocean, and as the fruit of one tree. May they drink from the same fountain. May they be refreshed by the same breeze. May they receive illumination from the same source of light. Thou art the Giver, the Merciful, the Omnipotent.

*ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 116*

In this Day the Hand of divine grace hath removed all distinctions. The servants of God and His handmaidens are regarded on the same plane. Blessed is the servant who hath attained unto that which God hath decreed, and likewise the leaf moving in accordance with the breezes of His will. This favour is great and this station lofty. His bounties and bestowals are ever present and manifest.

*BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: WOMEN, PAGE 358*

Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the drops of one ocean.

*BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, PAGE 129*

Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.

*BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF, PAGE 14*

Be as one spirit, one soul, leaves of one tree, flowers of one garden, waves of one ocean.

*ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 24*

My handmaiden, O My leaf! Render thou thanks unto the Best-Beloved of the world for having attained this boundless grace at a time when the world's learned and most distinguished men have remained deprived thereof. We have designated thee `a leaf' that thou mayest, like unto leaves, be stirred by the gentle wind of the Will of God -exalted be His glory - even as the leaves of the trees are stirred by onrushing winds. Yield thou thanks unto thy Lord by virtue of this brilliant utterance. Wert thou to perceive the sweetness of the title `O My handmaiden' thou wouldst find thyself detached from all mankind, devoutly engaged day and night in communion with Him Who is the sole Desire of the world.

In words of incomparable beauty We have made fitting mention of such leaves and handmaidens as have quaffed from the living waters of heavenly grace and have kept their eyes directed towards God. Happy and blessed are they indeed. Ere long shall God reveal their station whose loftiness no word can befittingly express nor any description adequately describe.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, PAGES 254-255

If you could see with the eye of truth, great waves of spirituality would be visible to you in this place. The power of the Holy Spirit is here for all. Praise be to God that your hearts are inspired with Divine fervour! Your souls are as waves on the sea of the spirit; although each individual is a distinct wave, the ocean is one, all are united in God.

Every heart should radiate unity, so that the Light of the one Divine Source of all may shine forth bright and luminous. We must not consider the separate waves alone, but the entire sea. We should rise from the individual to the whole. The spirit is as one great ocean and the waves thereof are the souls of men.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGES 83-84

Although these waves may differ in form and shape, they are waves of the same sea. Flowers may be variegated in colors, but they are all flowers of one garden. Trees differ though they grow in the same orchard. All are nourished and quickened into life by the bounty of the same rain, all grow and develop by the heat and light of the one sun, all are refreshed and exhilarated by the same breeze that they may bring forth varied fruits. This is according to the creative wisdom. If all trees bore the same kind of fruit, it would cease to be delicious. In their never-ending variety man finds enjoyment instead of monotony.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 51

The plurality of humanity may be likened to the waves, but the reality of humankind is like the sea itself. All the waves are of the same water; all are waves of one ocean.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 284

From separation doth every kind of hurt and harm proceed, but the union of created things doth ever yield most laudable results. From the pairing of even the smallest particles in the world of being are the grace and bounty of God made manifest; and the higher the degree, the more momentous is the union. `Glory be to Him Who hath created all the pairs, of such things as earth produceth, and out of men themselves, and of things beyond their ken.'(1) And above all other unions is that between human beings, especially when it cometh to pass in the love of God. Thus is the primal oneness made to appear; thus is laid the foundation of love in the spirit.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ*, PAGE 119

## Purpose of Equality Training



Purpose: To assist each of us to more effectively live and teach the principle of the equality of women and men.

Equality trainers offer workshops designed to assist the friends to identify and implement effective strategies for promoting equality in our communities and in the world at large. These strategies include exploring the meaning of equality and the necessity for cooperation and mutual support among women and men; fostering equality in marriage and in Bahá'í community life; raising children to live out the principle of equality; and teaching this principle to others.

Through each of the four modules, learners practice active, practical steps to promote gender equality in the home, the Bahá'í community, and in every field of human endeavor.

# The Organizational Schema



Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception, and eloquent speech

Bahá'u'lláh, BE #9

The organization of the learning model for the Curriculum, which will be shared in Module Four, has been guided by this quotation. Learning objectives for the children within each topic area of each strand have been described in accordance with the following definitions:

## **KNOWLEDGE**

A keen awareness of information and facts. The remembering and recall of previously learned material.

## **WISDOM**

True comprehension and insight. The discovery, through experience, of the meaning of information and facts. Wisdom is acquired through experience, consultation, reflection, inspiration and an evolving understanding of spiritual truth.

## **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

Penetrating inner vision and the acquisition and utilization of a Bahá'í perspective. The discovery of purpose and meaning. The bringing to bear of Bahá'í spiritual values, principles and laws upon the individual's expanding consciousness of issues and problems. As such it includes the capacity to apply, analyze, and evaluate, using Bahá'í Law, principles and qualities as the standard for discernment.

## **ELOQUENT 'SPEECH'**

The ability to articulate knowledge, understanding and beliefs in a clear and comprehensive way. For the purposes of the Core Curriculum the definition of eloquent "speech" has been extended beyond articulated language to include the manifestation of all the behaviors that reflect the internalization of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. This involves the integration and synthesis of learning into the active expression of the understanding acquired through knowledge, wisdom and spiritual perception. As such it is the endeavor to live the Bahá'í life, to teach and engage in service to humanity.



# SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN

## CORE CURRICULUM FOR A SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

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### MODULE ONE

#### Your Role as an Equality Worker

#### Learning Objectives

<b>KNOWLEDGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To know some of the events in the life of the Greatest Holy Leaf.</li><li>To recognize some of the factors that distinguish this century from others.</li><li>To know the logical arguments that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to teach the principle of equality.</li><li>To know that human virtues belong equally to all.</li><li>To identify effective strategies for promoting equality.</li><li>Become familiar with the national teaching initiative focusing on equality.</li><li>To know that the Greatest Holy Leaf is an example for all mankind.</li></ul>
<b>WISDOM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To recognize the station of the Greatest Holy Leaf in the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.</li><li>To understand the significance of the principle of the equality of women and men fulfilling prophesy and initiating a new era of human fulfillment.</li><li>To understand that equality is a critical factor in establishing peace and prosperity.</li><li>To understand that the distinct qualities of women and men may be related to child rearing.</li><li>To understand that both love and justice promote equality and preserve unity.</li><li>To understand the core curriculum learning model.</li></ul>
<b>SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To perceive ways emulate the example of the Greatest Holy Leaf.</li><li>To recognize some of the assumptions we have about women and men.</li><li>To perceive that both sexes can express all the qualities of God.</li><li>To perceive the relationship between the principles of equality and unity.</li><li>To perceive ways to use the core curriculum learning model for self transformation.</li></ul>
<b>ELOQUENT ‘SPEECH’</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To express how our own human relationships reflect the principles of oneness and equality.</li><li>To use logic and reason to teach the principle of equality.</li><li>To plan to use a presentation on equality in our local communities.</li><li>To demonstrate understanding of the complementary relationship of men and women.</li><li>To demonstrate some strategies for promoting equality.</li><li>Demonstrate capacity to host spiritual gatherings to introduce the principle of equality to all humankind</li></ul>

## Bahíyyih Khánum, The Greatest Holy Leaf

### Focus Questions:

1. What qualities did the Greatest Holy Leaf exemplify and under what circumstances of time and place?
2. How can I incorporate those qualities in my life, in my own circumstances?
3. What will be the impact on my own self, my family and friends, my community, and the world at large as I increasingly manifest the qualities so beautifully demonstrated by the Greatest Holy Leaf?



As far back as the concluding stages of the heroic age of the Cause, which witnessed the imprisonment of Bahá'u'lláh in the Síyáh-Chál of Tíhrán, the Greatest Holy Leaf, then still in her infancy, was privileged to taste of the cup of woe which the first believers of that Apostolic Age had quaffed.

How well I remember her recall, at a time when her faculties were still unimpaired, the gnawing suspense that ate into the hearts of those who watched by her side, at the threshold of her pillaged house, expectant to hear at any moment the news of Bahá'u'lláh's imminent execution! In those sinister hours, she often recounted, her parents had so suddenly lost their earthly possessions that within the space of a single day from being the privileged member of one of the wealthiest families of Tíhrán she had sunk to the state of a sufferer from unconcealed poverty. Deprived of the means of subsistence her illustrious mother, the famed Navváb, was constrained to place in the palm of her daughter's hand a handful of flour and to induce her to accept it as a substitute for her daily bread.

And when at a later time this revered and precious member of the Holy Family, then in her teens, came to be entrusted by the guiding hand of her Father with missions that no girl of her age could, or would be willing to, perform, with what spontaneous joy she seized her opportunity and acquitted herself of the task with which she had been entrusted! The delicacy and extreme gravity of such functions as she, from time to time, was called upon to fulfil, when the city of Baghád was swept by the hurricane which the heedlessness and perversity of Mírzá Yahyá had unchained, as well as the tender solicitude which, at so early an age, she evinced during the period of Bahá'u'lláh's enforced retirement to the mountains of Sulaymáníyyih, marked her as one who was both capable of sharing the burden, and willing to make the sacrifice, which her high birth demanded.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, PAGES 32-33

That her sensitive heart instantaneously reacted to the slightest injury that befell the least significant of creatures, whether friend or foe, no one who knew her well could doubt. And yet such was the restraining power of her will - a will which her spirit of self-renunciation so often prompted her to suppress - that a superficial observer might well be led to question the intensity of her emotions or to belittle the range of her sympathies. In the school of adversity she, already endowed by Providence with the virtues of meekness and fortitude, learned through the example and exhortations of the Great Sufferer, Who was her Father, the lesson she was destined to teach the great mass of His followers for so long after Him.

Armed with the powers with which an intimate and long-standing companionship with Bahá'u'lláh had already equipped her, and benefiting by the magnificent example which the steadily widening range of Ábdu'l-Bahá's activities afforded her, she was prepared to face the storm which the treacherous conduct of the Covenant-breakers had aroused and to withstand its most damaging onslaughts.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, PAGES 35-36

With the passing of Bahá'u'lláh and the fierce onslaught of the forces of disruption that followed in its wake, the Greatest Holy Leaf, now in the hey-day of her life, rose to the height of her great opportunity and acquitted herself worthily of her task. It would take me beyond the compass of the tribute I am moved to pay to her memory were I to dwell upon the incessant machinations to which Muhammad-Alí, the arch-breaker of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, and his despicable supporters basely resorted, upon the agitation which their cleverly-directed campaign of misrepresentation and calumny produced in quarters directly connected with Sultan Abdu'l-Hamíd and his advisers, upon the trials and investigations to which it gave rise, upon the rigidity of the incarceration it reimposed, and upon the perils it revived. Suffice it to say that but for her sleepless vigilance, her tact, her courtesy, her extreme patience and heroic fortitude, grave complications might have ensued and the load of Ábdu'l-Bahá's anxious care would have been considerably increased.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, PAGES 37-38

The outbreak of the Great War gave her yet another opportunity to reveal the true worth of her character and to release the latent energies of her heart. The residence of Ábdu'l-Bahá in Haifa was besieged, all throughout that dreary conflict, by a concourse of famished men, women and children whom the maladministration, the cruelty and neglect of the officials of the Ottoman Government had driven to seek an alleviation to their woes. From the hand of the Greatest Holy Leaf, and out of the abundance of her heart, these hapless victims of a contemptible tyranny, received day after day unforgettable evidences of a love they had learned to envy and admire. Her words of cheer and comfort, the food, the money, the clothing she freely dispensed, the remedies which, by a process of her own, she herself prepared and diligently applied - all these had their share in comforting the disconsolate, in restoring sight to the blind, in sheltering the orphan, in healing the sick, and in succouring the homeless and the wanderer.

She had reached, amidst the darkness of the war days the high water-mark of her spiritual attainments. Few, if any, among the unnumbered benefactors of society whose privilege has been to allay, in various measures, the hardships and sufferings entailed by that Fierce Conflict, gave as freely and as disinterestedly as she did; few exercised that undefinable influence upon the beneficiaries of their gifts.

Age seemed to have accentuated the tenderness of her loving heart, and to have widened still further the range of her sympathies. The sight of appalling suffering around her steeled her energies and revealed such potentialities that her most intimate associates had failed to suspect.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, PAGES 40-41

It would take me too long to make even a brief allusion to those incidents of her life, each of which eloquently proclaims her as a daughter, worthy to inherit that priceless heritage bequeathed to her by Bahá'u'lláh. A purity of life that reflected itself in even the minutest details of her daily occupations and activities; a tenderness of heart that obliterated every distinction of creed, class and colour; a resignation and serenity that evoked to the mind the calm and heroic fortitude of the Báb; a natural fondness of flowers and children that was so characteristic of Bahá'u'lláh; an unaffected simplicity of manners; an extreme sociability which made her accessible to all; a generosity, a love, at once disinterested and indiscriminating, that reflected so clearly the attributes of Ábdu'l-Bahá's character; a sweetness of temper; a cheerfulness that no amount of sorrow could becloud; a quiet and unassuming disposition that served to enhance a thousandfold the prestige of her exalted rank; a forgiving nature that instantly disarmed the most unyielding enemy - these rank among the outstanding attributes of a saintly life which history will acknowledge as having been endowed with a celestial potency that few of the heroes of the past possessed.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, PAGES 42-43

Dearly-beloved Greatest Holy Leaf! Through the mist of tears that fill my eyes I can clearly see, as I pen these lines, thy noble figure before me, and can recognize the serenity of thy kindly face. I can still gaze, though the shadows of the grave separate us, into thy blue, love-deep eyes, and can feel in its calm intensity, the immense love thou didst bear for the Cause of Thine Almighty Father, the attachment that bound thee to the most lowly and insignificant among its followers, the warm affection thou didst cherish for me in Thine heart. The memory of the ineffable beauty of thy smile shall ever continue to cheer and hearten me in the thorny path I am destined to pursue. The remembrance of the touch of thine hand shall spur me on to follow steadfastly in thy way. The sweet magic of thy voice shall remind me, when the hour of adversity is at its darkest, to hold fast to the rope thou didst seize so firmly all the days of thy life.

Bear thou this my message to Ábdu'l-Bahá, thine exalted and divinely-appointed Brother: If the Cause for which Bahá'u'lláh toiled and laboured, for which Thou didst suffer years of agonizing sorrow, for the sake of which streams of sacred blood have flowed, should, in the days to come, encounter storms more severe than those it has already weathered, do Thou continue to overshadow, with Thine all-encompassing care and wisdom, Thy frail, Thy unworthy appointed child.

Intercede, O noble and well-favoured scion of a heavenly Father, for me no less than for the toiling masses of thy ardent lovers, who have sworn undying allegiance to thy memory, whose souls have been nourished by the energies of thy love, whose conduct has been moulded by the inspiring example of thy life, and whose imaginations are fired by the imperishable evidences of thy lively faith, thy unshakable constancy, thy invincible heroism, thy great renunciation.

Whatever betide us, however distressing the vicissitudes which the nascent Faith of God may yet experience, we pledge ourselves, before the mercy-seat of thy glorious Father, to hand on, unimpaired and undivided, to generations yet unborn, the glory of that tradition of which thou hast been its most brilliant exemplar.

In the innermost recesses of our hearts, O thou exalted Leaf of the Abhá Paradise, we have reared for thee a shining mansion that the hand of time can never undermine, a shrine which shall frame eternally the matchless beauty of thy countenance, an altar whereon the fire of thy consuming love shall burn for ever.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHLÁNUM*, PAGES 43-45

# This Radiant Century

## Focus Questions:

1. What are some of the scientific evidences and spiritual indicators that this is truly a radiant century?
2. How does the promulgation of the principle of equality indicate that this is a new and wonderful age?



The realities of things have been revealed in this radiant century, and that which is true must come to the surface. Among these realities is the principle of the equality of man and woman - equal rights and prerogatives in all things appertaining to humanity.

*ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 283*

In the estimation of historians this radiant century is equivalent to one hundred centuries of the past. If comparison be made with the sum total of all former human achievements, it will be found that the discoveries, scientific advancement and material civilization of this present century have equaled, yea far exceeded the progress and outcome of one hundred former centuries. The production of books and compilations of literature alone bears witness that the output of the human mind in this century has been greater and more enlightening than all the past centuries together. It is evident, therefore, that this century is of paramount importance. Reflect upon the miracles of accomplishment which have already characterized it: the discoveries in every realm of human research. Inventions, scientific knowledge, ethical reforms and regulations established for the welfare of humanity, mysteries of nature explored, invisible forces brought into visibility and subjection - a veritable wonder-world of new phenomena and conditions heretofore unknown to man now open to his uses and further investigation. The East and West can communicate instantly. A human being can soar in the skies or speed in submarine depths. The power of steam has linked the continents. Trains cross the deserts and pierce the barriers of mountains; ships find unerring pathways upon the trackless oceans. Day by day discoveries are increasing. What a wonderful century this is! It is an age of universal reformation.... Just as the thoughts and hypotheses of past ages are fruitless today, likewise dogmas and codes of human invention are obsolete and barren of product in religion. Nay, it is true that they are the cause of enmity and conducive to strife in the world of humanity; war and bloodshed proceed from them, and the oneness of mankind finds no recognition in their observance. Therefore, it is our duty in this radiant century to investigate the essentials of divine religion, seek the realities underlying the oneness of the world of humanity and discover the source of fellowship and agreement which will unite mankind in the heavenly bond of love...

If love and agreement are manifest in a single family, that family will advance, become illumined and spiritual; but if enmity and hatred exist within it, destruction and dispersion are inevitable. This is, likewise, true of a city. If those who dwell within it manifest a spirit of accord and fellowship, it will progress steadily and human conditions become brighter, whereas through enmity and strife it will be degraded and its inhabitants scattered. In the same way, the people of a nation develop and advance toward civilization and enlightenment through love and accord and are disintegrated by war and strife. Finally, this is true of humanity itself in the aggregate. When love is realized and the ideal spiritual bonds unite the hearts of men, the whole human race will be uplifted, the world will continually grow more spiritual and radiant and the happiness and tranquillity of mankind be immeasurably increased. Warfare and strife will be uprooted, disagreement and dissension pass away and universal peace unite the nations and peoples of the world. All mankind will dwell together as one family, blend as the waves of one sea, shine as stars of one firmament and appear as fruits of the same tree. This is the happiness and felicity of humankind. This is the illumination of man, the eternal glory and everlasting life; this is the divine bestowal.

*ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGES 143-146*

## Equality: A Key to Peace



### Focus Questions:

1. In what ways will establishing the full equality of women and men promote peace?
2. In what ways will full equality facilitate human progress?
3. What are the benefits of equality to men?

...In the estimation of God there is no distinction of sex. The one whose heart is most pure, whose deeds and service in the Cause of God are greater and nobler, is most acceptable before the divine threshold - whether male or female. In the vegetable and animal kingdoms sex exists in perfect equality and without distinction or invidious estimate. The animal, although inferior to man in intelligence and reason, recognizes sex equality. Why should man, who is endowed with the sense of justice and sensibilities of conscience, be willing that one of the members of the human family should be rated and considered as subordinate? Such differentiation is neither intelligent nor conscientious; therefore, the principle of religion has been revealed by Bahá'u'lláh that woman must be given the privilege of equal education with man and full right to his prerogatives. That is to say, there must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation. Then the world will attain unity and harmony. In past ages humanity has been defective and inefficient because it has been incomplete. War and its ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war. Woman rears the child and educates the youth to maturity. She will refuse to give her sons for sacrifice upon the field of battle. In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind. Inasmuch as human society consists of two parts, the male and female, each the complement of the other, the happiness and stability of humanity cannot be assured unless both are perfected. Therefore, the standard and status of man and woman must become equalized.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 108

The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. When the two wings or parts become equivalent in strength, enjoying the same prerogatives, the flight of man will be exceedingly lofty and extraordinary. Therefore, woman must receive the same education as man and all inequality be adjusted. Thus, imbued with the same virtues as man, rising through all the degrees of human attainment, women will become the peers of men, and until this equality is established, true progress and attainment for the human race will not be facilitated.

The evident reasons underlying this are as follows: Woman by nature is opposed to war; she is an advocate of peace. Children are reared and brought up by the mothers who give them the first principles of education and labor assiduously in their behalf. Consider, for instance, a mother who has tenderly reared a son for twenty years to the age of maturity. Surely she will not consent to having that son torn asunder and killed in the field of battle. Therefore, as woman advances toward the degree of man in power and privilege, with the right of vote and control in human government, most assuredly war will cease; for woman is naturally the most devoted and staunch advocate of international peace.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 375

**2 May 1912 - Talk to Federation of Women's Clubs,  
Hotel La Salle, Chicago, Illinois**  
Notes by Joseph H. Hannen

**Focus Question:**

What strategies did the Master use to promulgate the principle of equality in contemporary society?



One of the functions of the sun is to quicken and reveal the hidden realities of the kingdoms of existence. Through the light and heat of the great central luminary, all that is potential in the earth is awakened and comes forth into the realm of the visible. The fruit hidden in the tree appears upon its branches in response to the power of the sun; man and all other organisms live, move and have their being under its developing rays; nature is resplendent with countless evolutionary forms through its pervading impulse - so that we can say a function of the sun is the revelation of the mysteries and creative purposes hidden within the phenomenal world.

The outer sun is a sign or symbol of the inner and ideal Sun of Truth, the Word of God. Inasmuch as this is the century of light, it is evident that the Sun of Reality, the Word, has revealed itself to all humankind. One of the potentialities hidden in the realm of humanity was the capability or capacity of womanhood. Through the effulgent rays of divine illumination the capacity of woman has become so awakened and manifest in this age that equality of man and woman is an established fact. In past ages woman was wronged and oppressed. This was especially the case in Asia and Africa. In certain parts of Asia women were not considered as members of humankind. They were looked upon as inferior, unworthy creatures, subordinate and subject to man. A certain people known as the Nusayris held to the belief for a long period that woman was the incarnation of the evil spirit, or Satan, and that man alone was the manifestation of God, the Merciful. At last this century of light dawned, the realities shone forth, and the mysteries long hidden from human vision were revealed. Among these revealed realities was the great principle of the equality of man and woman, which is now finding recognition throughout the whole world - America, Europe and the Orient.

History records the appearance in the world of women who have been signs of guidance, power and accomplishment. Some were notable poets, some philosophers and scientists, others courageous upon the field of battle. Qurratu'l-'Ayn, a Bahá'í, was a poetess. She discomfited the learned men of Persia by her brilliancy and fervor. When she entered a meeting, even the learned were silent. She was so well versed in philosophy and science that those in her presence always considered and consulted her first. Her courage was unparalleled; she faced her enemies fearlessly until she was killed. She withstood a despotic king, the Shah of Persia, who had the power to decree the death of any of his subjects. There was not a day during which he did not command the execution of some. This woman singly and alone withstood such a despot until her last breath, then gave her life for her faith.

Consider the mysteries revealed during the last half century, all due to the effulgence of the Sun of Reality, which has been so gloriously manifested in this age and cycle. In this day man must investigate reality impartially and without prejudice in order to reach the true knowledge and conclusions. What, then, constitutes the inequality between man and woman? Both are human. In powers and function each is the complement of the other. At most it is this: that woman has been denied the opportunities which man has so long enjoyed, especially the privilege of education. But even this is not always a shortcoming. Shall we consider it an imperfection and weakness in her nature that she is not proficient in the school of military tactics, that she cannot go forth to the field of battle and kill, that she is not able to handle a deadly weapon? Nay, rather, is it not a compliment when we say that in hardness of heart and cruelty she is inferior to man?

The woman who is asked to arm herself and kill her fellow creatures will say, "I cannot." Is this to be considered a fault and lack of qualification as man's equal? Yet be it known that if woman had been taught and trained in the military science of slaughter, she would have been the equivalent of man even in this accomplishment. But God forbid! May woman never attain this proficiency; may she never wield weapons of war, for the destruction of humanity is not a glorious achievement. The upbuilding of a home, the bringing of joy and comfort into human hearts are truly glories of mankind. Let not a man glory in this, that he can kill his fellow creatures; nay, rather, let him glory in this, that he can love them.

When we consider the kingdoms of existence below man, we find no distinction or estimate of superiority and inferiority between male and female. Among the myriad organisms of the vegetable and animal kingdoms sex exists, but there is no differentiation whatever as to relative importance and value in the equation of life. If we investigate impartially, we may even find species in which the female is superior or preferable to the male. For instance, there are trees such as the fig, the male of which is fruitless while the female is fruitful. The male of the date palm is valueless while the female bears abundantly. Inasmuch as we find no ground for distinction or superiority according to the creative wisdom in the lower kingdoms, is it logical or becoming of man to make such distinction in regard to himself? The male of the animal kingdom does not glory in its being male and superior to the female. In fact, equality exists and is recognized. Why should man, a higher and more intelligent creature, deny and deprive himself of this equality the animals enjoy? His surest index and guide as to the creative intention concerning himself are the conditions and analogies of the kingdoms below him where equality of the sexes is fundamental.

The truth is that all mankind are the creatures and servants of one God, and in His estimate all are human. Man is a generic term applying to all humanity. The biblical statement "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" does not mean that woman was not created. The image and likeness of God apply to her as well. In Persian and Arabic there are two distinct words translated into English as man: one meaning man and woman collectively, the other distinguishing man as male from woman the female. The first word and its pronoun are generic, collective; the other is restricted to the male. This is the same in Hebrew.

To accept and observe a distinction which God has not intended in creation is ignorance and superstition. The fact which is to be considered, however, is that woman, having formerly been deprived, must now be allowed equal opportunities with man for education and training. There must be no difference in their education. Until the reality of equality between man and woman is fully established and attained, the highest social development of mankind is not possible. Even granted that woman is inferior to man in some degree of capacity or accomplishment, this or any other distinction would continue to be productive of discord and trouble. The only remedy is education, opportunity; for equality means equal qualification. In brief, the assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman, as if her attainment to equality was creationally impossible; woman's aspiration toward advancement will be checked by it, and she will gradually become hopeless. On the contrary, we must declare that her capacity is equal, even greater than man's. This will inspire her with hope and ambition, and her susceptibilities for advancement will continually increase. She must not be told and taught that she is weaker and inferior in capacity and qualification. If a pupil is told that his intelligence is less than his fellow pupils, it is a very great drawback and handicap to his progress. He must be encouraged to advance by the statement, "You are most capable, and if you endeavor, you will attain the highest degree."

It is my hope that the banner of equality may be raised throughout the five continents where as yet it is not fully recognized and established. In this enlightened world of the West woman has advanced an immeasurable degree beyond the women of the Orient. And let it be known once more that until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible. For the world of humanity consists of two parts or members: one is woman; the other is man. Until these two members are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality. God willing, this is to be so.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGES 73-77

## 20 May 1912 - Talk at Woman's Suffrage Meeting, Metropolitan Temple, Seventh Avenue and Fourteenth Street, New York, New York

Notes by Esther Foster

### Focus Question:

What strategies did the Master use to promulgate the principle of equality in contemporary society?



Today questions of the utmost importance are facing humanity, questions peculiar to this radiant century. In former centuries there was not even mention of them. Inasmuch as this is the century of illumination, the century of humanity, the century of divine bestowals, these questions are being presented for the expression of public opinion, and in all the countries of the world, discussion is taking place looking to their solution.

One of these questions concerns the rights of woman and her equality with man. In past ages it was held that woman and man were not equal - that is to say, woman was considered inferior to man, even from the standpoint of her anatomy and creation. She was considered especially inferior in intelligence, and the idea prevailed universally that it was not allowable for her to step into the arena of important affairs. In some countries man went so far as to believe and teach that woman belonged to a sphere lower than human. But in this century, which is the century of light and the revelation of mysteries, God is proving to the satisfaction of humanity that all this is ignorance and error; nay, rather, it is well established that mankind and womankind as parts of composite humanity are coequal and that no difference in estimate is allowable, for all are human. The conditions in past centuries were due to woman's lack of opportunity. She was denied the right and privilege of education and left in her undeveloped state. Naturally, she could not and did not advance. In reality, God has created all mankind, and in the estimation of God there is no distinction as to male and female. The one whose heart is pure is acceptable in His sight, be that one man or woman. God does not inquire, "Art thou woman or art thou man?" He judges human actions. If these are acceptable in the threshold of the Glorious One, man and woman will be equally recognized and rewarded.

Furthermore, the education of woman is more necessary and important than that of man, for woman is the trainer of the child from its infancy. If she be defective and imperfect herself, the child will necessarily be deficient; therefore, imperfection of woman implies a condition of imperfection in all mankind, for it is the mother who rears, nurtures and guides the growth of the child. This is not the function of the father. If the educator be incompetent, the educated will be correspondingly lacking. This is evident and incontrovertible. Could the student be brilliant and accomplished if the teacher is illiterate and ignorant? The mothers are the first educators of mankind; if they be imperfect, alas for the condition and future of the race.

Again, it is well established in history that where woman has not participated in human affairs the outcomes have never attained a state of completion and perfection. On the other hand, every influential undertaking of the human world wherein woman has been a participant has attained importance. This is historically true and beyond disproof even in religion. Jesus Christ had twelve disciples and among His followers a woman known as Mary Magdalene. Judas Iscariot had become a traitor and hypocrite, and after the crucifixion the remaining eleven disciples were wavering and undecided. It is certain from the evidence of the Gospels that the one who comforted them and reestablished their faith was Mary Magdalene.

The world of humanity consists of two parts: male and female. Each is the complement of the other. Therefore, if one is defective, the other will necessarily be incomplete, and perfection cannot be attained. There is a right hand and a left hand in the human body, functionally equal in service and administration. If either proves defective, the defect will naturally extend to the other by involving the completeness of the whole; for accomplishment is not normal unless both are perfect. If we say one hand is deficient, we prove the inability and incapacity of the other; for single-handed there is no full accomplishment. Just as physical accomplishment is complete with two hands, so man and woman, the two parts of the social body, must be perfect. It is not natural that either should remain undeveloped; and until both are perfected, the happiness of the human world will not be realized.

The most momentous question of this day is international peace and arbitration, and universal peace is impossible without universal suffrage. Children are educated by the women. The mother bears the troubles and anxieties of rearing the child, undergoes the ordeal of its birth and training. Therefore, it is most difficult for mothers to send to the battlefield those upon whom they have lavished such love and care. Consider a son reared and trained twenty years by a devoted mother. What sleepless nights and restless, anxious days she has spent! Having brought him through dangers and difficulties to the age of maturity, how agonizing then to sacrifice him upon the battlefield! Therefore, the mothers will not sanction war nor be satisfied with it. So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it. This is true and without doubt.

It has been objected by some that woman is not equally capable with man and that she is deficient by creation. This is pure imagination. The difference in capability between man and woman is due entirely to opportunity and education. Heretofore woman has been denied the right and privilege of equal development. If equal opportunity be granted her, there is no doubt she would be the peer of man. History will evidence this. In past ages noted women have arisen in the affairs of nations and surpassed men in their accomplishments. Among them was Zenobia, Queen of the East, whose capital was Palmyra. Even today the site of that city bears witness to her greatness, ability and sovereignty; for there the traveler will find ruins of palaces and fortifications of the utmost strength and solidity built by this remarkable woman in the third century after Christ. She was the wife of the governor-general of Athens. After her husband's death she assumed control of the government in his stead and ruled her province most efficiently. Afterward she conquered Syria, subdued Egypt and founded a most wonderful kingdom with political sagacity and thoroughness. The Roman Empire sent a great army against her. When this army replete with martial splendor reached Syria, Zenobia herself appeared upon the field leading her forces. On the day of battle she arrayed herself in regal garments, placed a crown upon her head and rode forth, sword in hand, to meet the invading legions. By her courage and military strategy the Roman army was routed and so completely dispersed that they were not able to reorganize in retreat. The government of Rome held consultation, saying, "No matter what commander we send, we cannot overcome her; therefore, the Emperor Aurelian himself must go to lead the legions of Rome against Zenobia." Aurelian marched into Syria with two hundred thousand soldiers. The army of Zenobia was greatly inferior in size. The Romans besieged her in Palmyra two years without success. Finally, Aurelian was able to cut off the city's supply of provisions so that she and her people were compelled by starvation to surrender. She was not defeated in battle. Aurelian carried her captive to Rome. On the day of his entry into the city he arranged a triumphal procession - first elephants, then lions, tigers, birds, monkeys - and after the monkeys, Zenobia. A crown was upon her head, a chain of gold about her neck. With queenly dignity and unconscious of humiliation, looking to the right and left, she said, "Verily, I glory in being a woman and in having withstood the Roman Empire." (At that time the dominion of Rome covered half the known earth.) "And this chain about my neck is a sign not of humiliation but of glorification. This is a symbol of my power, not of my defeat."

Among other historical women was Catherine I, wife of Peter the Great. Russia and Turkey were at war. Muhammad Pasha, commander of the Turkish forces, had defeated Peter and was about to take St. Petersburg. The Russians were in a most critical position. Catherine, the wife of Peter, said, "I will arrange this matter." She had an interview with Muhammad Pasha, negotiated a treaty of peace and induced him to turn back. She saved her husband and her nation. This was a great accomplishment. Afterward she was crowned Empress of Russia and ruled with wisdom until her death.

The discovery of America by Columbus was during the reign of Isabella of Spain, to whose intelligence and assistance this wonderful accomplishment was largely due. In brief, many remarkable women have appeared in the history of the world, but further mention of them is not necessary.

Today among the Bahá'ís of Persia there are many women who are the very pride and envy of the men. They are imbued with all the virtues and excellences of humanity. They are eloquent; they are poets and scholars and embody the quintessence of humility. In political ability and acumen they have been able to cope and compete with representative men. They have consecrated their lives and forfeited their possessions in martyrdom for the sake of humanity, and the traces of their glory will last forever. The pages of the history of Persia are illumined by the lives and records of these women.

The purpose, in brief, is this: that if woman be fully educated and granted her rights, she will attain the capacity for wonderful accomplishments and prove herself the equal of man. She is the coadjutor of man, his complement and helpmeet. Both are human; both are endowed with potentialities of intelligence and embody the virtues of humanity. In all human powers and functions they are partners and coequals. At present in spheres of human activity woman does not manifest her natal prerogatives, owing to lack of education and opportunity. Without doubt education will establish her equality with men. Consider the animal kingdom, where no distinction is observed between male and female. They are equal in powers and privileges. Among birds of the air no distinction is evidenced. Their powers are equal; they dwell together in complete unity and mutual recognition of rights. Shall we not enjoy the same equality? Its absence is not befitting to mankind.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGES 133-137

**26 August 1912 - Talk at Franklin Square House, Boston, Massachusetts**  
**Notes by Edna McKinney**

**Focus Question:**

What strategies did the Master use to promulgate the principle of equality in contemporary society?



Among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the principle of equality of man and woman. Bahá'u'lláh has said that both belong to humankind and that in the estimation of God they are equal, for each is the complement of the other in the divine creative plan. The only distinction between them in the sight of God is the purity and righteousness of their deeds and actions, for that one is preferred by God who is most nearly in the spiritual image and likeness of the Creator. Throughout the kingdoms of living organisms there is sex differentiation in function, but no preference or distinction is made in favor of either male or female. In the animal kingdom individual sex exists, but rights are equal and without distinction. Likewise, in the plane or kingdom of the vegetable sex appears, but equality of function and right is evident. Inasmuch as sex distinction and preference are not observed in these kingdoms of inferior intelligence, is it befitting the superior station of man that he should make such differentiation and estimate, when as a matter of fact there is no difference indicated in the law of creation?

In ancient times and medieval ages woman was completely subordinated to man. The cause of this estimate of her inferiority was her lack of education. A woman's life and intellect were limited to the household. Glimpses of this may be found even in the Epistles of Saint Paul. In later centuries the scope and opportunities of a woman's life broadened and increased. Her mind unfolded and developed; her perceptions awakened and deepened. The question concerning her was: Why should a woman be left mentally undeveloped? Science is praiseworthy - whether investigated by the intellect of man or woman. So, little by little, woman advanced, giving increasing evidence of equal capabilities with man -whether in scientific research, political ability or any other sphere of human activity. The conclusion is evident that woman has been outdistanced through lack of education and intellectual facilities. If given the same educational opportunities or course of study, she would develop the same capacity and abilities.

There are some who declare that woman is not naturally endowed or imbued with the same capabilities as man; that she is intellectually inferior to man, weaker in willpower and lacking his courage. This theory is completely contradicted by history and facts of record. Certain women of superlative capacity and determination have appeared in the world, peers of man in intellect and equally courageous. Zenobia was the wife of the governor-general of Athens. Her husband died, and like the Russian Queen, Catherine, she manifested the highest degree of capability in the administration of public affairs. The Roman government appointed her to succeed her husband. Afterward she conquered Syria, conducted a successful campaign in Egypt and established a memorable sovereignty. Rome sent an army against her under direction of distinguished commanders. When the two forces met in battle, Zenobia arrayed herself in gorgeous apparel, placed the crown of her kingdom upon her head and rode forth at the head of her army, defeating the Roman legions so completely that they were not able to reorganize. The Emperor of Rome himself took command of the next army of one hundred thousand soldiers and marched into Syria. At that time Rome was at the zenith of greatness and was the strongest military power in the world. Zenobia withdrew with her forces to Palmyra and fortified it to withstand a siege. After two years the Roman Emperor cut off her supplies, and she was forced to surrender.

The Romans returned in triumphal procession and pageant to their own country. They entered Rome in great pomp and splendor, led by African elephants. After the elephants there were lions, then tigers, bears and monkeys, and after the monkeys, Zenobia - barefooted, walking, a chain of gold about her neck and a crown in her hand, dignified, majestic, queenly and courageous notwithstanding her downfall and defeat.

Among other noted women of history was Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, who held her kingdom against the armies of Rome for a long time. Catherine, wife of Peter the Great, displayed courage and military strategy of the very highest order during the war between Russia and Muhammad Pasha. When the cause of Russia seemed hopeless, she took her jewels and went before the Turkish victor, presented them to him and pled the justice of her country's cause with such convincing skill and diplomacy that peace was declared.

Victoria, Queen of England, was really superior to all the kings of Europe in ability, justness and equitable administration. During her long and brilliant reign the British Empire was immensely extended and enriched, due to her political sagacity, skill and foresight.

The history of religion, likewise, furnishes eloquent examples of woman's capability under conditions of great difficulty and necessity. The conquest of the Holy Land by the Israelites after forty years' wandering in the desert and wilderness of Judea was accomplished through the strategy and cunning of a woman.

After the martyrdom of Christ, to Whom be glory, the disciples were greatly disturbed and disheartened. Even Peter had denied Christ and tried to shun Him. It was a woman, Mary Magdalene, who confirmed the wavering disciples in their faith, saying, "Was it the body of Christ or the reality of Christ that ye have seen crucified? Surely it was His body. His reality is everlasting and eternal; it hath neither beginning nor ending. Therefore, why are ye perplexed and discouraged? Christ always spoke of His being crucified." Mary Magdalene was a mere villager, a peasant woman; yet she became the means of consolation and confirmation to the disciples of Christ.

In the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh there have been women who were superior to men in illumination, intellect, divine virtues and devotion to God. Among them was Qurratu'l-'Ayn. When she spoke, she was listened to reverently by the most learned men. They were most respectful in her presence, and none dared to contradict her. Among the Baha'i women in Persia today there are Rúhu'lláh and others who are gifted with knowledge, invincible steadfastness, courage, virtue and power of will. They are superior to men and well-known throughout Persia.

Briefly, history furnishes evidence that during the past centuries there have been great women as well as great men; but in general, owing to lack of educational advantages, women have been restricted and deprived of opportunity to become fully qualified and representative of humankind. When given the opportunity for acquiring education, they have shown equal capacity with men. Some philosophers and writers have considered woman naturally and by creation inferior to man, claiming as a proof that the brain of man is larger and heavier than that of woman. This is frail and faulty evidence, inasmuch as small brains are often found coupled with superior intellect and large brains possessed by those who are ignorant, even imbecilic. The truth is that God has endowed all humankind with intelligence and perception and has confirmed all as His servants and children; therefore, in the plan and estimate of God there is no distinction between male or female. The soul that manifests pure deeds and spiritual graces is most precious in His sight and nearer to Him in its attainments.

The realities of things have been revealed in this radiant century, and that which is true must come to the surface. Among these realities is the principle of the equality of man and woman - equal rights and prerogatives in all things appertaining to humanity. Bahá'u'lláh declared this reality over fifty years ago. But while this principle of equality is true, it is likewise true that woman must prove her capacity and aptitude, must show forth the evidences of equality. She must become proficient in the arts and sciences and prove by her accomplishments that her abilities and powers have merely been latent. Demonstrations of force, such as are now taking place in England, are neither becoming nor effective in the cause of womanhood and equality. Woman must especially devote her energies and abilities toward the industrial and agricultural sciences, seeking to assist mankind in that which is most needful. By this means she will demonstrate capability and ensure recognition of equality in the social and economic equation. Undoubtedly God will confirm her in her efforts and endeavors, for in this century of radiance Bahá'u'lláh has proclaimed the reality of the oneness of the world of humanity and announced that all nations, peoples and races are one. He has shown that although individuals may differ in development and capacity, they are essentially and intrinsically equal as human beings, just as the waves of the sea are innumerable and different, but the reality of the sea is one. The plurality of humanity may be likened to the waves, but the reality of humankind is like the sea itself. All the waves are of the same water; all are waves of one ocean.

Therefore, strive to show in the human world that women are most capable and efficient, that their hearts are more tender and susceptible than the hearts of men, that they are more philanthropic and responsive toward the needy and suffering, that they are inflexibly opposed to war and are lovers of peace. Strive that the ideal of international peace may become realized through the efforts of womankind, for man is more inclined to war than woman, and a real evidence of woman's superiority will be her service and efficiency in the establishment of universal peace.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGES 280-284

# Equality, Complementarity and Balance

## Focus Questions:

1. What evidence do we have that 'human virtues belong equally to all?'
2. In what ways might child rearing foster the development of tender-heartedness and intuition?
3. How might an intimate connection with children not only engender the love of peace and abhorrence of war, but also special gifts that would be of particular value in times of danger and crisis?



Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 379

Exalted, immensely exalted is He Who hath removed differences and established harmony. Glorified, infinitely glorified is He Who hath caused discord to cease, and decreed solidarity and unity. Praised be God, the Pen of the Most High hath lifted distinctions from between His servants and handmaidens, and, through His consummate favours and all-encompassing mercy, hath conferred upon all a station and rank of the same plane. He hath broken the back of vain imaginings with the sword of utterance and hath obliterated the perils of idle fancies through the pervasive power of His might.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 357

...God hath created all humankind in His own image, and after His own likeness. That is, men and women alike are the revealers of His names and attributes, and from the spiritual viewpoint there is no difference between them. Whosoever draweth nearer to God, that one is the most favoured, whether man or woman

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ*, PAGES 79-80

Know thou that the distinction between male and female is an exigency of the physical world and hath no connection with the spirit; for the spirit and the world of the spirit are sanctified above such exigencies, and wholly beyond the reach of such changes as befall the physical body in the contingent world. In former ages, men enjoyed ascendancy over women because bodily might reigned supreme and the spirit was subject to its dominion. In this radiant age, however, since the power of the spirit hath transcended that of the body and assumed its ascendancy, authority and dominion over the human world, this physical distinction hath ceased to be of consequence; and, as the sway and influence of the spirit have become apparent, women have come to be the full equals of men. Today, therefore, there is no respect or circumstance in which a person's sex provideth grounds for the exercise of either discrimination or favour.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ, CITED BY JANET KAHN AND PETER KAHN: *THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 38

The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals, or, to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 369

In the world of humanity we find a great difference; the female sex is treated as though inferior, and is not allowed equal rights and privileges. This condition is due not to nature, but to education. In the Divine Creation there is no such distinction. Neither sex is superior to the other in the sight of God. Why then should one sex assert the inferiority of the other, withholding just rights and privileges as though God had given His authority for such a course

of action? If women received the same educational advantages as those of men, the result would demonstrate the equality of capacity of both for scholarship.

In some respects woman is superior to man. She is more tender-hearted, more receptive, her intuition is more intense.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGE 161

Divine Justice demands that the rights of both sexes should be equally respected since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of Heaven. Dignity before God depends, not on sex, but on purity and luminosity of heart. Human virtues belong equally to all!

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGE 162

Among the miracles which distinguish this sacred Dispensation is this, that women have evinced a greater boldness than men when enlisted in the ranks of the Faith.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ, CITED BY SHOOGHI EFFENDI: *THE ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE*, PAGE 69

Therefore, strive to show in the human world that women are most capable and efficient, that their hearts are more tender and susceptible than the hearts of men, that they are more philanthropic and responsive toward the needy and suffering, that they are inflexibly opposed to war and are lovers of peace. Strive that the ideal of international peace may become realized through the efforts of womankind, for man is more inclined to war than woman, and a real evidence of woman's superiority will be her service and efficiency in the establishment of universal peace.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 284

...The woman is indeed of the greater importance to the race. She has the greater burden and the greater work. Look at the vegetable and the animal worlds. The palm which carries the fruit is the tree most prized by the date grower. The Arab knows that for a long journey the mare has the longest wind. For her greater strength and fierceness, the lioness is more feared by the hunter than the lion.

The woman has greater moral courage than the man; she has also special gifts which enable her to govern in moments of danger and crisis...

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ IN LONDON, ADDRESSES AND NOTES OF CONVERSATIONS, PAGES 102, 103

Equality between men and women does not, indeed physiologically it cannot, mean identity of functions. In some things women excel men, for others men are better fitted than women, while in very many things the difference of sex is of no effect at all. The differences of function are most apparent in family life.

The capacity for motherhood has many far-reaching implications which are recognized in Bahá'í Law. For example, when it is not possible to educate all one's children, daughters receive preference over sons, as mothers are the first educators of the next generation. Again, for physiological reasons, women are granted certain exemptions from fasting that are not applicable to men.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 370

You are quite right in stating that men and women have basic and distinct qualities. The solution provided in the teachings of Baha'u'llah is not, as you correctly observe, for men to become women, and for women to become men. Ábdu'l-Bahá gave us the key to the problem when He taught that the qualities and functions of men and women "complement" each other. He further elucidated this point when He said that the "new age" will be "an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more properly balanced."

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGES 371-372

## Inherited Assumptions and Investigating Truth



God, my God! Aid Thou Thy trusted servants to have loving and tender hearts. Help them to spread, amongst all the nations of the earth, the light of guidance that cometh from the Company on high. Verily Thou art the Strong, the Powerful, the Mighty, the All-Subduing, the Ever-Giving. Verily Thou art the Generous, the Gentle, the Tender, the Most Bountiful.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ*, PAGE 22

Write each spiritual quality or attribute in this prayer into one of the following three categories, depending on whether your family or cultural background taught that they pertain primarily to men, primarily to women, or were equally common to both:

Primarily masculine

Primarily feminine

Equally common to both

## Effective Strategies for Promoting Equality

### Focus:

Underline specific actions that promote equality.



The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light are these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Day-Star of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF*, PAGE 14

O children of men! Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE HIDDEN WORDS*, ARABIC # 68

...Woman must prove her capacity and aptitude, must show forth the evidences of equality. She must become proficient in the arts and sciences and prove by her accomplishments that her abilities and powers have merely been latent. Demonstrations of force, such as are now taking place in England, are neither becoming nor effective in the cause of womanhood and equality.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 283

Woman must endeavour then to attain greater perfection, to be man's equal in every respect, to make progress in all in which she has been backward, so that man will be compelled to acknowledge her equality of capacity and attainment.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGE 162

...The assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman, as if her attainment to equality was creationally impossible; woman's aspiration toward advancement will be checked by it, and she will gradually become hopeless.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 76

When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights!

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGE 163

I appeal to you to obliterate this contention between men and women.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 362

We need a change of heart, a reframing of all our conceptions and a new orientation of our activities. The inward life of man as well as his outward environment have to be reshaped if human salvation is to be secured.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 1, PAGE 85

We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 1, PAGE 84

If presented properly the position of women in the Bahá'í teachings will surely attract much attention, for it is not only legal but also spiritual and educational. Our ideals are so high and at the same time so practicable that all other views will fall short if compared to them.

WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI: *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 369

The principle of the equality between women and men, like the other teachings of the Faith, can be effectively and universally established among the friends when it is pursued in conjunction with all the other aspects of Bahá'í life. Change is an evolutionary process requiring patience with one's self and others, loving education and the passage of time as the believers deepen their knowledge of the principles of the Faith, gradually discard long-held traditional attitudes and progressively conform their lives to the unifying teachings of the Cause.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 405

Those Bahá'ís who devote themselves to promotion of the equality of the sexes, through speeches and articles, should be aware that such a process will be facilitated if it is carried out without disruption to the unity of the believers, in order that spiritual blessings are attracted to the community and its endeavours reinforced. To maintain this unity, Bahá'í men and women must work together co-operatively, in striking contrast to the adversarial and denunciatory attitudes which distinguish so much of the movement for equality of the sexes....

...Bahá'ís should realize that the Bahá'í approach to truth-seeking is consultative and not adversarial, and that contention between men and women is counter-productive in the endeavour to promote equality.

WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, 5 JUNE 1994

## The Example of Bahíyyih Khánum



Her blessed life was a source of spiritual illumination for the whole world and her noble traits and heavenly attributes served as a shining example, an object of emulation for all mankind.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁN*UM, PAGE 84

...Then is my tongue loosed to praise and thank thee, and thy Lord, Him Who did fashion thee and did prefer thee to all other handmaidens,...Who withdrew the veil of concealment from thy true being and made thee to be a true example for all thy kin to follow, and caused thee to be the fragrance of His garment for all of creation.

And at such times I strengthen my resolve to follow in thy footsteps, and to continue onward in the pathway of thy love; to take thee as my model, and to acquire the qualities, and to make manifest that which thou didst desire for the triumph of this exalted and exacting, this most resplendent, sacred, and wondrous Cause.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁN*UM, PAGES 54-55

She who was a sparkling light of God, she who was so full of grace...was made to appear with all perfections, all goodly attributes, all blessed ways; and never had the world's eye gazed upon such a welling spring of tender love, of pity and compassion, and never will it behold again such a gem of loving-kindness, such a fount of God's munificence.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁN*UM, PAGE 82

To every disconsolate one she was an affectionate comforter, to every heart-broken and grief-stricken soul, a token of unfailing sympathy, of kindness, of cheer and comfort....Like the showers of heavenly grace, her generosity knew no bounds, and as the breeze of celestial blessing and favour, she breathed a new life into every soul. Both friends and strangers were drawn by her sense of spirituality, her tenderness and refinement, her unfailing solicitude, and were attracted by the magic of her unbounded affection and goodwill. That heavenly being displayed throughout her life such evidence of glory and dignity, such manifestations of majesty and greatness, such a degree of patience and resignation as bewildered the minds and souls. In the midst of trials her radiant face bore the likeness of a sweet rose and in moments of sore tribulation she was resplendent as a brilliant candle.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁN*UM, PAGE 84

She always kept such a wonderful atmosphere of joy and hope around her that was bound to influence those that were present and help them to go out into the world with added zeal and determination to consecrate all in the path of God.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁN*UM, PAGE 85

That sacred treasure, that jewel of Heaven, was the very sign and token of spiritual attributes and qualities and perfections, the very model of high honour and nobility and heavenly ways....Fortitude was the rich dress she wore, serenity and tranquil strength were her splendid robe, virtue and detachment, purity and chastity, were all her jewels, and tenderness, care and love for humankind, her beauty's bright adornings."

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁN*UM, PAGE 83

## The Example of Bahíyyih Khánum



1. Knowledge - Thinking about these passages and remembering the beloved Guardian's tribute to the Greatest Holy Leaf, what do we know about Bahíyyih Khánum?
2. Wisdom - Reflecting on both sets of passages that refer to the Greatest Holy Leaf. What deeper understanding have we gained about her role in human history?
3. Spiritual Perception - Pondering the Guardian's statement that the Greatest Holy Leaf is "a shining example, an object of emulation for all mankind," how can we begin to emulate her example in our own lives?
4. Eloquent Speech - What words and deeds have we shared together today that in some small way mirror the actions and attributes of the Greatest Holy Leaf? How, specifically, can we build on those words and deeds in a line of effective action for equality?

## Personal Development



Every day, in the morning when arising, you should compare today with yesterday and see in what condition you are. If you see your belief is stronger and your heart more occupied with God and your love increased and your freedom from the world greater then thank God and ask for the increase of these qualities. You must begin to pray and repent for all that you have done which is wrong and you must implore and ask for help and assistance that you may become better than yesterday so that you may continue to make progress.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS, VOLUME 1, PAGE 376

If we Bahá'ís cannot attain to cordial unity among ourselves, then we fail to realize the main purpose for which the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and the Beloved Master lived and suffered.

In order to achieve this cordial unity one of the first essentials insisted on by Bahá'u'lláh and Ábdu'l-Bahá is that we resist the natural tendency to let our attention dwell on the faults and failings of others rather than on our own. Each of us is responsible for one life only, and that is our own. Each of us is immeasurably far from being “perfect as our heavenly father is perfect” and the task of perfecting our own life and character is one that requires all our attention, our will-power and energy. If we allow our attention and energy to be taken up in efforts to keep others right and remedy their faults, we are wasting precious time. We are like ploughmen each of whom has his team to manage and his plough to direct, and in order to keep his furrow straight he must keep his eye on his goal and concentrate on his own task. If he looks to this side and that to see how Tom and Harry are getting on and to criticize their ploughing, then his own furrow will assuredly become crooked.

THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2, PAGES 3-4

...The individual...must make a conscious decision as to what he or she will do to serve the Plan, and as to how, where and when to do it. This determination enables the individual to check the progress of his actions and, if necessary, to modify the steps being taken. Becoming accustomed to such a procedure of systematic striving lends meaning and fulfillment to the life of any Bahá'í.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN155

## Setting Personal Goals within the Curriculum Framework



Sample Personal Goal: To be more patient.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>KNOWLEDGE</b></p> <p>A keen awareness of information and facts. The remembering and recall of previously learned material.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>To read what the Writings say about patience. Post quotations around the house to focus my attention.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WISDOM</b></p> <p>True comprehension and insight. The discovery, through experience, of the meaning of information and facts Wisdom is acquired through consultation, reflection, inspiration and are evolving understanding of spiritual truth.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>To read and reflect upon stories of people who display patience, by observing people who are patient and by discussing with others.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION</b></p> <p>Penetrating inner vision and the acquisition and application of a Bahá'í perspective. The discovery of purpose and meaning. The bringing to bear of Bahá'í spiritual values, principles and laws to the individual's expanding consciousness of issues and problems. As such it includes the capacity to apply, analyze, and evaluate, using Bahá'í Law, principles and qualities as the standard for discernment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>To ascertain how I will be able to deal with situations more patiently. To discern where I have and where I have not been patient by bringing myself to account each day concerning patience.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ELOQUENT 'SPEECH'</b></p> <p>The ability to articulate knowledge, understanding and beliefs in a clear and comprehensive way. For the purposes of the Core Curriculum the definition of Eloquent Speech has been extended to include the manifestation of all the behaviors that reflect the internalization of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. This involves the integration and synthesis of learning into the active expression of the understanding acquired through knowledge, wisdom and spiritual perception. As such it is the endeavor to live the Bahá'í Life, to teach and engage in service to humanity.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>To recite memorized Writings about patience on a daily basis. To turn to God for assistance. To be patient and stop getting annoyed so easily with others. To prepare a short fireside presentation on patience.</i></p>

**Setting Personal Goals  
within the Curriculum Framework**



Personal Goal:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>KNOWLEDGE</b></p> <p>A keen awareness of information and facts. The remembering and recall of previously learned material.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WISDOM</b></p> <p>True comprehension and insight. The discovery, through experience, of the meaning of information and facts Wisdom is acquired through consultation, reflection, inspiration and are evolving understanding of spiritual truth.</p>	
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# SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN

## CORE CURRICULUM FOR A SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

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### MODULE TWO

#### Equality In The World At Large

#### Learning Objectives

<b>KNOWLEDGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To know some examples of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá encouraging women to undertake services that have been viewed as the exclusive prerogative of men in past centuries.</li><li>To know that equal education is a necessary prerequisite to equal attainment in the human realm.</li><li>To know that women must enter all professions</li><li>To know the assignments given in our Writings to men, to women, and to both men and women for promoting the principle of equality</li><li>To know that women serve at all levels of the Administrative Order of the Bahá’í Faith, local, national, and international</li></ul>
<b>WISDOM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To understand the importance of women’s contributions to the well-being of humanity as a whole</li><li>To understand the value of specific actions for promoting equality</li><li>To understand the relationship between equality and Bahá’í community life</li><li>To understand that the reason for exclusion of women from the Universal House of Justice will become clear in the future, after the evolution of society.</li></ul>
<b>SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To appreciate the power of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s encouragement both for individual women and for the evolution of the entire Bahá’í community.</li><li>To perceive the importance to humanity of educating girl children.</li><li>To appreciate the views of others as we work together to promote equality</li><li>To perceive the importance of encouragement in transforming ourselves and transforming society</li><li>To perceive the contributions of others to the cause of equality.</li></ul>
<b>ELOQUENT ‘SPEECH’</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To demonstrate approaches for welcoming all humanity into true patterns of community life</li><li>To respond to the National Spiritual Assembly’s call for equality in the Bahá’í community</li><li>To answer questions about the exclusion of women from the Universal House of Justice.</li><li>To plan a community celebration that promotes the principle of equality for all ages and for Bahá’ís as well as others interested in the principle of equality.</li></ul>

## Corinne True

While on pilgrimage in 1907, Corinne True was given her assignment by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: When their pilgrimage came to an end and Corinne was ready to leave, the Master sent for her. It would be her last interview with Him. ‘I asked Him what He wished me to do,’ she recalled many years later. ‘I wish you to live in Chicago. I wish you to work for the Mashriqu’l-Adhkar, and if you do that you must live in Chicago.’ As she sat beside Him, He took her hand. It was as though, she has said, a great power was pulsing through her – a ‘most unusual thing.’

NATHAN RUTSTEIN WITH EDNA M. TRUE, *CORINNE TRUE: FAITHFUL HANDMAID OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*: PAGES 68-69

While Corinne True and her daughter were on their way home via Paris and London, Thornton Chase, Carl Scheffler and the Agnews were on pilgrimage, experiencing, at one point, something they hadn’t expected. It was the Master’s response to Mr. Chase’s questions regarding the Temple. “When you return consult with Mrs. True – I have given her complete instructions.

Mr. Chases was startled. He simply wasn’t prepared for what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had said. The Master had upset his notions about the role of women in the Faith. Had the Master doubted Thornton Chase’s firmness in the Faith, He wouldn’t have been so direct with him. What was said was obviously meant to broaden and deepen the American pilgrims’ understanding of a certain aspect of the Bahá’í teachings.

NATHAN RUTSTEIN WITH EDNA M. TRUE, *CORINNE TRUE: FAITHFUL HANDMAID OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*: PAGE 71

It was understandable why some of the early Bahá’ís clashed with her, especially some of the more assertive men, who felt she craved power. They were unfamiliar with such a display of drive in a woman, not realizing the Corinne’s all-consuming love for the Master was what drove her.

NATHAN RUTSTEIN WITH EDNA M. TRUE, *CORINNE TRUE: FAITHFUL HANDMAID OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*: PAGE 75

‘Abdu’l-Bahá chose her to do what He felt others more experienced in the ways of the world weren’t capable of doing. He chose a woman to spearhead the development of the most important single project in the first fifty years of the Faith in North American. But there were other things that she was destined to do for the Master; and she probably did them unaware at the time of what her exploits would eventually lead to. Through her efforts the Administrative Order, on a national scale, was started and developed.

And ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used her to break down the psychological barriers against women in the American Bahá’í community. That was a long and painful experience. Above all she stood firm in the Faith, regardless of the severity of the tests within the Bahá’í community. Nothing could unhinge her attachment to the Cause. It was that, more than anything else, that endeared her to the Master and the Guardian. For it is upon that kind of rock that true Faiths are built.

NATHAN RUTSTEIN WITH EDNA M. TRUE, *CORINNE TRUE: FAITHFUL HANDMAID OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*: PAGE 206-207

## Susan Moody

In Iran during the time of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

...Bahá’í women had no access to competent medical care, especially regarding gynecological concerns, in a society in which the medical profession was male.

When a number of Persian Bahá’í physicians appealed for an American female doctor to reside in Tehran for the purpose of caring for the women of Iran, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá chose Dr. Susan Moody, a gynecologist and specialist in women’s diseases. She as the first American Bahá’í woman to settle in Iran....

En route to Iran Dr. Moody visited ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Holy Land and received from Him the necessary instructions and encouragement for the work. He gave her the designation **Amatu’l-A’la**, “the handmaid of the Most High,” counseled her to have patience, and assured her that He would always be with her. Dr. Moody arrived in Tehran in November 1909, in the fifty-ninth year of her life.

Her medical services were greatly appreciated by the population at large. She served high and low alike, providing primary health care and holding classes for mothers. She also actively promoted the education of girls and worked for the establishment of the Tarbiyat school for girls.... She remained at her post for fifteen years before returning to the United States. In 1928, at Shoghi Effendi’s request, she proceeded again to Iran to continue her highly meritorious service. She completely consecrated herself to her work and passed away in that land in 1934. Other health professionals, including Dr. Sarah Clock and Miss Elizabeth Stewart, assisted Dr. Moody and carried on her tradition of providing selfless service to the Bahá’ís and the general public.

JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 161

## Martha Root

Martha Root, later described by Shoghi Effendi as “the fairest fruit as yet yielded by the Formative Age of the Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh,” “the foremost Hand” of the Cause of God, and “that archetype of Bahá’í itinerant teachers,” proclaimed the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh to royalty, statesmen, academics and ordinary people everywhere. She circled the globe from “the very first year the Tablets of the Divine Plan were unveiled in the United States of America” until her death from cancer in 1939 in Hawaii, at the age of sixty-seven. The indomitable Martha Root began her travels in response to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s summons to her:

As ears are awaiting the summons for Universal Peace, it is therefore advisable for thee to travel...to the different parts of the globe, and roar like unto a lion of the Kingdom of God. Wide-reaching consequences thou shalt witness and extraordinary confirmations shall be exhibited unto thee.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ CITED IN M.R. GARIS, *MARTHA ROOT: LIONESSE AT THE THRESHOLD*, PAGES 87-88

## Education for Equality

### Focus Topics:

1. In what ways does equal education increase opportunities for women and promote the principle of equality of women and men?
2. What can individuals, families and the Bahá'í community do to support equal education?

...There must be an equality of rights between men and women. Women shall receive an equal privilege of education. This will enable them to qualify and progress in all degrees of occupation and accomplishment. For the world of humanity possesses two wings: man and woman. If one wing remains incapable and defective, it will restrict the power of the other, and full flight will be impossible. Therefore, the completeness and perfection of the human world are dependent upon the equal development of these two wings.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 318

...If woman be fully educated and granted her rights, she will attain the capacity for wonderful accomplishments and prove herself the equal of man. She is the coadjutor of man, his complement and helpmeet. Both are human; both are endowed with potentialities of intelligence and embody the virtues of humanity. In all human powers and functions they are partners and coequals. At present in spheres of human activity woman does not manifest her natal prerogatives, owing to lack of education and opportunity. Without doubt education will establish her equality with men.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGES 136-137

Until the reality of equality between man and woman is fully established and attained, the highest social development of mankind is not possible. Even granted that woman is inferior to man in some degree of capacity or accomplishment, this or any other distinction would continue to be productive of discord and trouble. The only remedy is education, opportunity; for equality means equal qualification.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 76

...Woman must be given the privilege of equal education with man and full right to his prerogatives. That is to say, there must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation. Then the world will attain unity and harmony. In past ages humanity has been defective and inefficient because it has been incomplete. War and its ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war. Woman rears the child and educates the youth to maturity. She will refuse to give her sons for sacrifice upon the field of battle. In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 108

...Thou hast written about the girls' school. What was previously written still holdeth true. There can be no improvement unless the girls are brought up in schools and centres of learning, unless they are taught the sciences and other branches of knowledge, and unless they acquire the manifold arts, as necessary, and are divinely trained. For the day will come when these girls will become mothers. Mothers are the first educators of children, who establish virtues in the child's inner nature. They encourage the child to acquire perfections and goodly manners, warn him against unbecoming qualities, and encourage him to show forth resolve, firmness, and endurance under hardship, and to advance on the high road to progress. Due regard for the education of girls is, therefore, necessary. This is a very important subject, and it should be administered and organized under the aegis of the Spiritual Assembly...

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 374

...it is incumbent upon the girls of this glorious era to be fully versed in the various branches of knowledge, in sciences and the arts and all the wonders of this pre-eminent time, that they may then educate their children and train them from their earliest days in the ways of perfection.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 374

He promulgated the adoption of the same course of education for man and woman. Daughters and sons must follow the same curriculum of study, thereby promoting unity of the sexes. When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE\**, PAGES 174-175

Why should a woman be left mentally undeveloped? Science is praiseworthy - whether investigated by the intellect of man or woman. So, little by little, woman advanced, giving increasing evidence of equal capabilities with man -whether in scientific research, political ability or any other sphere of human activity. The conclusion is evident that woman has been outdistanced through lack of education and intellectual facilities. If given the same educational opportunities or course of study, she would develop the same capacity and abilities.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE\**, PAGE 281

Bahá’u’lláh has announced that inasmuch as ignorance and lack of education are barriers of separation among mankind, all must receive training and instruction. Through this provision the lack of mutual understanding will be remedied and the unity of mankind furthered and advanced. Universal education is a universal law. It is, therefore, incumbent upon every father to teach and instruct his children according to his possibilities. If he is unable to educate them, the body politic, the representative of the people, must provide the means for their education.

In the Orient women were degraded and considered subordinate to man. Bahá’u’lláh proclaimed equality of the sexes - that both man and woman are servants of God before Whom there is no distinction. Whosoever has a pure heart and renders good deeds is nearer to God and the object of His favor - whether man or woman. The sex distinction which exists in the human world is due to the lack of education for woman, who has been denied equal opportunity for development and advancement. Equality of the sexes will be established in proportion to the increased opportunities afforded woman in this age, for man and woman are equally the recipients of powers and endowments from God, the Creator. God has not ordained distinction between them in His consummate purpose.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 300

The education of each child is compulsory.... In addition to this widespread education each child must be taught a profession, art, or trade, so that every member of the community will be enabled to earn his own livelihood. Work done in the spirit of service is the highest form of worship....

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 376-377

The cause of universal education, which has already enlisted in its service an army of dedicated people from every faith and nation, deserves the utmost support that the governments of the world can lend it. For ignorance is indisputably the principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples and the perpetuation of prejudice. No nation can achieve success unless education is accorded all its citizens. Lack of resources limits the ability of many nations to fulfill this necessity, imposing a certain ordering of priorities. The decision-making agencies involved would do well to consider giving first priority to the education of women and girls, since it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively and rapidly diffused throughout society. In keeping with the requirements of the times, consideration should also be given to teaching the concept of world citizenship as part of the standard education of every child.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 377-378

A very important element in the attainment of such equality is Bahá’u’lláh’s provision that boys and girls must follow essentially the same curriculum in schools.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 378

## Shifting the Balance



### Focus Questions:

1. What do the specific occupations mentioned by the Beloved Master have in common?
2. How can women entering professions be a benefit to all humanity?

In this Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the women go neck and neck with the men. In no movement will they be left behind. Their rights with men are equal in degree. They will enter all the administrative branches of politics. They will attain in all such a degree as will be considered the very highest station of the world of humanity and will take part in all affairs.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGE 182

When the women attain to the ultimate degree of progress, then, according to the exigency of the time and place and their great capacity, they shall obtain extraordinary privileges. Be ye confident on these accounts. His Holiness Baha'u'llah has greatly strengthened the cause of women, and the rights and privileges of women is one of the greatest principles of Abdu'l-Baha. Rest ye assured! Ere long the days shall come when the men addressing the women, shall say: ‘Blessed are ye! Blessed are ye! Verily ye are worthy of every gift. Verily ye deserve to adorn your heads with the crown of everlasting glory, because in sciences and arts, in virtues and perfections ye shall become equal to man, and as regards tenderness of heart and the abundance of mercy and sympathy ye are superior’.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGES 183-184

As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities, so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGE 133

Again, it is well established in history that where woman has not participated in human affairs the outcomes have never attained a state of completion and perfection. On the other hand, every influential undertaking of the human world wherein woman has been a participant has attained importance.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 134

And let it be known once more that until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible. For the world of humanity consists of two parts or members; one is woman; the other is man. Until these two members are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 77

Woman must especially devote her energies and abilities toward the industrial and agricultural sciences, seeking to assist mankind in that which is most needful. By this means she will demonstrate capability and ensure recognition of equality in the social and economic equation.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE\**, PAGE 283

Thus, imbued with the same virtues as man, rising through all the degrees of human attainment, women will become the peers of men, and until this equality is established, true progress and attainment for the human race will not be facilitated.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 375

So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 135

The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world’s population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavour will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge. (October 1985 to the Peoples of the World)

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2*, PAGE 392

...Bahá’u’lláh Himself has envisaged that women as well as men would be breadwinners....

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 1*, PAGE 416

## Equality: A Shared Responsibility



All should know, and in this regard attain the splendours of the sun of certitude, and be illumined thereby: Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God. The Dawning-Place of the Light of God sheddeth its radiance upon all with the same effulgence. Verily God created women for men, and men for women. The most beloved of people before God are the most steadfast and those who have surpassed others in their love for God, exalted be His glory....

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 379

The happiness of mankind will be realized when women and men coordinate and advance equally, for each is the complement and helpmeet of the other.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, P. 182

The handmaidens of God and the bondswomen in His divine Court should reveal such attributes and attitudes amongst the women of the world as would cause them to stand out and achieve renown in the circles of women. That is, they should associate with them with supreme chastity and steadfast decency, with unshakable faith, articulate speech, and eloquent tongue, irrefutable testimony and high resolve. Beseech God that thou mayest attain unto all these bounties.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN *MESSAGES FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE*, 1963-1986, PAGE 707

Woman must endeavour then to attain greater perfection, to be man's equal in every respect, to make progress in all in which she has been backward, so that man will be compelled to acknowledge her equality of capacity and attainment.

In Europe women have made greater progress than in the East, but there is still much to be done! When students have arrived at the end of their school term an examination takes place, and the result thereof determines the knowledge and capacity of each student. So will it be with woman; her actions will show her power, there will no longer be any need to proclaim it by words. It is my hope that women of the East, as well as their Western sisters, will progress rapidly until humanity shall reach perfection. God's Bounty is for all and gives power for all progress. When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights! One of the principles then of Baha'u'llah is the equality of sex. Women must make the greatest effort to acquire spiritual power and to increase in the virtue of wisdom and holiness until their enlightenment and striving succeeds in bringing about the unity of mankind. They must work with a burning enthusiasm to spread the Teaching of Baha'u'llah among the peoples, so that the radiant light of the Divine Bounty may envelop the souls of all the nations of the world!

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, PP. 162-63

In this wondrous Dispensation the favours of the Glorious Lord are vouchsafed unto the handmaidens of the Merciful. Therefore, they should, like unto men, seize the prize and excel in the field, so that it will be proven and made manifest that the penetrative influence of the Word of God in this new Dispensation hath caused women to be equal with men, and that in the arena of tests they will outdo others. Therefore, the true bondswomen of the Blessed Beauty must be revived by the spirit of detachment, and refreshed by the breezes of attraction. With hearts overflowing with the love of God, with souls gladdened by the heavenly glad-tidings, and with extreme humility and lowliness, let them speak out with eloquent speech, and praise and glorify the Great Lord, for they are the manifestations of His bounty and adorned with the crown of splendour.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 396-397

Divine Justice demands that the rights of both sexes should be equally respected since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of Heaven.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, P. 162

In brief, the assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman, as if her attainment to equality was creationally impossible; woman’s aspiration toward advancement will be checked by it, and she will gradually become hopeless. On the contrary, we must declare that her capacity is equal, even greater than man’s. This will inspire her with hope and ambition, and her susceptibilities for advancement will continually increase. She must not be told and taught that she is weaker and inferior in capacity and qualification. If a pupil is told that his intelligence is less than his fellow pupils, it is a very great drawback and handicap to his progress. He must be encouraged to advance by the statement, “You are most capable, and if you endeavor, you will attain the highest degree.”

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGES 76-77

Bahá’í men have the opportunity to demonstrate to the world around them a new approach to the relationship between the sexes, where aggression and the use of force are eliminated and replaced by cooperation and consultation.

LETTER ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE DATED JANUARY 24, 1993 TO AN INDIVIDUAL;  
PUBLISHED IN *THE AMERICAN BAHÁ’Í*, NOV. 23, 1993

## Working Together for Equality



1. Think of someone with whom you have had a relationship that you would characterize as “truly equal.” How did you know it was equal? Please be as specific as possible in your answer.
  
2. What are three specific actions that members of the other sex can do to promote equality? Think of concrete actions that seem particularly helpful in your particular circumstances. Please be as specific as possible.
  
3. What are three specific actions that members of the other sex should avoid to promote equality? Please be as specific as possible. Please consider what language you can use to be frank and open, as well as courteous and respectful to others.
  
4. What specific actions can you, yourself, do to promote equality? Think of concrete actions that seem particularly helpful in your particular circumstances. Please be as specific as possible.
  
5. What specific actions can you, yourself, avoid to promote equality? Please be as specific as possible.  
Please consider what language you can use to be frank and open, as well as courteous and respectful to others.

# The Bahá'í Community: A Light and Haven for All



## Focus Questions:

1. What specific patterns of actions distinguish Bahá'í community life?
2. How do these patterns of action promote the principle of the equality of women and men?
3. How do these patterns of action create a community that welcomes all with the light of oneness?

...welcome all with the light of oneness.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, QUOTED IN SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE*, PAGE 37

The Cause in ... is growing very rapidly, and the more it spreads the more the attention of the public will be fixed upon it. This imposes a heavy responsibility on the believers, as they must show forth such a spirit of love and unity among themselves as will attract the hearts of others and encourage them to enter the Faith in large numbers. We must always remember that the Teachings are perfect, and that the only reason more of our fellow men have not as yet embraced them is because we Bahá'ís, the world over, are ourselves not yet as selfless and radiant mirrors of Bahá'u'lláh's Truth as we should and could be! We must constantly strive to better exemplify His Teachings.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 17-18

Without the spirit of real love for Baha'u'llah, for His Faith and its Institutions, and the believers for each other, the Cause can never really bring in large numbers of people. For it is not preaching and rules the world wants, but love and action.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *DIRECTIVES OF THE GUARDIAN*, PAGE 72

The greater the patience, the loving understanding and the forbearance the believers show towards each other and their shortcomings, the greater will be the progress of the whole Bahá'í community at large.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, IN *LIVING THE LIFE*, P. 9

The Bahá'í community life provides you with an indispensable laboratory, where you can translate into living and constructive action the principles which you imbibe from the Teachings. By becoming a real part of that living organism you can catch the real spirit which runs throughout the Bahá'í Teachings. To study the principles, and to try to live according to them, are, therefore, the two essential mediums through which you can ensure the development and progress of your inner spiritual life and of your outer existence as well.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME ONE, PAGE 219

As you know, the Bahá'ís are distinguished not by their perfection or their immunity from the negative influences of the wider society in which they live, but by their acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh's vision and willingness to work toward it. Each of us must strike a balance between realistically facing our community's shortcomings, and focusing on Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings rather than our fellow believers as our standard of faith. This comment is not intended to belittle your concerns, but rather to place them in perspective so that you may not become discouraged as you strive toward the ideal.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, LETTER DATED MARCH 5, 1979

. . . the Bahá'ís . . . should initiate and implement programs which will stimulate and promote the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of Bahá'í community life, so that through their accomplishments the friends will demonstrate the distinction of the Cause of God in this field of human endeavor.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *MESSAGES FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, 1963-1986*, p. 309

Such close interaction, such complete cohesion, such continual harmony and fellowship between the various agencies that contribute to the organic life, and constitute the basic framework, of every properly functioning Bahá'í community, is a phenomenon which offers a striking contrast to the disruptive tendencies which the discordant elements of present-day society so tragically manifest.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE*, p. 2

...As we read in one of the letters written on behalf of the Guardian: "Until the public sees in the Bahá'í Community a true pattern, in action, of something better than it already has, it will not respond to the Faith in large numbers." When people embrace the Cause, they should then, through the Teachings, develop their relationships with each other and with their fellow-citizens to gradually produce a truly Bahá'í community, a light and haven for the bewildered.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN 1994

...the friends should love each other, constantly encourage each other, work together, be as one soul in one body, and in so doing become a true, organic, healthy body animated and illumined by the spirit. In such a body all will receive spiritual health and vitality from the organism itself, and the most perfect flowers and fruits will be brought forth.

*MESSAGES FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, 1963-1986*, PAGE 43

It [the principle of the oneness of humankind] has widespread implications which affect and remold all dimensions of human activity. It calls for a fundamental change in the manner in which people relate to each other, and the eradication of those age-old practices which deny the intrinsic human right of every individual to be treated with consideration and respect.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, IN *THE AMERICAN BAHÁ'Í*, 24, NO. 17 (NOVEMBER 23, 1993), PP. 10-11

This principle [the equality of the sexes] is far more than the enunciation of admirable ideals; it has profound implications in all aspects of human relations and must be an integral element of Bahá'í domestic and community life. The application of this principle gives rise to changes in habits and practices which have prevailed for many centuries.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, IN *EXTRACTS ON WOMEN*.

The community, as distinguished from the individual and the institutions, assumes its own character and identity as it grows in size. This is a necessary development to which much attention is required both with respect to places where large-scale enrollment has occurred and in anticipation of more numerous instances of entry by troops. A community is of course more than the sum of its membership; it is a comprehensive unit of civilization composed of individuals, families and institutions that are originators and encouragers of systems, agencies and organizations working together with a common purpose for the welfare of people both within and beyond its own borders; it is a composition of diverse, interacting participants that are achieving unity in an unremitting quest for spiritual and social progress. Since Bahá'ís everywhere are at the very beginning of the process of community building, enormous effort must be devoted to the tasks at hand.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *TO THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE WORLD*, RIDVÁN 1996

December 31, 1998

Dearly loved Friends,

Bahá'u'lláh, the Sun of Truth, has assured us that the only remedy for prejudice – an opinion held in disregard of the facts – is the true spirit of equality and unity. The American Bahá'í Community has the ability to serve as a model to our nation in the promotion of these issues. As you know, the National Spiritual Assembly has adopted the equality of women and men together with racial harmony as our twin foci for the duration of the Four Year Plan. We must seize the opportunities afforded at this time to make a difference in the life of our nation. Our progress will help insure the achievement of human rights for all people, and ultimately, to the attainment of peace.

In the arena of gender equality our role is to emphasize the need for a true partnership between women and men. Most individuals are aware of the advances that are needed for equality in education and employment. But let us consider the subtler challenges. We must question whether deep-rooted prejudices about women are affecting our daily behavior. In Bahá'í communities we must examine whether women occupy equally important positions as men; whether their voices are truly heard in consultation; whether their capacities are considered in each election; and whether women and men are sharing in the tasks necessary for community functioning, such as implementing children's programs, providing food, administering meetings, speaking at events, and executing teaching plans.

The role of Bahá'í men, as partners in this process, is critical. Bahá'í men must make a concerted effort to assist, encourage, and support women to realize and fulfill the high aspirations that are held for them in the Bahá'í Writings. We call upon Bahá'í men to confront the attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors that promote the world's currently deplorable moral climate that denigrates women. Bahá'í men can and must explore ways in which to support the often unspoken aspirations of Bahá'í women in their midst and encourage them to step forward in action....

We invite you to consider the following questions in your families, communities and Spiritual Assembly meetings:

1. What should our community do to become a true model of equality?
2. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated, "When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights!" ('Abdu'l-Bahá: Paris Talks, p. 163) How can men "own" equality?
3. How are we raising our children to practice equality in their lives?
4. How can we reach out to the community at large to share the Bahá'í view on equality?...

We look forward to receiving reports of the results of your consultations. Be assured of our ongoing prayers for your success in the closing months of this Century of Light.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

## Women and the Universal House of Justice

### Focus questions:

1. Why don't women serve on the Universal House of Justice?
2. How can Bahá'ís be sure that the Universal House of Justice will continue to uphold the principle of equality of women and men if all the members are men?



We exhort the men of the House of Justice and command them to ensure the protection and safeguarding of men, women and children. It is incumbent upon them to have the utmost regard for the interests of the people at all times and under all conditions. Blessed is the ruler who succoureth the captive, and the rich one who careth for the poor, and the just one who secureth from the wrong doer the rights of the downtrodden, and happy the trustee who observeth that which the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days hath prescribed unto him.

BAHA'U'LLAH: TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLAH, PAGES 69-70

And now, concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers. Its members must be manifestations of the fear of God and daysprings of knowledge and understanding, must be steadfast in God's faith and the well-wishers of all mankind. By this House is meant the Universal House of Justice, that is, in all countries, a secondary House of Justice must be instituted, and these secondary Houses of Justice must elect the members of the Universal one. Unto this body all things must be referred. It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION, PAGE 10

The House of Justice, however, according to the explicit text of the Law of God, is confined to men; this for a wisdom of the Lord God's, which will ere long be made manifest as clearly as the sun at high noon.

ABDU'L-BAHA: SELECTIONS ... ABDU'L-BAHA, PAGE 80

Regarding your question, the Master said the wisdom of having no women on the International House of Justice, would become manifest in the future. We have no other indication than this.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: DIRECTIVES OF THE GUARDIAN, PAGE 80

As regards your question concerning the membership of the Universal House of Justice, there is a Tablet from `Abdu'l-Bahá in which He definitely states that the membership of the Universal House is confined to men and that the wisdom of it will be fully revealed in the future. In the local, as well as the National Houses of Justice, however, women have the full right of membership. It is therefore, only to the International House that they cannot be elected. The Bahá'ís should accept this statement of the Master in a spirit of deep faith, confident that there is a divine guidance and wisdom behind it, which will be gradually unfolded to the eyes of the world."

SHOGHI EFFENDI, DIRECTIVES FROM THE GUARDIAN, P. 79-80

Further, in response to a number of questions about eligibility for membership and procedures for election of the Universal House of Justice, the Guardian's secretary writing on his behalf distinguished between those questions which could be answered by reference to the "explicitly revealed" Text and those which could not. Membership of the Universal House of Justice fits into the former category. The letter stated:

The membership of the Universal House of Justice is confined to men. Fixing the number of members, the procedures for election and the term of membership will be known later, as these are not explicitly revealed in the Holy Text. (27 May 1940)

Hence, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Guardian progressively have revealed, in accordance with divine inspiration, the meaning and implications of Bahá'u'lláh's seminal teachings. Their interpretations are fundamental statements of truth which cannot be varied through legislation by the Universal House of Justice.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, QUOTED IN JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 125

Bahá'ís believe that to gain a fuller understanding of the reason women are excused from membership of the Universal House of Justice, we must await the evolution of society, and, we are confident that the wisdom of women's exclusion will become manifest as society develops and becomes more united.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, QUOTED IN JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 127

Though at the present time it may be difficult for the believers to appreciate the reason for the circumscription of the membership on the Universal House of Justice to men, we call upon the friends to remain assured by the Master's promise that clarity of understanding will be achieved in due course. The friends, both women and men, must accept this with faith that the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh will aid them and the institutions of His World Order to see the realization of every principle ordained by His unerring Pen, including the equality of men and women, as expounded in the Writings of the Cause.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, QUOTED IN JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGES 128-129

While individuals are free to speculate on the reason for the membership of the Universal House of Justice being confined to men, there is no authoritative text to support the assertion that it is due to women being so compassionate as to be unable to make objective decisions. Indeed, it might well be argued that if this were the reason, the teachings would have provided also for the exclusion of women from Local and National Spiritual Assemblies, whereas a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer contains this statement: "In local, as well as national Houses of Justice, however, women have the full right of membership.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, QUOTED IN JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 129

With regard to the status of women, the important point for Bahá'ís to remember is that in face of the categorical pronouncements in Bahá'í Scripture establishing the equality of men and women, the ineligibility of women for membership of the Universal House of Justice does not constitute evidence of the superiority of men over women. It must also be borne in mind that women are not excluded from any other international institution of the Faith. They are found among the ranks of the Hands of the Cause and as Continental Counselors. And there is nothing in the Text to preclude the participation of women in such future international bodies as the Supreme Tribunal.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, QUOTED IN JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGES 130-131

## Power of Encouragement



How often have things been simple and easy of accomplishment, and yet most men have been heedless, and busied themselves with that which wasteth their time!

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF*, PAGE 137

It is incumbent upon every one of us to encourage each other....

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN A LETTER OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM: *BAHÍYYIH KH*ÁNUM, PAGES 163-164

Joy gives us wings! In times of joy our strength is more vital, our intellect keener, and our understanding less clouded. We seem better able to cope with the world and to find our sphere of usefulness.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGE 109

## Resource Guide

Stories and Activities Suited for All Ages

### Using Stories as a Resource

Many stories illustrate the attitudes and behaviors of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. These stories reflect Their regard for and confidence in both female family members and women outside the family. An excellent source of such stories is *Advancement of Women*, especially pp. 142-161, 172-194.

Other sources include:

- *The Chosen Highway*, especially the spoken chronicles of three ladies of the holy family, such pp. 47, 89-90, 98, 101
- *Stories of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 26-27
- *Vignettes of the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*.

### Using *Brilliant Star* as a Resource

- July/August 1993 – entire magazine is devoted to the role of women
- Nov/Dec 1993, “Expanding Resources,” p. 29
- Jan/Feb 1994, “What Does Mom Do? What Does Dad Do?,” pp. 2-3
- Special Edition 1994, “The Two Wings of a Bird,” p. 27
- Mar/Apr 1996, “With Two Wings,” pp. 8-9



# SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN

## CORE CURRICULUM FOR A SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

### MODULE THREE Equality in the Family

#### Learning Objectives

<b>KNOWLEDGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To become aware of traditional conversation patterns</li><li>To know the requisites and conditions for effective consultation</li><li>To know some of the Bahá'í writings that describe the conditions for equality and unity in marriage</li><li>To know the importance of child-rearing to the advancement of human civilization</li><li>To know that tyranny, conflict and aggressive domination are forbidden by Bahá'u'lláh</li><li>To become more familiar with the circumstances of the lives of individuals in the Holy Family.</li></ul>
<b>WISDOM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To understand the relationship between family life and the peace of nations</li><li>To understand the impact of speech patterns on conversation</li><li>To understand that spiritual education and training promote violence-free communities</li><li>To understand that Bahá'í law transcends the common idea of a legal system</li><li>To gain a deeper appreciation of the spiritual qualities which enabled members of the Holy Family to serve in the household of Bahá'u'lláh and in the unfoldment of the Faith</li></ul>
<b>SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To perceive the importance of consultation in establishing harmonious family life</li><li>To perceive that equality in marriage strengthens the marriage bond and promotes the happiness of the couple</li><li>To appreciate that equality in status can include differences in function between women and men</li><li>To reflect on the deep love and respect the members of the Holy Family had for each other</li><li>To perceive the members of the Holy Family as role models for women and men today</li></ul>
<b>ELOQUENT 'SPEECH'</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To demonstrate the requisites and conditions of effective consultation</li><li>To explain to others the relationship between the fundamental principle of the equality of women and men, and the role of mothers as the first, but not only, educator of children</li><li>To explain to others the relationship of the principle of equality to passages in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas that differentiate between women and men</li><li>To exemplify one or more of the qualities of the Holy Family in one's continuing work to achieve the equality of women and men</li></ul>

## Bahá'u'lláh and the Holy Family



The Greatest Holy Leaf recalls:

Asíyih Khánum, my dear mother, was in delicate health, her strength was diminished by the hardships she had undergone, but she always worked beyond her force.

Sometimes my father himself helped in the cooking, as that hard work was too much for the dainty, refined, gentle lady. The hardships she had endured saddened the heart of her divine husband, who was also her beloved Lord.

THE SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, DAUGHTER OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, IN *THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY* BY LADY BLOMFIELD, PAGE 47

Túbá Khánum, granddaughter of Bahá'u'lláh, remembers:

When my little sister, Ruh-Angiz Asíyih, arrived, there was some disappointment that she was not a boy.

Bahá'u'lláh said, "I will love her more than all the rest; you must not wish that she had been a boy."

THE SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF TÚBÁ KHÁNUM, DAUGHTER OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, GRAND-DAUGHTER OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, IN *THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY* BY LADY BLOMFIELD, PAGE 103

We children looked upon Bahá'u'lláh as another loving Father; to Him we carried all our little difficulties and troubles. He took an interest in everything which concerned us.

He used to send a servant to Beirut every year to buy stuff for our clothes. Bahá'u'lláh would then call for us to choose which we liked best for our frocks. My mother, my aunt, and the children would make this cotton material into garments....

All our holidays, all our treats and our happiness came from Him in those days; when boxes of sweets were brought to Him He would set some aside for us.

Put that box of sweets over there, or Aqá will give it away to the people,' He would say in fun.

'Let the dear children come in, and have some dessert,' He often said, when we were being sent off to bed-my Father and my mother not wishing that we should disturb Him-but He always welcomed us with loving words.

How we adored Him!

'Now children, to-morrow you shall come with Me for a picnic to the Ridván,' He would say, and our night was so full of joy we could scarcely sleep.

THE SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF TÚBÁ KHÁNUM, DAUGHTER OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, IN *THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY* BY LADY BLOMFIELD, PAGE 98

## Family Life in an Ever Advancing Civilization

### Focus Questions:

1. What practical expressions of co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity strengthen family life?
2. How can families assist children to learn the attitudes and habits that foster equality, harmony and unity in the family, and that transfer the workplace, political life, and international relations?
3. Please be as specific as possible in your answers.



Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household, and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations, and you have all humanity. The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. Would it add to the progress and advancement of a family if dissensions should arise among its members, all fighting, pillaging each other, jealous and revengeful of injury, seeking selfish advantage? Nay, this would be the cause of the effacement of progress and advancement. So it is in the great family of nations, for nations are but an aggregate of families.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 157

Consider the harmful effect of discord and dissension in a family; then reflect upon the favors and blessings which descend upon that family when unity exists among its various members. What incalculable benefits and blessings would descend upon the great human family if unity and brotherhood were established!

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 230

According to the teachings of Baha’u’llah the family, being a human unit, must be educated according to the rules of sanctity. All the virtues must be taught the family. The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother - none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 168

Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly. ...

The more this inter-relationship is strengthened and expanded, the more will human society advance in progress and prosperity. Indeed without these vital ties it would be wholly impossible for the world of humanity to attain true felicity and success.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 1, PAGES 509-510

The denial of...equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world’s population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 392

## Consultation: The Panacea for Domestic Conflict

### Focus Questions:

1. What different types of consultation occur within the family?
2. What do you value most about effective consultation?
3. When does this happen for you?
4. Who and what is involved in the best types of family consultation?



The primary question to be resolved is how the present world, with its entrenched pattern of conflict, can change to a world in which harmony and co-operation will prevail. World order can be founded only on an unshakable consciousness of the oneness of mankind, a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm. Anthropology, physiology, psychology, recognize only one human species, albeit infinitely varied in the secondary aspects of life. Recognition of this truth requires abandonment of prejudice - prejudice of every kind - race, class, colour, creed, nation, sex, degree of material civilization, everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 371

Family consultation employing full and frank discussion, and animated by awareness of the need for moderation and balance, can be the panacea for domestic conflict.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 453

# Consultation



## Focus Questions:

1. How do the requisites and conditions for consultation help reveal the truth of the matter?
2. How can consultation become an effective guide to action?
3. What are the similarities and differences among various types of consultation: consultation as a member of a spiritual assembly, consultation at the Nineteen-Day Feast, consultation between husband and wife, and consultation between parents and children?

Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 1, PAGE 93*

The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Baha shall be vouchsafed to them. In this day, assemblies of consultation are of the greatest importance and a vital necessity. Obedience unto them is essential and obligatory. The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should any one oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN SHOGHI EFFENDE: *BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION*, PAGE 21

The first condition [for consultation] is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly. They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity of God, for they are the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the stars of one heaven, the rays of one sun, the trees of one orchard, the flowers of one garden. Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be non-existent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that assembly be brought to naught. The second condition: - They must when coming together turn their faces to the Kingdom on High and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden. The honored members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth, and should differences of opinion arise a majority of voices must prevail, and all must obey and submit to the majority. It is again not permitted that any one of the honored members object to or censure, whether in or out of the meeting, any decision arrived at previously, though that decision be not right, for such criticism would prevent any decision from being enforced. In short, whatsoever thing is arranged in harmony and with love and purity of motive, its result is light, and should the least trace of estrangement prevail the result shall be darkness upon darkness....

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN SHOGHI EFFENDE: *BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION*, PAGE 22

Every one of the friends should highly praise the other and each should regard himself as evanescent and as naught in the presence of others.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 1, PAGE 97*

The honoured members of the Spiritual Assembly should exert their efforts so that no differences may occur, and if such differences do occur, they should not reach the point of causing conflict, hatred and antagonism, which lead to threats. When you notice that a stage has been reached when enmity and threats are about to occur, you should immediately postpone discussion of the subject, until wranglings, disputations, and loud talk vanish, and a propitious time is at hand.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 1, PAGE 98

The purpose is to emphasize the statement that consultation must have for its object the investigation of truth. He who expresses an opinion should not voice it as correct and right but set it forth as a contribution to the consensus of opinion, for the light of reality becomes apparent when two opinions coincide. A spark is produced when flint and steel come together. Man should weigh his opinions with the utmost serenity, calmness and composure. Before expressing his own views he should carefully consider the views already advanced by others. If he finds that a previously expressed opinion is more true and worthy, he should accept it immediately and not willfully hold to an opinion of his own. By this excellent method he endeavors to arrive at unity and truth.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 72

Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation. Nothing short of the spirit of a true Baha’i can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHA’I ADMINISTRATION*, PAGES 63-64

Not infrequently, nay oftentimes, the most lowly, untutored and inexperienced among the friends will, by the sheer inspiring force of selfless and ardent devotion, contribute a distinct and memorable share to a highly involved discussion in any given Assembly.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHA’I ADMINISTRATION*, PAGE 79

In any group, however loving the consultation, there are nevertheless points on which, from time to time, agreement cannot be reached. In a Spiritual Assembly this dilemma is resolved by a majority vote. There can, however, be no majority where only two parties are involved, as in the case of a husband and wife. There are, therefore, times when a wife should defer to her husband, and times when a husband should defer to his wife, but neither should ever unjustly dominate the other. In short, the relationship between husband and wife should be as held forth in the prayer revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá which is often read at Baha’i weddings: “Verily, they are married in obedience to Thy command. Cause them to become the signs of harmony and unity until the end of time.”

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 1, PAGE 415

Bahá’u’lláh also stressed the importance of consultation. We should not think this worthwhile method of seeking solutions is confined to the administrative institutions of the Cause. Family consultation employing full and frank discussion, and animated by awareness of the need for moderation and balance, can be the panacea for domestic conflict. Wives should not attempt to dominate their husbands, nor husbands their wives...

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 383

# Marriage: A Fortress for Well-Being and Salvation

## Focus:

Mark the passages indicating factors that promote equality and unity in marriage.



Verily God created women for men, and men for women.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 379

And when He desired to manifest grace and beneficence to men, and to set the world in order, He revealed observances and created laws; among them He established the law of marriage, made it as a fortress for well-being and salvation, and enjoined it upon us in that which was sent down out of the heaven of sanctity in His Most Holy Book. He saith, great is His glory: “Marry, O people, that from you may appear he who will remember Me amongst My servants; this is one of My commandments unto you; obey it as an assistance to yourselves.”

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *BAHÁ'Í PRAYERS* (US), PAGE 105

“We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God.”

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDÁS*: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, PAGE 105

The pledge of marriage, the verse to be spoken individually by the bride and the bridegroom in the presence of at least two witnesses acceptable to the Spiritual Assembly is, as stipulated in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* (The Most Holy Book):

“We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God.”

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *BAHÁ'Í PRAYERS* (US EDITION), PAGE 104

O ye two believers in God! The Lord, peerless is He, hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other.

If they live thus, they will pass through this world with perfect contentment, bliss, and peace of heart, and become the object of divine grace and favour in the Kingdom of heaven. But if they do other than this, they will live out their lives in great bitterness, longing at every moment for death, and will be shamefaced in the heavenly realm.

Strive, then, to abide, heart and soul, with each other as two doves in the nest, for this is to be blessed in both worlds.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS ... ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, PAGE 122

From separation doth every kind of hurt and harm proceed, but the union of created things doth ever yield most laudable results. From the pairing of even the smallest particles in the world of being are the grace and bounty of God made manifest; and the higher the degree, the more momentous is the union. ‘Glory be to Him Who hath created all the pairs, of such things as earth produceth, and out of men themselves, and of things beyond their ken.’ And above all other unions is that between human beings, especially when it cometh to pass in the love of God. Thus is the primal oneness made to appear; thus is laid the foundation of love in the spirit.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS ... ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, PAGE 119

You have asked whether a husband would be able to prevent his wife from embracing the divine light or a wife dissuade her husband from gaining entry into the Kingdom of God. In truth neither of them could prevent the other from entering into the Kingdom, unless the husband hath an excessive attachment to the wife or the wife to the husband. Indeed when either of the two worshippeth the other to the exclusion of God, then each could prevent the other from seeking admittance into His Kingdom.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 381

The relationship between husband and wife must be viewed in the context of the Baha’i ideal of family life. Baha’u’llah came to bring unity to the world, and a fundamental unity is that of the family. Therefore, one must believe that the Faith is intended to strengthen the family, not weaken it, and one of the keys to a strengthening of unity is loving consultation. The atmosphere within a Baha’i family as within the community as a whole should express “the keynote of the Cause of God” which, the beloved Guardian has stated, “is not dictatorial authority, but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation....”

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 455-456

You have asked, however, for specific rules of conduct to govern the relationships of husbands and wives. This the House of Justice does not wish to do, and it feels that there is already adequate guidance included in the compilation on this subject; for example, the principle that the rights of each and all in the family unit must be upheld, and the advice that loving consultation should be the keynote, that all matters must be settled in harmony and love, and that there are times when the husband and wife should defer to the wishes of the other. Exactly under what circumstances such deference should take place is a matter for each couple to determine. If, God forbid, they fail to agree, and their disagreement leads to estrangement, they should seek counsel from those they trust and in whose sincerity and sound judgement they have confidence, in order to preserve and strengthen their ties as a united family.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 456

In considering the problems that you and your wife are experiencing, the House of Justice points out that the unity of your family should take priority over any other consideration. Baha’u’llah came to bring unity to the world, and a fundamental unity is that of the family. Therefore, we must believe that the Faith is intended to strengthen the family, not weaken it. For example, service to the Cause should not produce neglect of the family. It is important for you to arrange your time so that your family life is harmonious and your household receives the attention it requires.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 453

## Parents and Children

### Focus Questions:

1. What is the importance of child-rearing in an ever-advancing civilization?
2. How does the Bahá'í view of child-rearing differ from some of the views in contemporary society?
3. How can child-rearing become increasingly valued, supported and encouraged as a contribution to human civilization without confining women to the home?



The Ancient of Days hath turned His countenance towards thee, making mention of thee, and exhorting the people of God to educate their children. Should a father neglect this most weighty commandment laid down in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* by the Pen of the Eternal King, he shall forfeit rights of fatherhood, and be accounted guilty before God.

BAHÁ'U'LLAH: *KITÁB-I-AQDAS*: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, PAGE 138

O ye loving mothers, know ye that in God's sight, the best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in all the perfections of humankind; and no nobler deed than this can be imagined.

ABDU'L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS ... ABDO'L-BAHÁ*, PAGE 139

O handmaid of God!... To the mothers must be given the divine Teachings and effective counsel, and they must be encouraged and made eager to train their children, for the mother is the first educator of the child. It is she who must, at the very beginning, suckle the newborn at the breast of God's Faith and God's Law, that divine love may enter into him even with his mother's milk, and be with him till his final breath.

So long as the mother faileth to train her children, and start them on a proper way of life, the training which they receive later on will not take its full effect. It is incumbent upon the Spiritual Assemblies to provide the mothers with a well-planned programme for the education of children, showing how, from infancy, the child must be watched over and taught. These instructions must be given to every mother to serve her as a guide, so that each will train and nurture her children in accordance with the Teachings.

ABDU'L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS ... ABDO'L-BAHÁ*, PAGE 138

Furthermore, the education of woman is more necessary and important than that of man, for woman is the trainer of the child from its infancy. If she be defective and imperfect herself, the child will necessarily be deficient; therefore, imperfection of woman implies a condition of imperfection in all mankind, for it is the mother who rears, nurtures and guides the growth of the child. This is not the function of the father. If the educator be incompetent, the educated will be correspondingly lacking. This is evident and incontrovertible. Could the student be brilliant and accomplished if the teacher is illiterate and ignorant? The mothers are the first educators of mankind; if they be imperfect, alas for the condition and future of the race.

ABDU'L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGES 133-134

The members of a family all have duties and responsibilities towards one another and to the family as a whole, and these duties and responsibilities vary from member to member because of their natural relationships. The parents have the inescapable duty to educate their children - but not vice versa; the children have the duty to obey their parents - the parents do not obey the children; the mother - not the father - bears the children, nurses them in babyhood, and is thus their first educator; hence daughters have a prior right to education over sons and, as the Guardian's secretary has written on his behalf, "The task of bringing up a Bahá'í child, as emphasized time and again in Bahá'í Writings, is the chief responsibility of the mother, whose unique privilege is indeed to create in her home such conditions as would be most conducive to both his material and spiritual welfare and advancement. The training which a child first receives through his mother constitutes the strongest foundation for his

future development..."A corollary of this responsibility of the mother is her right to be supported by her husband - a husband has no explicit right to be supported by his wife.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 1, PAGE 414

The great importance attached to the mother's role derives from the fact that she is the first educator of the child. Her attitude, her prayers, even what she eats and her physical condition have a great influence on the child when it is still in the womb. When the child is born, it is she who has been endowed by God with the milk which is the first food designed for it, and it is intended that, if possible, she should be with the baby to train and nurture it in its earliest days and months. This does not mean that the father does not also love, pray for, and care for his baby, but as he has the primary responsibility of providing for the family, his time to be with his child is usually limited, while the mother is usually closely associated with the baby during this intensely formative time when it is growing and developing faster than it ever will again during the whole of its life. As the child grows older and more independent, the relative nature of its relationship with its mother and father modifies and the father can play a greater role.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 386

...there is a much wider sphere of relationships between men and women than in the home, and this too we should consider in the context of Baha'i society, not in that of past or present social norms. For example, although the mother is the first educator of the child, and the most important formative influence in his development, the father also has the responsibility of educating his children, and this responsibility is so weighty that Baha'u'llah has stated that a father who fails to exercise it forfeits his rights of fatherhood. Similarly, although the primary responsibility for supporting the family financially is placed upon the husband, this does not by any means imply that the place of woman is confined to the home.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 392

With regard to your question whether mothers should work outside the home, it is helpful to consider the matter from the perspective of the concept of a Baha'i family. This concept is based on the principle that the man has primary responsibility for the financial support of the family, and the woman is the chief and primary educator of the children. This by no means implies that these functions are inflexibly fixed and cannot be changed and adjusted to suit particular family situations, nor does it mean that the place of the woman is confined to the home. Rather, while primary responsibility is assigned, it is anticipated that fathers would play a significant role in the education of the children and women could also be breadwinners. As you rightly indicated, 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged women to "participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world".

In relation to your specific queries, the decision concerning the amount of time a mother may spend in working outside the home depends on circumstances existing within the home, which may vary from time to time. Family consultation will help to provide the answers....

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 386

The duty of women in being the first educators of mankind is clearly set forth in the Writings. It is for every woman, if and when she becomes a mother, to determine how best she can discharge on the one hand her chief responsibility as a mother and on the other, to the extent possible, to participate in other aspects of the activities of the society of which she forms a part....

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 393

## Violence-Free Communities

### Focus Questions:

1. How can the promotion of equality in home and community life help create violence-free communities?
2. What sort of education and training programs overcome patterns of violence in home and community life?
3. How can the Bahá'í community promote the protection and safeguarding of men, women and children from violence?



We exhort the men of the House of Justice and command them to ensure the protection and safeguarding of men, women and children. It is incumbent upon them to have the utmost regard for the interests of the people at all times and under all conditions.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, PAGES 69-70

The friends of God must be adorned with the ornament of justice, equity, kindness and love. As they do not allow themselves to be the object of cruelty and transgression, in like manner they should not allow such tyranny to visit the handmaidens of God. He, verily, speaketh the truth and commandeth that which benefitteth His servants and handmaidens.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2, PAGE 379

In formulating the principles and laws a part hath been devoted to penalties which form an effective instrument for the security and protection of men. However, dread of the penalties maketh people desist only outwardly from committing vile and contemptible deeds, while that which guardeth and restraineth man both outwardly and inwardly hath been and still is the fear of God. It is man's true protector and his spiritual guardian. It behoveth him to cleave tenaciously unto that which will lead to the appearance of this supreme bounty. Well is it with him who giveth ear unto whatsoever My Pen of Glory hath proclaimed and observeth that whereunto he is bidden by the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days.

Incline your hearts, O people of God, unto the counsels of your true, your incomparable Friend. The Word of God may be likened unto a sapling, whose roots have been implanted in the hearts of men. It is incumbent upon you to foster its growth through the living waters of wisdom, of sanctified and holy words, so that its root may become firmly fixed and its branches may spread out as high as the heavens and beyond.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, PAGES 93-94

The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2, PAGE 369

The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother - none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 168

...if such differences do occur, they should not reach the point of causing conflict, hatred and antagonism, which lead to threats. When you notice that a stage has been reached when enmity and threats are about to occur, you should immediately postpone discussion of the subject, until wranglings, disputations, and loud talk vanish, and a propitious time is at hand.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 1*, PAGE 98

Divine civilization, however, so traineth every member of society that no one, with the exception of a negligible few, will undertake to commit a crime. There is thus a great difference between the prevention of crime through measures that are violent and retaliatory, and so training the people, and enlightening them, and spiritualizing them, that without any fear of punishment or vengeance to come, they will shun all criminal acts. They will, indeed, look upon the very commission of a crime as a great disgrace and in itself the harshest of punishments. They will become enamoured of human perfections, and will consecrate their lives to whatever will bring light to the world and will further those qualities which are acceptable at the Holy Threshold of God.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS ... ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, PAGES 132-133

In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor deprives himself of God’s grace. It is incumbent upon everyone to show the utmost love, rectitude of conduct, straightforwardness and sincere kindness unto all the peoples and kindreds of the world, be they friends or strangers.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÁ’Í ADMINISTRATION*, PAGE 9

Family consultation employing full and frank discussion, and animated by awareness of the need for moderation and balance, can be the panacea for domestic conflict.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2*, PAGE 453

# Spiritual Practices



## Focus Questions:

1. In light of the fundamental principle of equality, what is the significance of the fact that these laws explain exemptions rather than prohibitions?
2. In what way could these exemptions indicate a “mercy on His part?”
3. How can our understanding of the Station of the Manifestation of God assist us to explain these teachings to friends who have not yet embraced the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh?

## Prayer and Fasting

God hath exempted women who are in their courses from obligatory prayer and fasting. Let them, instead, after performance of their ablutions, give praise unto God, repeating ninety-five times between the noon of one day and the next “Glorified be God, the Lord of Splendour and Beauty”. Thus hath it been decreed in the Book, if ye be of them that comprehend.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 13, PAGES 23-24

God hath, likewise, as a bounty from His presence, abolished the concept of “uncleanness”, whereby divers things and peoples have been held to be impure. He, of a certainty, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous. Verily, all created things were immersed in the sea of purification when, on that first day of Ridvan, We shed upon the whole of creation the splendours of Our most excellent Names and Our most exalted Attributes. This, verily, is a token of My loving providence, which hath encompassed all the worlds. Consort ye then with the followers of all religions, and proclaim ye the Cause of your Lord, the Most Compassionate; this is the very crown of deeds, if ye be of them who understand.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 75, PAGE 47

### **Note 20. God hath exempted women who are in their courses from obligatory prayer and fasting. # 13**

Exemption from obligatory prayer and fasting is granted to women who are menstruating; they should, instead, perform their ablutions (see note 34) and repeat 95 times a day between one noon and the next, the verse “Glorified be God, the Lord of Splendour and Beauty”. This provision has its antecedent in the Arabic Bayan, where a similar dispensation was granted.

In some earlier religious Dispensations, women in their courses were considered ritually unclean and were forbidden to observe the duties of prayer and fasting. The concept of ritual uncleanness has been abolished by Baha’u’llah (see note 106).

The Universal House of Justice has clarified that the provisions in the Kitab-i-Aqdas granting exemptions from certain duties and responsibilities are, as the word indicates, exemptions and not prohibitions. Any believer is, therefore, free to avail himself or herself of an applicable exemption if he or she so wishes. However, the House of Justice counsels that, in deciding whether to do so or not, the believer should use wisdom and realize that Baha’u’llah has granted these exemptions for good reason.

The prescribed exemption from obligatory prayer, originally related to the Obligatory Prayer consisting of nine rak’ahs, is now applicable to the three Obligatory Prayers which superseded it.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, NOTES, PAGES 173-174

## Pilgrimage

The Lord hath ordained that those of you who are able shall make pilgrimage to the sacred House, and from this He hath exempted women as a mercy on His part. He, of a truth, is the All-Bountiful, the Most Generous.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDÁS*, PARAGRAPH 32, PAGE 30

### **Note 55. And from this He hath exempted women as a mercy on His part. # 32**

In the Bayán, the Báb enjoined the ordinance of pilgrimage once in a lifetime upon those of His followers who were financially able to undertake the journey. He stated that the obligation was not binding on women in order to spare them the rigours of travel.

Bahá'u'lláh likewise exempts women from His pilgrimage requirements. The Universal House of Justice has clarified that this exemption is not a prohibition, and that women are free to perform the pilgrimage.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDÁS*, NOTES, PAGES 191-192

# Marriage and Dowry



## Focus questions:

1. How can we understand the wisdom of the gradual implementation of the law of monogamy?
2. How does the Bahá'í dowry differ from traditional practices that subjugate women?
3. How does the symbolic gift of the dowry indicate the wife's freedom to hold property in her own name?

## Marriage

God hath prescribed matrimony unto you. Beware that ye take not unto yourselves more wives than two. Whoso contenteth himself with a single partner from among the maidservants of God, both he and she shall live in tranquillity. And he who would take into his service a maid may do so with propriety. Such is the ordinance which, in truth and justice, hath been recorded by the Pen of Revelation. Enter into wedlock, O people, that ye may bring forth one who will make mention of Me amid My servants. This is My bidding unto you; hold fast to it as an assistance to yourselves.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 63, PAGE 41

**Note 89. Beware that ye take not unto yourselves more wives than two. Whoso contenteth himself with a single partner from among the maidservants of God, both he and she shall live in tranquillity. # 63**

While the text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas appears to permit bigamy, Bahá'u'lláh counsels that tranquillity and contentment derive from monogamy. In another Tablet, He underlines the importance of the individual's acting in such a way as to "bring comfort to himself and to his partner". Abdu'l-Bahá, the authorized Interpreter of the Baha'í Writings, states that in the text of the Aqdas monogamy is in effect enjoined. He elaborates this theme in a number of Tablets, including the following:

Know thou that polygamy is not permitted under the law of God, for contentment with one wife hath been clearly stipulated. Taking a second wife is made dependent upon equity and justice being upheld between the two wives, under all conditions. However, observance of justice and equity towards two wives is utterly impossible. The fact that bigamy has been made dependent upon an impossible condition is clear proof of its absolute prohibition. Therefore it is not permissible for a man to have more than one wife.

Polygamy is a very ancient practice among the majority of humanity. The introduction of monogamy has been only gradually accomplished by the Manifestations of God. Jesus, for example, did not prohibit polygamy, but abolished divorce except in the case of fornication; Muhammad limited the number of wives to four, but making plurality of wives contingent on justice, and reintroducing permission for divorce; Bahá'u'lláh, Who was revealing His Teachings in the milieu of a Muslim society, introduced the question of monogamy gradually in accordance with the principles of wisdom and the progressive unfoldment of His purpose. The fact that He left His followers with an infallible Interpreter of His Writings enabled Him to outwardly permit two wives in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas but uphold a condition that enabled Abdu'l-Bahá to elucidate later that the intention of the law was to enforce monogamy.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*: NOTES, PAGES 205-206

**Note 90. He who would take into his service a maid may do so with propriety. # 63**

Bahá'u'lláh states that a man may employ a maiden for domestic service. This was not permissible under Shi'ih Muslim practice unless the employer entered into a marriage contract with her. Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes that the “service” referred to in this verse is solely “such as is performed by any other class of servants, be they young or old, in exchange for wages” (Q and A 30). An employer has no sexual rights over his maid. She is “free to choose a husband at whatever time she pleaseth”, for the purchase of women is forbidden (Q and A 30).

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*: NOTES, PAGES 206-207

## Dowry

No marriage may be contracted without payment of a dowry, which hath been fixed for city-dwellers at nineteen mithqals of pure gold, and for village-dwellers at the same amount in silver. Whoso wisheth to increase this sum, it is forbidden him to exceed the limit of ninety-five mithqals. Thus hath the command been writ in majesty and power. If he content himself, however, with a payment of the lowest level, it shall be better for him according to the Book. God, verily, enricheth whomsoever He willeth through both heavenly and earthly means, and He, in truth, hath power over all things.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 66, PAGE 42

With the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh many familiar concepts, customs and institutions are redefined and take on new meaning. One of these is the dowry. The institution of dowry is a very ancient practice in many cultures and takes many forms. In some countries it is a payment made by the parents of the bride to the bridegroom; in others it is a payment made by the bridegroom to the parents of the bride, called a “bride-price”. In both such cases the amount is often quite considerable. The law of Bahá'u'lláh abolishes all such variants and converts the dowry into a symbolic act whereby the bridegroom presents a gift of a certain limited value to the bride.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*: NOTES, PAGES 207-208

**Note 93. No marriage may be contracted without payment of a dowry. # 66**

The Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.1.j.i.-v., summarizes the main provisions concerning the dowry. These provisions have their antecedents in the Bayán.

The dowry is to be paid by the bridegroom to the bride. It is fixed at 19 mithqals of pure gold for city-dwellers, and 19 mithqals of silver for village-dwellers (see note 94). Bahá'u'lláh indicates that, if, at the time of the wedding, the bridegroom is unable to pay the dowry in full, it is permissible for him to issue a promissory note to the bride (Q and A 39).

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*: NOTES, PAGES 207-208

# Inheritance



## Focus questions:

1. How is the well-being of human society strengthened by the instruction that each person write a will?
2. What might be the relationship between the financial responsibilities of fathers and the laws of dividing an estate when the deceased has not left a will?
3. In what ways could the principles of equality and family unity be upheld by the provision that if a will has not been made, the eldest son inherits the residence along with the obligation to care for his mother?

Unto everyone hath been enjoined the writing of a will.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 109, PAGE 59

We have divided inheritance into seven categories: to the children, We have allotted nine parts comprising five hundred and forty shares; to the wife, eight parts comprising four hundred and eighty shares; to the father, seven parts comprising four hundred and twenty shares; to the mother, six parts comprising three hundred and sixty shares; to the brothers, five parts or three hundred shares; to the sisters, four parts or two hundred and forty shares; and to the teachers, three parts or one hundred and eighty shares. Such was the ordinance of My Forerunner, He Who extolleth My Name in the night season and at the break of day. When We heard the clamour of the children as yet unborn, We doubled their share and decreased those of the rest. He, of a truth, hath power to ordain whatsoever He desireth, and He doeth as He pleaseth by virtue of His sovereign might.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 20, PAGE 26

We have assigned the residence and personal clothing of the deceased to the male, not female, offspring, nor to the other heirs. He, verily, is the Munificent, the All-Bountiful.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 25, PAGES 27-28

## Note 38. We have divided inheritance into seven categories. # 20

The Bahá'í laws of inheritance apply only in case of intestacy, that is, when the individual dies without leaving a will. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (# 109), Bahá'u'lláh instructs every believer to write a will. He elsewhere clearly states that the individual has full jurisdiction over his property and is free to determine the manner in which his or her estate is to be divided and to designate, in the will, those, whether Bahá'í or non-Bahá'í, who should inherit (Q and A 69). In this connection, a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi explains that:

...even though a Bahá'í is permitted in his will to dispose of his wealth in the way he wishes, yet he is morally and conscientiously bound to always bear in mind, while writing his will, the necessity of his upholding the principle of Bahá'u'lláh regarding the social function of wealth, and the consequent necessity of avoiding its over-accumulation and concentration in a few individuals or groups of individuals.

This verse of the Aqdas introduces a lengthy passage in which Bahá'u'lláh elaborates the Bahá'í law of inheritance. In reading this passage one should bear in mind that the law is formulated with the presumption that the deceased is a man; its provisions apply, *mutatis mutandis*, when the deceased is a woman.

The system of inheritance which provides for distribution of the deceased's estate among seven categories of heirs (children, spouse, father, mother, brothers, sisters, and teachers) is based on the provisions set out by the Báb in the Bayán. The major features of the Bahá'í laws of inheritance in the case of intestacy are:

1. If the deceased is a father and his estate includes a personal residence, such residence passes to the eldest son (Q and A 34).

2. If the deceased has no male descendants, two thirds of the residence pass to his female descendants and the remaining third passes to the House of Justice (Q and A 41, 72). See note 42 concerning the levels of the institution of the House of Justice to which this law applies. (See also note 44.)

3. The remainder of the estate is divided among the seven categories of heirs. For details of the number of shares to be received by each group, see Questions and Answers, number 5, and Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.3.a.

4. In case there is more than one heir in any category the share allotted to that class should be divided between them equally, be they male or female.

5. In cases where there is no issue, the share of the children reverts to the House of Justice (Q and A 7, 41).

6. Should one leave offspring, but either part or all of the other categories of heirs be non-existent, two thirds of their shares revert to the offspring and one third to the House of Justice (Q and A 7).

7. Should none of the specified categories exist, two thirds of the estate revert to the nephews and nieces of the deceased. If these do not exist, the same shares revert to the aunts and uncles; lacking these, to their sons and daughters. In any case the remaining third reverts to the House of Justice.

8. Should one leave none of the aforementioned heirs, the entire estate reverts to the House of Justice.

9. Bahá'u'lláh states that non-Bahá'ís have no right to inherit from their Bahá'í parents or relatives (Q and A 34). Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf indicates that this restriction applies "only to such cases when a Bahá'í dies without leaving a will and when, therefore, his property will have to be divided in accordance with the rules set forth in the Aqdas. Otherwise, a Bahá'í is free to bequeath his property to any person, irrespective of religion, provided however he leaves a will, specifying his wishes." It is always possible, therefore, for a Bahá'í to provide for his or her non-Bahá'í partner, children or relatives by leaving a will.

Additional details of the laws of inheritance are summarized in the Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.3.a.-o.

### **39. to the brothers, five parts ... to the sisters, four parts # 20**

Questions and Answers amplifies the provisions of the law as it relates to the shares of the inheritance allocated to the brothers and sisters of the deceased. If the brother or sister is from the same father as the deceased, he or she will inherit his or her full allotted share. If, however, the brother or sister is from another father he or she will inherit only two thirds of the allotted share, the remaining one third reverting to the House of Justice (Q and A 6). Further, in the case where the deceased has full brothers or full sisters among his heirs, half-brothers and half-sisters from the mother's side do not inherit (Q and A 53). The half-brothers and half-sisters will, of course, be due to receive inheritance from their own father's estate.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*: NOTES, PAGES 182-185

**Note 44. We have assigned the residence and personal clothing of the deceased to the male, not female, offspring, nor to the other heirs. # 25**

In a Tablet, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá indicates that the residence and personal clothing of a deceased man remain in the male line. They pass to the eldest son and in the absence of the eldest son, they pass to the second-eldest son, and so on. He explains that this provision is an expression of the law of primogeniture, which has invariably been upheld by the Law of God. In a Tablet to a follower of the Faith in Persia He wrote: “In all the Divine Dispensations the eldest son hath been given extraordinary distinctions. Even the station of prophethood hath been his birthright.” With the distinctions given to the eldest son, however, go concomitant duties. For example, he has the moral responsibility, for the sake of God, to care for his mother and also to consider the needs of the other heirs.

Bahá’u’lláh clarifies various aspects of this part of the law of inheritance. He specifies that if there be more than one residence, the principal and most important one passes to the male offspring. The remaining residences will, together with the other possessions of the deceased, have to be divided among the heirs (Q and A 34), and He indicates that in the absence of male offspring, two thirds of the principal residence and the personal clothing of the deceased father will revert to the female issue and one third to the House of Justice (Q and A 72). Further, when the deceased is a woman, Bahá’u’lláh states that all her used clothing is to be equally divided amongst her daughters. Her unworn clothing, jewels and property must be divided among her heirs, as well as her used clothing if she leaves no daughter (Q and A 37).

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDÁS*: NOTES, PAGES 186-187

## Group One: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and His Sister, the Greatest Holy Leaf



Bahíyyih Khánum recalls:

The journey to Adrianople, although occupying but nine days, was the most terrible experience of travel we had thus far had. It was the beginning of winter, and very cold; heavy snow fell most of the time; and destitute as we were of proper clothing or food, it was a miracle that we survived it. We arrived at Adrianople all sick - even the young and strong....

Our family, numbering eleven persons, was lodged in a house of three rooms just outside the city of Adrianople. It was like a prison; without comforts and surrounded by a guard of soldiers. Our only food was the prison fare allowed us, which was unsuitable for the children and the sick.

That winter was a period of intense suffering, due to cold, hunger, and, above all, to the torments of vermin, with which the house was swarming. These made even the days horrible, and the nights still more so. When they were so intolerable that it was impossible to sleep, my brother would light a lamp (which somewhat intimidated the vermin) and by singing and laughing seek to restore the spirits of the family.”

*THE MASTER IN ‘AKKÁ* BY MYRON H. PHELPS, PAGES 47-48

‘Abdu’l-Bahá provides for His sister’s comfort during a later journey by writing to His daughter:

O Diya! It is incumbent upon thee, throughout the journey, to be a close, a constant and cheerful companion to my honoured and distinguished sister. Unceasingly, with the utmost vigour and devotion, exert thyself, by day and night, to gladden her blessed heart; for all her days she was denied a moment of tranquillity. She was astir and restless every hour of her life. Moth-like she circled in adoration round the undying flame of the Divine Candle, her spirit ablaze and her heart consumed by the fire of His love....

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁN*UM, PAGES 10

## Group Two: The Marriage of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Munírih Khánum



Munírih Khánum recalls:

It is impossible to put into words the delight of being with the Master; I seemed to be in a glorious realm of sacred happiness whilst in His company.

You have known Him in His later years, but then, in the youth of His beauty and manly vigour, with His unfailing love, His kindness, His cheerfulness, His sense of humour, His untiring consideration for everybody, He was marvelous, without equal, surely in all the earth!...

For fifty years my Beloved and I were together. Never were we separated, save during His visits to Egypt, Europe, and America.

O my Beloved husband and my Lord! How shall I speak of Him?

You, who have known Him, can imagine what my fifty years have been – how they fled by in an atmosphere of love and joy and the perfection of that Peace which passeth all understanding, in the radiant light of which I await the day when I shall be called to join Him, in the celestial garden of transfiguration.

SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF MUNÍRIH KHÁNUM, *THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY*, PAGE 89-90

## Group Three: Gifts of the Greatest Holy Leaf



Early pilgrims share remembrances of the Greatest Holy Leaf:

It is a charming Persian habit to wrap a gift in an embroidered silk or linen cloth, as fine in its way as the thing enclosed. So, always, she [Bahíyyih Khánúm] gave a gift within the gift. You took the happy warmth of contentment you felt when you were with her and only later came to realize that this was the fine wrapping of a deeper joy, a richer core....

She was seldom alone.... Her room was the heart of the house. Around the glow of her brazier in winter or when she sat on her window divan in full sunlight, old and young would gather near her, filtering in one by one, slipping out again to work or play, or pausing for a moment in a busy day at the doorway for a glimpse. You left your shoes at the threshold of that room and you left, too, any outer covering of pose or manner you might have made for yourself for protection in a bleak world. Here was no need for pretense and brave showing: here in the light of her shining simplicity you became simple.

“THE PASSING OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNÚM,” BY MARJORY MORTEN, IN *CRYSTALLIZATIONS*, PAGE 168 & 170

Among the visitors was a widow from the Middle East, who had arrived on what seemed to be a permanent pilgrimage. I do not recall the source of this lady’s permanent melancholy. True, she would help some of the people there on occasion, sitting on the floor according to the lingering custom and working on the vegetables and other ingredients of the patriarchal dinner dishes that would feed so many mouths. But she would take little part in the conversations, being mostly wrapped in unadulterated grief. One day, there she came, and sat, heaving her usual sighs, her face clouded with sorrow. Gently the Greatest Holy Leaf leaned over and addressed her. “There are not frontiers to the world of gloom,” she said.... “You will never get to the end of it, no matter how far and how fast you gallop your steed.”

MARZIEH GAIL, KHÁNÚM, *THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF*, PAGE 25

## Group Four: The Children's Education



From the earliest days of the small Bahá'í community centered around Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land, the education of children – both boys and girls – was emphasized, within the limits imposed by the confinement of the family and companions as prisoners of the Ottoman Turks, and by the meager facilities available to them. The emphasis on education was constant. Lady Blomfield, an early Bahá'í, describes how, when the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was evacuated temporarily from Haifa to the village of Abu-Sinan during the period of World War I when Haifa was in danger of bombardment, 'Abdu'l-Bahá arranged for schools to be set up in that village to ensure that the children's education was not neglected.

JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 183

'Abdu'l-Bahá took particular care in Shoghi Effendi's education:

“At this time, the British world empire is the greatest of all and is still advancing. Its language is a world language. My Vizier shall receive his education in England itself, after acquiring the Oriental languages and the wisdom of the East in this place.”

The doctor ventured to object: Would not Western education “check his active spirit”, rigidly bind it, “stifle his Oriental non-rationalities and intuition into dogmas and conventionalities,” so that he would turn from being a servant of the Most High and become “a slave of Western opportunism and the trite and commonplace”?

A long pause. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá stood up and said in a firm voice, “I am not giving my Elisha to the British for education: I am consecrating him to Almighty God. May His eyes watch over my child...even at Oxford.”

MARZIEH GAIL, *KHLÁNUM, THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF*, PAGES 33-34

## Group Five: Shoghi Effendi's Tenderness



Rúhíyyih Khánum shares this personal story about the Guardian:

In 1940 my mother, animated by a passionate desire to render the Cause some service ... decided to go to South America and help in teaching the Faith in Argentina .... The Guardian, my father and I had consented to this long journey, but at such an age, and with a heart very far from sound, it was a risk, to say the least.

The reason I record all these personal things is because behind them, in them, pervading them was the spirit of the Guardian and his tender heart, ... which were all reflected in the events that followed. My mother reached Buenos Aires and died almost immediately of a heart attack. The three cables that came, one from her asking for his prayers, one from my father saying she was very ill and to prepare me, and one from my cousin Jeanne Bolles, who had accompanied her, saying she had died, were all handed by me to Shoghi Effendi. As he read them I saw his face change and he looked at me with an expression of intense anxiety and concern. Then of course, gradually, he had to tell me she was dead. I cannot conceive that any human being ever received such pure kindness as I did from the Guardian during that period of shock and grief. His praises of her sacrifice, his descriptions of her state of joy in the next world, ... his vivid depiction of her as she wandered about the Abhá Kingdom making a thorough nuisance of herself because all she wanted to talk about was her beloved daughter on earth!-all combined to lift me into a state of such happiness that many times I would find myself laughing with him over the things he seemed to be actually divining.

*THE PRICELESS PEARL BY RÚHÍYYIH RABBÁNÍ, PAGES 154-155*

# SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN

## CORE CURRICULUM FOR A SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

### MODULE FOUR

#### Teaching Equality “Can Attract Much Notice”

#### Learning Objectives

<b>KNOWLEDGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To know some of the facts about Tahirih’s life and accomplishments</li><li>To know about some of the Bahá’í heroines in the history of the Bahá’í faith</li><li>To know about some of the world-wide efforts to promote the equality of women and men</li></ul>
<b>WISDOM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To understand Tahirih’s role as foremost heroine of the Bábi dispensation</li><li>To understand the main points of <b>Two Wings of a Bird</b> statement</li><li>To understand the importance of the arts and consultation in promoting equality</li><li>To understand the power of unified action</li></ul>
<b>SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To appreciate some of the qualities of service that Bahá’u’lláh expects of girls and women</li><li>To plan to distribute the statement to friends, acquaintances and leaders of thought</li><li>To plan specific opportunities to teach others about equality</li><li>To perceive the equality of women and men as an aspect of an ideal Bahá’í community</li><li>To reflect on Bahíyyih Khánum’s life of selfless service to the Head of the Faith</li></ul>
<b>ELOQUENT ‘SPEECH’</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To encourage girls and women with the words of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá</li><li>To prepare a presentation about a Bahá’í heroine to teach others about the role of women in the Bahá’í faith</li><li>To memorize and use the Writings to teach others about equality</li><li>To anticipate and answer questions about the principle of the equality of women and men</li><li>To respond to the National Spiritual Assembly’s call for equality in the Bahá’í community</li><li>To articulate a vision of equality as aspect of the ideal community</li><li>To identify and initiate unified lines of action for equality</li><li>To prepare a statement on service to the head of the Faith</li></ul>

## Táhirih, Peerless Woman of the Bábí Dispensation



THE FOLLOWING EXCEPTS, INCLUDING SELECTIONS FROM JOURNAL ASIATTQUE AND MEMORIALS OF THE FAITHFUL, ARE TAKEN FROM SUSAN STILES MANECK, "TÁHIRIH: A RELIGIOUS PARADIGM OF WOMANHOOD", JOURNAL OF BAHÁ'Í STUDIES, 2:2, 1989

How could it be that a woman, in Persia where woman is considered so weak a creature, and above all in a city like Qazvín, where the clergy possessed so great an influence, where the 'Ullamá, by their number and importance, attracted the attention of the government and of the people - how could it be that there, precisely under such untoward circumstances, a woman could have organized so strong a group of heretics? There lies a question which puzzles even the Persian historian, Siphir, for such an occurrence was without precedent! (JOURNAL ASIATTQUE)

Táhirih's background was certainly inauspicious for one who would later emerge as a preeminent leader of the militantly anticlerical Bábí religion and who would become in Shoghi Effendi's words "the first woman suffrage martyr." Fátimih Zarrin Tá'j Baraghání, known to Bahá'ís by her titles Qurratu'l-'Ayn and Táhirih, was born to the most prominent family of 'ulamá of Qazvín (circa 1817-18 A.D.)...

Táhirih and her younger sister Marziyih were brought up in a strictly religious yet affluent environment. Her father, recognizing Táhirih's extraordinary abilities, had permitted her to continue her studies beyond the elementary level that was expected of a woman of her station. She far surpassed her brothers in theological and juridical knowledge.

At the age of thirteen Táhirih was married to the eldest son of her uncle...She bore three children from that marriage, two sons and a daughter. Family tensions soon developed after Táhirih became attracted to the teachings of the Shaykhís. Her father, husband, and uncle all tried to dissuade her from supporting the views of Siyyid Kázim Rashtí but to no avail. Through her Shaykhí relatives she corresponded with the leader of that school and wrote a treatise vindicating it... Táhirih's relations with her husband quickly deteriorated, and after her father-in-law publicly began to denounce the Shaykhís from the pulpit, she decided to leave her husband and children and return to her father's house. Shortly afterwards she set out of Karbilá and joined the circle of Shaykhís there....

When the Báb arose claiming to be the Promised One, Táhirih immediately accepted his claim and persuaded most of the Shaykhí community in Karbilá to do the same....

Claiming that much of Islamic law was no longer binding on the Bábís, she refused to perform the daily ritual prayers. At the same time she instituted a number of innovations within the Bábí community at Karbilá. Her most dangerous and unconventional act was appearing unveiled in a gathering of believers...The circle of women who gathered around her appear to have formed the earliest group of female Iranians to attain an awareness of their deprivations as women. Yet Táhirih's activities did not represent a woman's liberation movement in the modern sense of the word. Táhirih clearly saw the unveiling of women as an act of religious innovation....

Táhirih's activities became quite controversial...She frequently issued challenges to debate the 'ulamá. During the month of Muharram, 1847, while Shiíte Muslims donned mourning clothes to commemorate the martyrdom of the Imám Husayn, Táhirih deliberately excited their reaction by dressing in gay colors and appearing unveiled. She urged the Bábís to celebrate the Báb's birthday, which fell on the first day of that month. The enraged 'ulamá incited a mob to attack Siyyid Kázim's house. Finally, the governor of Karbilá intervened and had Táhirih placed under house arrest for three months before allowing her to be sent to Baghdad.

Accompanied by the leading Bábí women of Karbilá, along with a number of Shaykhís who were her devoted followers, Táhírih set out for Baghdad, where she continued her activities, offering public lectures from behind a curtain. Often the ‘ulamá would attend these lectures to refute her. On one of these occasions the Shah’s Jewish physician...was present and became thoroughly convinced of the validity of Táhírih’s message. This physician, Dr. Hakím Masih, became the first Bábí of Jewish origin.

This conversion aroused further opposition and caused Táhírih to be imprisoned in the house of the Muftí of Baghdad [who] later wrote these observations in regards to Táhírih:

...Verily, I saw in her such a degree of merit and accomplishment as I rarely saw in men. She was a wise and decent woman who was unique in virtue and chastity...there is no doubt about her knowledge...

Táhírih’s father dispatched a relative to Iraq who induced the governor to order her deportation to Iran. Wherever she travelled en route more excitement was raised. In the village of Karand some 1200 people immediately offered her their allegiance...In Kirmánsháh, however, her activities caused such an uproar that the Bábís were attacked by a mob and driven out of the city, but not before Táhírih had been able to expound the teachings before the leading women of Kirmánsháh, among them the governor’s wife, who had long been a patron of the Shaykhís. In Hamadán Táhírih met with both the leading ‘ulamá and the most notable women of the city, whose number included members of the royal family...

... Táhírih escaped with the assistance of Bahá’u’lláh, who hid her in his home in Tehran. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá recalled those days:

When word of this spread through out Tihrán, the Government hunted for her high and low; nevertheless, the friends [Bábís] kept arriving to see her, in a steady stream, and Táhírih, seated behind a curtain, would converse with them. One day the great Siyyid Yahyá, surnamed Váhíd, was present there. As he sat without, Táhírih listened to him from behind the veil. I was then a child, and sitting on her lap. With eloquence and fervor, Váhíd was discoursing on the signs and verses that bore witness to the advent of the new Manifestation. She suddenly interrupted him and, raising her voice, vehemently declared: ‘O Yahyá! Let deeds, not words, testify to thy faith, if thou art a man of learning. Cease idly repeating the traditions of the past, for the day of service, of steadfast action, is come. Now is the time to show forth the true signs of God, to rend asunder the veils of idle fancy, to promote the Word of God, and to sacrifice ourselves in His path. Let deeds, not words, be our adorning.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: MEMORIALS OF THE FAITHFUL, PAGE 200

Later, following a general call upon the Bábís to gather in Khurásán, both Táhírih and Bahá’u’lláh travelled to a place called Badasht where eighty-one Bábí leaders had gathered to...discuss the future direction of the Bábí community. At that meeting tension developed between Táhírih (who headed the more radical Bábís advocating a complete break with Islam as well as the militant defence of their community) and the more conservative Quddús...At one time when Quddús was rapt in his devotions, Táhírih rushed out of her tent brandishing a sword. “Now is not the time for prayers and prostrations,” she declared, “rather on to the field of love and sacrifice!”



It was to her doors, during the height of her fame and popularity in Tihran, that the flower of feminine society in the capital flocked to hear her brilliant discourses on the matchless tenets of her Faith. It was the magic of her words which won the wedding guests away from the festivities, on the occasion of the marriage of the son of Mahmud Khan-i-

Kalantar - in whose house she was confined - and gathered them about her, eager to drink in her every word. It was her passionate and unqualified affirmation of the claims and distinguishing features of the new Revelation, in a series of seven conferences with the deputies of the Grand Vizir commissioned to interrogate her, which she held while confined in that same house, which finally precipitated the sentence of her death. It was from her pen that odes had flowed attesting, in unmistakable language, not only her faith in the Revelation of the Báb, but also her recognition of the exalted and as yet undisclosed mission of Bahá'u'lláh. And last but not least it was owing to her initiative, while participating in the Conference of Badasht, that the most challenging implications of a revolutionary and as yet but dimly grasped Dispensation were laid bare before her fellow-disciples and the new Order permanently divorced from the laws and institutions of Islam. Such marvelous achievements were now to be crowned by, and attain their final consummation in, her martyrdom in the midst of the storm that was raging throughout the capital.

One night, aware that the hour of her death was at hand, she put on the attire of a bride, and anointed herself with perfume, and, sending for the wife of the Kalantar, she communicated to her the secret of her impending martyrdom, and confided to her her last wishes. Then, closeting herself in her chambers, she awaited, in prayer and meditation, the hour which was to witness her reunion with her Beloved. She was pacing the floor of her room, chanting a litany expressive of both grief and triumph, when the farrashes of Aziz Khan-i-Sardar arrived, in the dead of night, to conduct her to the Ilkhani garden, which lay beyond the city gates, and which was to be the site of her martyrdom. When she arrived the Sardar was in the midst of a drunken debauch with his lieutenants, and was roaring with laughter; he ordered offhand that she be strangled at once and thrown into a pit. With that same silken kerchief which she had intuitively reserved for that purpose, and delivered in her last moments to the son of Kalantar who accompanied her, the death of this immortal heroine was accomplished. Her body was lowered into a well, which was then filled with earth and stones, in the manner she herself had desired.

Thus ended the life of this great Bábí heroine, the first woman suffrage martyr, who, at her death, turning to the one in whose custody she had been placed, had boldly declared: "You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women."

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *GOD PASSES BY*, PAGES 74-75

## What a Woman Can Do



### Focus Questions:

1. What are some examples of using the power of utterance to achieve the goals described by
2. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?
3. How is it possible in this day to “to ride on a charger and penetrate the army of the ignorant, defeat the mighty regiments and subvert the foundations of error and violation?”
4. What practical steps can we take to assist girls and women to serve as described in these passages?

We beseech the True One to adorn His handmaidens with the ornament of chastity, of trustworthiness, of righteousness and of purity. Verily, He is the All-Bestowing, the All-Generous. We make mention of the handmaidens of God at this time and announce unto them the glad-tidings of the tokens of the mercy and compassion of God and His consideration for them, glorified be He, and We supplicate Him for all His assistance to perform such deeds as are the cause of the exaltation of His Word. He verily speaketh the truth and enjoineth upon His servants and His handmaidens that which will profit them in every world of His worlds. He, verily, is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 394

The effulgence of the rays of the Sun of Truth is abundant and the favours of the Blessed Beauty surround the women believers and the handmaidens who have attained unto certitude. At every moment a bounteous bestowal is revealed. The handmaidens of the Merciful should seize the opportunities afforded in these days. Each one should strive to draw nigh unto the divine Threshold and seek bounties from the Source of existence. She should attain such a state and be confirmed with such a power as to make, with but the utterance of one word, a lowly person to be held in reverence, initiate him who is deprived into the world of the spirit, impart hope to the despondent, endow the portionless one with a share of the great bestowal, and confer knowledge and insight upon the ignorant and the blind, and alertness and vigilance on the indolent and heedless. This is the attribute of the handmaidens of the Merciful. This is the characteristic of the bondswomen of God’s Threshold.

O ye leaves who have attained certitude! In the countries of Europe and America the maidservants of the Merciful have won the prize of excellence and advancement from the arena of men, and in the fields of teaching and spreading the divine fragrances they have shown a brilliant hand. Soon they will soar like the birds of the Concourse on high in the far corners of the world and will guide the people and reveal to them the divine mysteries. Ye, who are the blessed leaves from the East, should burn more brightly, and engage in spreading the sweet savours of the Lord and in reciting the verses of God. Arise, therefore, and exert yourselves to fulfil the exhortations and counsels of the Blessed Beauty, that all hopes may be realized and that the plain of streams and orchards may become the garden of oneness.

Upon ye, men and women, be the glory of glories.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 394-395

In this great Cycle and wondrous Dispensation some women have been raised up who were the emblems of unity and ensigns of oneness, for the revelation of divine bestowals is received by men and women in equal measure. “Verily the most honoured in the sight of God is the most virtuous amongst you” is applicable to both men and women, to servants and handmaidens. All are under the shadow of the Word of God and all derive their strength from the bounties of the Lord. Therefore, do not consider thyself to be insignificant by doubting what a handmaiden living behind the veil can do....

With a firm heart, a steadfast step and an eloquent tongue arise to spread the Word of God and say: “O God, although I am sitting concealed behind the screen of chastity and am restricted by the veil and exigencies of modesty, my cherished hope is to raise the banner of service and to become a maidservant at Thy Holy Threshold; to ride on a charger and penetrate the army of the ignorant, defeat the mighty regiments and subvert the foundations of error and violation. Thou art the Helper of the weak, Thou art the Sustainer of the poor, Thou art the Succourer of the handmaidens. Verily, Thou art the Almighty and All-Powerful.”

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 395

# Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men

## Section One

The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes is essential to human progress and the transformation of society. Inequality retards not only the advancement of women but the progress of civilization itself. The persistent denial of equality to one-half of the world's population is an affront to human dignity. It promotes destructive attitudes and habits in men and women that pass from the family to the work place, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. On no grounds, moral, biological, or traditional can inequality be justified. The moral and psychological climate necessary to enable our nation to establish social justice and to contribute to global peace will be created only when women attain full partnership with men in all fields of endeavor.

The systematic oppression of women is a conspicuous and tragic fact of history. Restricted to narrow spheres of activity in the life of society, denied educational opportunities and basic human rights, subjected to violence, and frequently treated as less than human, women have been prevented from realizing their true potential. Age-old patterns of subordination, reflected in popular culture, literature and art, law, and even religious scriptures, continue to pervade every aspect of life. Despite the advancement of political and civil rights for women in America and the widespread acceptance of equality in principle, full equality has not been achieved.

The damaging effects of gender prejudice are a fault line beneath the foundation of our national life. The gains for women rest uneasily on unchanged, often unexamined, inherited assumptions. Much remains to be done. The achievement of full equality requires a new understanding of who we are, what is our purpose in life, and how we relate to one another--an understanding that will compel us to reshape our lives and thereby our society.

At no time since the founding of the women's rights movement in America has the need to focus on this issue been greater. We stand at the threshold of a new century and a new millennium. Their challenges are already upon us, influencing our families, our lifestyles, our nation, our world. In the process of human evolution, the ages of infancy and childhood are past. The turbulence of adolescence is slowly and painfully preparing us for the age of maturity, when prejudice and exploitation will be abolished and unity established. The elements necessary to unify peoples and nations are precisely those needed to bring about equality of the sexes and to improve the relationships between women and men. The effort to overcome the history of inequality requires the full participation of every man, woman, youth, and child.

# Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men

## Section Two

Over a century ago, for the first time in religious history, Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, in announcing God's purpose for the age, proclaimed the principle of the equality of women and men, saying: "Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God."<sup>1</sup> The establishment of equal rights and privileges for women and men, Bahá'u'lláh says, is a precondition for the attainment of a wider unity that will ensure the well-being and security of all peoples. The Bahá'í Writings state emphatically that "When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Bahá'í vision of equality between the sexes rests on the central spiritual principle of the oneness of humankind. The principle of oneness requires that we "regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form,"<sup>3</sup> and that we foster an unshakable consciousness that "if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest."<sup>4</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh teaches that the divine purpose of creation is the achievement of unity among all peoples:

Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest.<sup>5</sup>

The full and equal participation of women in all spheres of life is essential to social and economic development, the abolition of war, and the ultimate establishment of a united world. In the Bahá'í Scriptures the equality of the sexes is a cornerstone of God's plan for human development and prosperity:

The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. When the two wings become equivalent in strength, enjoying the same prerogatives, the flight of man will be exceedingly lofty and extraordinary.<sup>6</sup>

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### Notes

1. Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet translated from the Persian and Arabic, quoted in *Women: Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice*, comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Thornhill, Ontario: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of Canada, 1986), no. 54.
2. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, comp. Howard MacNutt, 2d ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 175.
3. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, trans. Marzieh Gail and Ali-Kuli Khan, 1st ps ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), p. 39.
4. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 39.
5. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, trans. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1939), p. 20.
6. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, p. 375.

# Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men

## Section Three

The Bahá'í Writings state that to proclaim equality is not to deny that differences in function between women and men exist but rather to affirm the complementary roles men and women fulfill in the home and society at large. Stating that the acquisition of knowledge serves as “a ladder for [human] ascent,”<sup>7</sup> Bahá'u'lláh prescribes identical education for women and men but stipulates that when resources are limited first priority should be given to the education of women and girls. The education of girls is particularly important because, although both parents have responsibilities for the rearing of children, it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively diffused throughout society.

Reverence for, and protection of, motherhood have often been used as justification for keeping women socially and economically disadvantaged. It is this discriminatory and injurious result that must change. Great honor and nobility are rightly conferred on the station of motherhood and the importance of training children. Addressing the high station of motherhood, the Bahá'í Writings state, “O ye loving mothers, know ye that in God’s sight, the best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in all the perfections of humankind. . . .”<sup>8</sup> The great challenge facing society is to make social and economic provisions for the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of life while simultaneously reinforcing the critical functions of motherhood.

Asserting that women and men share similar “station and rank” and “are equally the recipients of powers and endowments from God,”<sup>9</sup> the Bahá'í teachings offer a model of equality based on the concept of partnership. Only when women become full participants in all domains of life and enter the important arenas of decision-making will humanity be prepared to embark on the next stage of its collective development.

Bahá'í Scripture emphatically states that women will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. “So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it.”<sup>10</sup>

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### Notes

7. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas*, comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, trans. Habib Taherzadeh et al., 1st ps ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 51.
8. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, trans. Committee at the Bahá'í World Centre and Marzieh Gail (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1997), 114.1.
9. Bahá'u'lláh, Tablet translated from the Persian and Arabic, quoted in *Women*, no. 2; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, p. 300.
10. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, p. 135.

# Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men

## Section Four

The elimination of discrimination against women is a spiritual and moral imperative that must ultimately reshape existing legal, economic, and social arrangements. Promoting the entry of greater numbers of women into positions of prominence and authority is a necessary but not sufficient step in creating a just social order. Without fundamental changes in the attitudes and values of individuals and in the underlying ethos of social institutions, full equality between women and men cannot be achieved. A community based on partnership, a community in which aggression and the use of force are supplanted by cooperation and consultation, requires the transformation of the human heart.

The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals . . . an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced.<sup>11</sup>

Men have an inescapable duty to promote the equality of women. The presumption of superiority by men thwarts the ambition of women and inhibits the creation of an environment in which equality may reign. The destructive effects of inequality prevent men from maturing and developing the qualities necessary to meet the challenges of the new millennium. “As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities,” the Bahá’í Writings state, “so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs.”<sup>12</sup> It is essential that men engage in a careful, deliberate examination of attitudes, feelings, and behavior deeply rooted in cultural habit, that block the equal participation of women and stifle the growth of men. The willingness of men to take responsibility for equality will create an optimum environment for progress: “When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights!”<sup>13</sup>

The long-standing and deeply rooted condition of inequality must be eliminated. To overcome such a condition requires the exercise of nothing short of “genuine love, extreme patience, true humility, consummate tact, sound initiative, mature wisdom, and deliberate, persistent, and prayerful effort.”<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, Bahá’u’lláh promises, a day will come when men will welcome women in all aspects of life. Now is the time to move decisively toward that promised future.

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### Notes

11. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in Wendell Phillips Dodge, “‘Abdu'l-Bahá’s Arrival in America,” in *Star of the West* 3 (April 28, 1912), no. 3, p. 4.
12. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks: Addresses Given by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911*, 12th ed. (London: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1995), 40.33
13. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, 50.14.
14. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 40.

December 31, 1998

Dearly loved Friends,

Bahá'u'lláh, the Sun of Truth, has assured us that the only remedy for prejudice - an opinion held in disregard of the facts - is the true spirit of equality and unity. The American Bahá'í Community has the ability to serve as a model to our nation in the promotion of these issues. As you know, the National Spiritual Assembly has adopted the equality of women and men together with racial harmony as our twin foci for the duration of the Four Year Plan. We must seize the opportunities afforded at this time to make a difference in the life of our nation. Our progress will help insure the achievement of human rights for all people, and ultimately, to the attainment of peace.

In the arena of gender equality our role is to emphasize the need for a true partnership between women and men. Most individuals are aware of the advances that are needed for equality in education and employment. But let us consider the subtler challenges. We must question whether deep-rooted prejudices about women are affecting our daily behavior. In Bahá'í communities we must examine whether women occupy equally important positions as men; whether their voices are truly heard in consultation; whether their capacities are considered in each election; and whether women and men are sharing in the tasks necessary for community functioning, such as implementing children's programs, providing food, administering meetings, speaking at events, and executing teaching plans.

The role of Bahá'í men, as partners in this process, is critical. Bahá'í men must make a concerted effort to assist, encourage, and support women to realize and fulfill the high aspirations that are held for them in the Bahá'í Writings. We call upon Bahá'í men to confront the attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors that promote the world's currently deplorable moral climate that denigrates women. Bahá'í men can and must explore ways in which to support the often unspoken aspirations of Bahá'í women in their midst and encourage them to step forward in action.

We invite you to consider the following questions in your families, communities and Spiritual Assembly meetings:

1. What should our community do to become a true model of equality?
2. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated, "When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights!" (*Abdu'l-Bahá: Paris Talks*, p. 163) How can men "own" equality?
3. How are we raising our children to practice equality in their lives?
4. How can we reach out to the community at large to share the Bahá'í view on equality?
5. How can we use the *Two Wings of a Bird* statement more effectively?

We look forward to receiving reports of the results of your consultations.

Be assured of our ongoing prayers for your success in the closing months of this Century of Light.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

## The Greatest Holy Leaf: Service to the Head of the Faith



Verily, We have elevated thee [Bahíyyih Khánúm] to the rank of one of the most distinguished among thy sex, and granted thee, in My court, a station such as none other woman hath surpassed

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF*, PAGE 3

In the days of the Commission of Investigation, she was a staunch and trusted supporter of the peerless Branch of Bahá'u'lláh, and a companion to Him beyond compare. At the time of His absence in the western world, she was His competent deputy, His representative and vicegerent, with none to equal her.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, PAGES 28-29

And when, in pursuance of God's inscrutable Wisdom, the ban on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's confinement was lifted and the Plan which He, in the darkest hours of His confinement, had conceived materialized, He with unhesitating confidence, invested His trusted and honoured sister with the responsibility of attending to the multitudinous details arising out of His protracted absence from the Holy Land.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION*, PAGE 192

Soon after the passing of the Master, Shoghi Effendi, grief stricken and entangled in the troubles created by covenant breakers within the Master's family, left the Holy Land for several months to seek rest and healing and to prepare himself for the Guardianship. He wrote at that time:

For this reason, unable to do otherwise, I have left for a time the affairs of the Cause both at home and abroad, under the supervision of the Holy Family and the headship of the Greatest Holy Leaf until, by the Grace of God, having gained health, strength, self-confidence and spiritual energy, and having taken into my hands, in accordance with my aim and desire, entirely and regularly the work of service I shall attain to my utmost spiritual hope and aspiration.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, PAGE 21

Rúhíyyih Khánúm describes the Greatest Holy Leaf during these days:

She had already - so frail, so quiet, so modest at all times - shown herself in these past weeks to be a strong rock to which the believers clung in the midst of the tempest that had so suddenly burst upon them. The calibre of her soul, her breeding, her station, fitted her for the role she played in the Cause and in Shoghi Effendi's life during this extremely difficult and dangerous period.

RÚHÍYYIH RABBÁNÍ: *THE PRICELESS PEARL*, PAGE 42

Bahíyyih Khánúm describes her childhood terror when Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned in the Síyáh-Chál:

"Every morning one or more of these brave and devoted friends would be taken out to be tortured and killed in various ways of horror....

"These terrible sounds I well remember, as we three children clung to our mother, she not knowing whether the victim was her own adored husband. She could not find out whether he was still alive or not until late at night, or very early in the morning, when she determined to venture out, in defiance of the danger to herself and to us, for neither women or children were spared.

"How well I remember cowering in the dark, with my little brother, Mirzá Mihdí, the Purest Branch, at that time two years old, in my arms, which were not very strong, as I was only six. I was shivering with terror, for I knew of some of the horrible things that were happening, and was aware that they might have seized even my mother.

"So I waited and waited until she should come back."

THE SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, IN *THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY* BY LADY BLOMFIELD, PAGES 42-43

Lady Blomfield also describes Bahíyyih Khánum's childhood and youth:

"During the period of the sojourn in Baghdad, Bahíyyih Khánum, the Greatest Holy Leaf, was her mother's loving helper, working always beyond her strength, in the various household tasks. No childish pleasures or companions were hers. Always with eyes on her mother, alert to spare her any fatigue, she rejoiced beyond measure when she could minister in any way to her or her illustrious father.

"My mother,' she said, 'sometimes gave lessons to my brother 'Abbás; at other times Mírzá Músá would teach Him, and on some occasions he would be taught by His father.'

"And your lessons?' I asked.

"But I never had any time for studies,' she said, in a tone which spoke volumes of absolute self-effacement, and this is the keynote of her whole life, no thought of her unselfishness entered her mind.

"Her thoughtfulness and consideration for all who came near her; the countless acts of never-failing kindness, were, in her eyes, all to be taken as a matter of course. Her one joy was to devote every moment of her existence to being of use to her mother and father, to whom she was passionately attached. This loving service was extended, as He grew older, to her brother 'Abbás, Sarkár-i-Aqá, and these three were her being's end and aim.

"Her life was spent in prayer to God and service to her loved ones....

"After those terrible days in Tíhrán, and the not less terrible journey to Baghdad, during the sojourn in this city, she grew into a beautiful girl, very much like her lovely mother in grace of body and character, a gentle, slender maiden with large, grey-blue eyes, golden-brown hair, and warm, ivory-coloured skin. Her sense of humour was keen and her intelligence remarkable.

"As she grew up, she implored her father to allow her to remain unmarried, that she might the better devote herself to her three dearly loved ones.

"And so it was."

LADY BLOMFIELD: *THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY*, PAGES 68-69

She had moulded her life to the bounds of her sphere, pouring into it the resources of her own spirit, and had found scope for all her qualities.

MARJORIE MORTEN: "THE PASSING OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM," IN *CRYSTALLIZATIONS*, PAGE 167

Something greater than forgiveness she had shown in meeting the cruelties and strictures in her own life. To be hurt and to forgive is saintly but far beyond this is the power to comprehend and not be hurt. This power she had.... She was never known to complain or lament. It was not that she made the best of things, but that she found in everything, even in calamity itself, the germs of enduring wisdom.

MARJORIE MORTEN: "THE PASSING OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM," IN *CRYSTALLIZATIONS*, PAGE 174

Even in the thick of the worst ordeals, she would smile like an opening rose...

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, PAGE 79

Marzieh Gail writes:

On this first pilgrimage of mine, the third anniversary of the Master's passing came due. The wound was raw, and there was a great outburst of Eastern grief: tears, loud cries and sobs; and seeing the adults in disarray, the children began whimpering and running about, not knowing where to turn. The house was full of people, and the sounds of weeping were all about, when I happened to walk by the open doorway of a lighted room, and there, through the door, was the Greatest Holy Leaf. She was seated in the midst of the children, they standing close to her as if all were in her embrace; she still and quiet, sitting there detached from the storm, her face composed, a comfort and safe haven.

MARZIEH GAIL: *KHÁN*UM, *THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF*, PAGE 20

All I can find to say is that she was a quietness, a focal point of peace; that she pervaded the room like a sweet scent, or lit her corner like a sun-ray shining through a crystal vase; that despite her rank and great dignity, she was self-effacing, gentle-voiced; and that she spoke little, but you remembered.

MARZIEH GAIL: *KHĀNUM, THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF*, PAGE 15

Always she moved with the larger rhythm, the wider sweep, toward the ultimate goal.

MARJORY MORTEN: *THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD*, "THE PASSING OF BAHÍYYIH *KHĀNUM*", VOL. 5 (1932-34); 181-85

It would take me too long to make even a brief allusion to those incidents of her life, each of which eloquently proclaims her as a daughter, worthy to inherit that priceless heritage bequeathed to her by Bahá'u'lláh. A purity of life that reflected itself in even the minutest details of her daily occupations and activities; a tenderness of heart that obliterated every distinction of creed, class and colour; a resignation and serenity that evoked to the mind the calm and heroic fortitude of the Báb; a natural fondness of flowers and children that was so characteristic of Bahá'u'lláh; an unaffected simplicity of manners; an extreme sociability which made her accessible to all; a generosity, a love, at once disinterested and indiscriminating, that reflected so clearly the attributes of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's character; a sweetness of temper; a cheerfulness that no amount of sorrow could becloud; a quiet and unassuming disposition that served to enhance a thousandfold the prestige of her exalted rank; a forgiving nature that instantly disarmed the most unyielding enemy.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHĀNUM*, PAGES 42-43

## Closing Readings

(Male reader)

In the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, women are advancing side by side with men. There is no area or instance where they will lag behind: they have equal rights with men, and will enter, in the future, into all branches of the administration of society. Such will be their elevation that, in every area of endeavour, they will occupy the highest levels in the human world. Rest thou assured. Look not upon their present state. In future, the world of womankind will shine with lustrous brilliance, for such is the will and purpose of Bahá'u'lláh.... No soul can retard or prevent it.

(Female reader)

...the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh will aid them and the institutions of His World Order to see the realization of every principle ordained by His unerring Pen, including the equality of men and women, as expounded in the Writings of the Cause.

LETTER DATED MAY 31, 1988 TO A NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY, P. 4, QUOTED IN *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 296

(Male reader)

O loved handmaidens of God! Consider not your present merits and capacities, rather fix your gaze on the favours and confirmations of the Blessed Beauty, because His everlasting grace will make of the insignificant plant a blessed tree, will turn the mirage into cool water and wine; will cause the forsaken atom to become the very essence of being, the puny one erudite in the school of knowledge.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, IN *WOMEN*, PAGE 50, #99

(Female reader)

O Thou Incomparable God! O Thou Lord of the Kingdom! These souls are Thy heavenly army. Assist them and, with the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse, make them victorious, so that each one of them may become like unto a regiment and conquer these countries through the love of God and the illumination of divine teachings.

O God! Be Thou their supporter and their helper, and in the wilderness, the mountain, the valley, the forests, the prairies and the seas, be Thou their confidant – so that they may cry out through the power of the Kingdom and the breath of the Holy Spirit.

Verily, Thou art the Powerful, the Mighty and the Omnipotent, and Thou art the Wise, the Hearing and the Seeing.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ: *TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN*, PAGE 35

**Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education**

held on \_\_\_\_\_  
 in \_\_\_\_\_  
 facilitated by \_\_\_\_\_  
 sponsored by \_\_\_\_\_

**Equality Course  
Evaluation**

This opportunity to work with you has truly been a pleasure. Please candidly share your feelings and reactions. This information will be invaluable to us in planning future workshops.

The presenters were organized and clear in their presentation.

The purpose of the course and the individual modules was made clear.

The materials were supportive of the presentations.

Adequate time was provided for reflection upon and recording of your observations.

The course demonstrated the use of different teaching methods, teaching tools and modalities of learning.

The Sacred Writings were sufficiently utilized to elevate the spirit of the participants and lay the foundation for the work before them?

The expectations and directions for your role as a worker for equality was made clear and seems sufficient?

	Exceptional	very good	fair	poor

Please take time to expand on any of the items listed above, particularly if any ate rated fair or poor so that we might improve the delivery of the course.

What was most helpful to you?

What was least helpful to you?

What would you recommend for future workshops?