

# Education of Children

Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Partial translation



## Education of Children

*"Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing and in all that hath been laid down in the Holy Tablet. He that putteth away that which is commanded unto him, the Trustees are then to take from him that which is required for their instruction if he be wealthy and, if not, the matter devolveth upon the House of Justice. Verily have We made it a shelter for the poor and needy. He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My glory, My loving-kindness, My mercy, that have compassed the world."*<sup>1</sup>

*"And in another Tablet, these exalted words have been revealed: O Muḥammad! 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. Well is it with him who imprinteth on his heart the admonitions of the Lord, and steadfastly cleaveth unto them. God, in truth, enjoineth on His servants what shall assist and profit them, and enable them to draw nigh unto Him. He is the Ordainer, the Everlasting."*<sup>2</sup>

*"of the Most Exalted Paradise is the following: Schools must first train the children in the principles of religion, so that the Promise and the Threat recorded in the Books of God may prevent them from the things forbidden and adorn them with the mantle of the commandments; but this in such a measure that it may not injure the children by resulting in ignorant fanaticism and bigotry..."*<sup>3</sup>

*"The Pen of Glory counseleth everyone regarding the instruction and education of children... Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing and in all that hath been laid down in the Holy Tablet..."*<sup>4</sup>

*"Everyone, whether man or woman, should hand over to a trusted person a portion of what he or she earneth through trade, agriculture or other occupation, for the training and education of*

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1. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 48

2. Baha'u'llah, Questions & Answers, no. 105

3. Baha'u'llah, Words of Paradise, The eighth leaf

4. Baha'u'llah, Ishraqat, The seventh Ishraq



children, to be spent for this purpose with the knowledge of the Trustees of the House of Justice.”<sup>5</sup>

*“Knowledge is one of the wondrous gifts of God. It is incumbent upon everyone to acquire it. Such arts and material means as are now manifest have been achieved by virtue of His knowledge and wisdom which have been revealed in Epistles and Tablets through His Most Exalted Pen—a Pen out of whose treasury pearls of wisdom and utterance and the arts and crafts of the world are brought to light.”*<sup>6</sup>

*“Therefore He hath sent forth His Messengers, His Prophets and chosen ones that they might acquaint the people with the divine purpose underlying the revelation of Books and the raising up of Messengers, and that everyone may become aware of the trust of God which is latent in the reality of every soul...The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom... At the outset of every endeavor, it is incumbent to look to the end of it. Of all the arts and sciences, set the children to studying those which will result in advantage to man, will ensure his progress and elevate his rank. Thus the noisome odors of lawlessness will be dispelled, and thus through the high endeavors of the nation's leaders, all will live cradled, secure and in peace.”*<sup>7</sup>

*“There are many things which will, if neglected, be wasted, and come to nothing. How often in this world do we see a child who has lost his parents and who, unless attention be devoted to his education and training, can produce no fruit. And better off dead than alive is he who produceth no fruit.”*<sup>8</sup>

*“The instruction of these children is even as the work of a loving gardener who tendeth his young plants in the flowering fields of the All-Glorious. There is no doubt that it will yield the desired results; especially is this true of instruction as to Bahá'í obligations and Bahá'í conduct, for the little children must needs be made aware in their very heart and soul that “Bahá'í” is not just a name but a truth. Every child must be trained in the things of the spirit, so that he may embody all the virtues and become a source of glory to the Cause of God. Otherwise, the mere word “Bahá'í”, if it yield no fruit, will come to nothing.”*<sup>9</sup>

*“The school for girls taketh precedence over the school for boys, for 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.*

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5. Baha'u'llah, Lawh Dunya

6. Baha'u'llah, Tarazat, The sixth Taraz

7. Baha'u'llah, Lawh Maqsd

8. Baha'u'llah, Compilation on Baha'i Education, pp. 59

9. Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, sec. 123, pp. 143

"If, as she ought, the mother possesseth the learning and accomplishments of humankind, her children, like unto angels, will be fostered in all excellence, in right conduct and beauty. Therefore the School for Girls that hath been established in that place must be made the object of the deep concern and high endeavours of the friends. The teachers of that school are handmaids close to the Sacred Threshold, for they are of those who, obedient to the commandments of the Blessed Beauty, have arisen to educate the girl children.

"The day will come when those children will be mothers, and each one of them in her deep gratitude will offer up prayers and supplications to Almighty God and ask that her teachers will be granted joy and well-being forever, and a high station in the Kingdom of God."<sup>10</sup>

"Devote ye particular attention to the school for girls, for the greatness of this wondrous Age will be manifested as a result of progress in the world of women. This is why ye observe that in every land the world of women is on the march, and this is due to the impact of the Most Great Manifestation, and the power of the teachings of God.

"Education holds an important place in the new order of things. The education of each child is compulsory. If there is not money enough in a family to educate both the girl and the boy the money must be dedicated to the girl's education, for she is the potential mother. If there are no parents the community must educate the child. 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."<sup>11</sup>

"...the first duty of the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful is this: They must strive by all possible means to educate both sexes, male and female; girls like boys; there is no difference whatsoever between them. The ignorance of both is blameworthy, and negligence in both cases is reprovable. "Are they who know and they who do not know equal?" (Quran)

"The command is decisive concerning both. If it be considered through the eye of reality, the training and culture of daughters is more necessary than that of sons, for these girls will come to the station of motherhood and will mould the lives of the children. The first trainer of the child is the mother. The babe, like unto a green and tender branch, will grow according to the way it is trained. If the training be right, it will grow right, and if crooked, the growth likewise, and unto the end of life it will conduct itself accordingly.

"Hence, it is firmly established that an untrained and uneducated daughter, on becoming a mother, will be the prime factor in the deprivation, ignorance, negligence and the lack of training of many children.

"O ye beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful! Teaching and learning, according to the decisive texts of the Blessed Beauty (Baha'o'llah), is a duty. Whosoever is indifferent therein depriveth himself of the great bounty.

"Beware! Beware! that ye fail not in this matter. Endeavor with heart, with life, to train your children, especially the daughters. No excuse is acceptable in this matter.

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<sup>10</sup>. Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian, Baha'i Education (compilation), no. 80

<sup>11</sup>. Abdu'l-Baha, Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy, pp. 83

"Thus may eternal glory and everlasting supremacy, like unto the mid-day sun, shine forth in the assemblage of the people of Baha', and the heart of Abdul-Baha become happy and thankful."<sup>12</sup>

"Devote ye particular attention to the school for girls, for the greatness of this wondrous Age will be manifested as a result of progress in the world of women. This is why ye observe that in every land the world of women is on the march, and this is due to the impact of the Most Great Manifestation, and the power of the teachings of God.

"Instruction in the schools must begin with instruction in religion. Following religious training, and the binding of the child's heart to the love of God, proceed with his education in the other branches of knowledge."<sup>13</sup>

"This principle, that women and girls should receive priority over men and boys in access to education, has been a long-standing principle in the Bahá'í teachings. Speaking in 1912, Abdu'l-Baha said: "In proclaiming the oneness of mankind [Baha'u'llah] taught that men and women are equal in the sight of God and that there is no distinction to be made between them. The only difference between them now is due to lack of education and training. If woman is given equal opportunity of education, distinction and estimate of inferiority will disappear.... Furthermore, the education of women is of greater importance than the education of men, for they are the mothers of the race, and mothers rear the children. The first teachers of children are the mothers. Therefore, they must be capably trained in order to educate both sons and daughters. There are many provisions in the words of Baha'u'llah in regard to this."

"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."<sup>14</sup>

"The question of training the children and looking after the orphans is extremely important, but most important of all is the education of girl children, for these girls will one day be mothers, and the mother is the first teacher of the child. In whatever way she reareth the child, so will the child become, and the results of that first training will remain with the individual throughout his entire life, and it would be most difficult to alter them. And how can a mother, herself ignorant and untrained, educate her child? It is therefore clear that the education of girls is of far greater consequence than that of boys. This fact is extremely important, and the matter must be seen to with the greatest energy and dedication.

"God sayeth in the Qur'an that they shall not be equals, those who have knowledge and those who have it not. Ignorance is thus utterly to be blamed, whether in male or female; indeed, in the female its harm is greater. I hope, therefore, that the friends will make strenuous efforts to educate their children, sons and daughters alike. This is verily the truth, and outside the truth there is manifestly naught save perdition."<sup>15</sup>

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12. Abdul-Baha, Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 579-580

13. Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian, Baha'i Education (compilation), no. 67

14. Abdu'l-Baha, Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 174-175.

15. Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian and Arabic; in Baha'i Education (compilation), no. 84

"Abdu'l-Baha laid great stress on Education. He said "The girl's education is of more importance today than the boy's, for she is the mother of the future race. It is the duty of all to look after the children. Those without children should, if possible, make themselves responsible for the education of a child.""<sup>16</sup>

"Furthermore, the education of women is of greater importance than the education of men, for they are the mothers of the race, and mothers rear the children. The first teachers of children are the mothers. Therefore, they must be capably trained in order to educate both sons and daughters. There are many provisions in the words of Bahá'u'lláh in regard to this."<sup>17</sup>

Instruction in the schools must begin with instruction in religion. Following religious training, and the binding of the child's heart to the love of God, proceed with his education in the other branches of knowledge."<sup>18</sup>

"In past centuries the girl children of Persia were deprived of all instruction. They had neither school nor academy, no kindly tutor and no teacher. Now in this greatest of centuries the bounty of the All-Bountiful hath encompassed the girls as well, and many schools have been founded in Persia for the education of girl children — but what is missing from them is character training, and this despite the fact that such training is more important than instruction, for it is the primary accomplishment of humankind..."<sup>19</sup>

"Thou didst write about the believers' daughters who attend the schools of other faiths. It is true that, while these children do learn a little in such schools, still the character and behaviour of the women teachers have an effect on them, and through the inculcation of doubts and ambiguities, the minds of these girls are influenced and changed.

"It is incumbent upon the friends to provide a school for Baha'i girls whose women teachers will educate their pupils according to the teachings of God. There must the girls be taught spiritual ethics and holy ways.

"A child is as a young plant: it will grow in whatever way you train it. If you rear it to be truthful, and kind, and righteous, it will grow straight, it will be fresh and tender, and will flourish. But if not, then from faulty training it will grow bent, and stand awry, and there will be no hope of changing it.

"Certainly, the women teachers from Europe give instruction in language and scripts, and housekeeping, and embroidery and sewing; but their pupils' character is completely altered, to such a point that the girls no longer care for their mothers, their disposition is spoiled, they misbehave, they become self-satisfied and proud.

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<sup>16</sup>. Abdu'l-Baha in London, pp. 91

<sup>17</sup>. Abdul-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Talks in Phil, 9 June 1912

<sup>18</sup>. Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian, Baha'i Education (compilation), no. 67

<sup>19</sup>. Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian, Baha'i Education (compilation), no. 82

"Rather, girls ought to be trained in such a manner that from day to day they will become more self-effacing, more humble, and will defer to and obey their parents and forebears, and be a comfort and a solace to all." <sup>20</sup>

"As to the education of children, exert every effort to further this; it is of the utmost importance. So too, the education of girls in all the rules of righteous conduct, that they may grow up with a good character and high standards of behaviour. For mothers are the first educators of the child, and every child at the beginning of life is like a fresh and tender branch in his parents' hands. His father and mother can train him in any way they choose." <sup>21</sup>

"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 new-born 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." <sup>22</sup>

"Consider that if the mother is a believer, the children will become believers too, even if the father denieth the Faith; while, if the mother is not a believer, the children are deprived of faith, even if the father be a believer convinced and firm. Such is the usual outcome, except in rare cases." "For this reason both fathers and mothers must carefully watch over their little daughters and have them thoroughly taught in the schools by highly qualified women teachers, so that they may familiarize themselves with all the sciences and arts and become acquainted with and reared in all that is necessary for human living, and will provide a family with comfort and joy." <sup>23</sup>

"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." <sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>. Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian, Baha'i Education (compilation), no. 85

<sup>21</sup>. Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian, Baha'i Education (compilation), no. 79

<sup>22</sup>. Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, no. 113

<sup>23</sup>. Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i Education (compilation), no. 86

<sup>24</sup>. Universal House of Justice, 24 July 1975 to an individual believer, Women (compilation), no. 30

"...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...." <sup>25</sup>

"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." <sup>26</sup>

**"the**

**teachers**

In a Tablet, Abdu'lBaha compares teachers who are involved with the spiritual education of the child to the "spiritual father" who "endoweth his child with life everlasting." He explains that this is the reason that "teachers are listed among the heirs" in the "law of God."

Baha'u'llah specifies the conditions under which the teacher inherits and the share he or she receives (Q&A 33)." <sup>27</sup>

***"Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing"***

Abdu'lBaha, in His Tablets, not only calls attention to the responsibility of parents to educate all their children, but He also clearly specifies that the "training and culture of daughters is more necessary than that of sons," for girls will one day be mothers, and mothers are the first educators of the new generation. If it is not possible, therefore, for a family to educate all the children, preference is to be accorded to daughters since, through educated mothers, the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively and rapidly diffused throughout society." <sup>28</sup>

**Life-Family      Compilation:      Parent-Child      Relationships      and      Responsibilities**  
<https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/compilations/family-life/4#103224323>

**Women**

**Compilation**

<https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/compilations/women/>



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<sup>25</sup>. On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 28 December 1980 to the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand, Women (compilation), no. 71

<sup>26</sup>. Universal House of Justice, Promise of World Peace

<sup>27</sup>. Notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 40

<sup>28</sup>. Notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 76