

XLVI. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Compiled from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l

Original English



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A. Guidelines

1. A Wider Horizon is Opening Before Us

"The growing maturity of a world-wide religious community which all these processes indicate is further evidenced in the reaching out, by a number of national communities, to the social and economic life of their countries, exemplified by the founding of tutorial schools, the inception of radio stations, the pursuit of rural development programs and the operation of medical and agricultural schemes."

"A wider horizon is opening before us, illumined by a growing and universal manifestation of the inherent potentialities of the Cause for ordering human affairs. In this light can be discerned not only our immediate tasks but, more dimly, new pursuits and undertakings upon which we must shortly become engaged."

(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, Ridvan 1983)

1. The Concept of Social and Economic Development is Enshrined in the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh

"...Thus, we can readily appreciate that although it has hitherto been impracticable for Bahá'í institutions generally to emphasize development activities, the concept of social and economic development is enshrined in the sacred Teachings of our Faith. The beloved Master, through His illuminating words and deeds, set the example for the application of this concept to the reconstruction of society. Witness, for instance, what social and economic progress the Iranian believers attained under His loving guidance and, subsequently, with the unfailing encouragement of the Guardian of the Cause."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, October 20, 1983)

1. His Teachings Emphasize Bringing into Being a World Unified in All Essential Aspects of Life

"From the beginning of His stupendous Mission, Bahá'u'lláh urged upon the attention of nations the necessity of ordering human affairs in such a way as to bring into being a world unified in all the essential aspects of its life. In unnumbered verses and Tablets He repeatedly and variously



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declared the 'progress of the world' and the 'development of nations' as being among the ordinances of God for this day. The oneness of mankind, which is at once the operating principle and ultimate goal of His Revelation, implies the achievement of a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth. The indispensability of this [pg 546] coherence is unmistakably illustrated in His ordination of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, the spiritual centre of every Bahá'í community round which must flourish dependencies dedicated to the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific advancement of mankind."

(Ibid.)

1. Steps to be Taken to Attain This Goal Must Begin in the Bahá'í Community

"Now, after all the years of constant teaching activity, the Community of the Greatest Name has grown to the stage at which the processes of this development must be incorporated into its regular pursuits; particularly its action compelled by the expansion of the Faith in Third World countries where the vast majority of its adherents reside. The steps to be taken must necessarily begin in the Bahá'í Community itself, with the friends endeavouring, through their application of spiritual principles, their rectitude of conduct and the practice of the art of consultation, to uplift themselves and thus become self-sufficient and self-reliant. Moreover, these exertions will conduce to the preservation of human honour, so desired by Bahá'u'lláh. In the process and as a consequence, the friends will undoubtedly extend the benefits of their efforts to society as a whole, until all mankind achieves the progress intended by the Lord of the Age."

(Ibid.)

1. Establishment of Office of Social and Economic Development in the World Centre

"It is indeed propitious that systematic attention be given to this vital sphere of Bahá'í endeavour. We are happy, therefore, to announce the establishment at the World Centre of the Office of Social and Economic Development, which is to assist the Universal House of Justice to promote and coordinate the activities of the friends throughout the world in this new field."

(Ibid.)

1. The Powers Released by Bahá'u'lláh Match the Needs of the Time

"...The powers released by Bahá'u'lláh match the needs of the times. We may therefore be utterly confident that the new throb of energy now vibrating throughout the Cause will empower it to meet the oncoming challenges of assisting, as maturity and resources allow, the development of the social and economic life of peoples, of collaborating with the forces leading towards the establishment of order in the world, of influencing the exploitation and constructive uses of modern technology, and in all these ways enhancing the prestige and progress of the Faith and uplifting the conditions of the generality of mankind."

(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridvan 1983)

1. Progress in Development Field Depends on Stirrings at the Grass Roots

"We call now upon National Spiritual Assemblies to consider the implications of this emerging trend for their respective communities, and to take well-conceived measures to involve the thought and actions of Local Spiritual Assemblies and [pg 547] individuals in the devising and implementing of plans, within the constraints of existing circumstances and available resources. Progress in the development field will largely depend on natural stirrings at the grassroots, and it should receive its driving force from those sources rather than from an imposition of plans and programs from the top."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, October 20, 1983)

1. The Major Tasks of National Spiritual Assemblies

"...The major task of National Assemblies, therefore, is to increase the local communities' awareness of needs and possibilities, and to guide and coordinate the efforts resulting from such awareness. Already in many areas the friends are witnessing the confirmations of their initiatives in such pursuits as the founding of tutorial and other schools, the promotion of literacy, the launching of rural development programs, the inception of educational radio stations, and the operation of agricultural and medical projects. As they enlarge the scope of their endeavours other modes of development will undoubtedly emerge."

(Ibid.)

1. Applying Systematically Principles of the Faith to Upraising Quality of Human Life

"This challenge evokes the resourcefulness, flexibility and cohesiveness of the many communities composing the Bahá'í world. Different communities will, of course, perceive different approaches and different solutions to similar needs. Some can offer assistance abroad, while, at the outset, others must of necessity receive assistance; but all, irrespective of circumstances or resources, are endowed with the capacity to respond in some measure; all can share; all can participate in the joint enterprise of applying more systematically the principles of the Faith to uplifting the quality of human life. The key to success is unity in spirit and in action."

(Ibid.)

1. Universal House of Justice Calls Individual to Action

"Ultimately, the call to action is addressed to the individual friends, whether they be adult or youth, veteran or newly-enrolled. Let them step forth to take their places in the arena of service where their talents and skills, their specialized training, their material resources, their offers of time and energy and, above all, their dedication to Bahá'í principles, can be put to work in improving the lot of man."

(Ibid.)

1. The Nature and Extent of Believers' Involvement Must Vary from Country to Country

"...the House of Justice wishes us to stress that the nature and extent of the believers' involvement in social and economic development must vary from country to country, both in relation to the general conditions of that country and in relation to the stage of development of the Bahá'í community. It is only because a number of Bahá'í communities have sufficiently increased their membership numerically, and have developed strongly functioning Bahá'í administrative institutions that the House [pg 548] of Justice has been able to contemplate the launching of this new stage in the work of the Cause."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, January 30, 1984: Extracts Concerning Bahá'í Social and Economic Development, A Compilation prepared by the International Teaching Centre of communications written by or on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, January 1985)



B. Agriculture

1. Strive to Become Proficient in the Science of Agriculture

"...Strive as much as possible to become proficient in the science of agriculture, for in accordance with the Divine Teachings, the acquisition of sciences and the perfection of arts are considered as acts of worship. If a man engages with all his power in the acquisition of a science or in the perfection of an art, it is as if he has been worshipping God in the churches and temples. Thus as thou entereth a school of agriculture and strivest in the acquisition of that science, thou art day and night engaged in acts of worship — acts that are accepted at the threshold of the Almighty. What bounty greater than this that science should be considered as an act of worship and art as service to the Kingdom of God."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Bahá'í World Faith, pp. 377-378)

1. Solution to Economic Problem Should Begin with the Farmer

"The question of economics must commence with the farmer and then be extended to the other classes inasmuch as the number of farmers is greater than all other classes, many many times greater. Therefore, it is fitting that the economic problem be first solved with the farmer, for the farmer is the first active agent in the body politic. In brief, from among the wise men in every village a board should be organized and the affairs of that village should be under the control of that board."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Extract from a Tablet to an individual believer, October 4, 1912, translation corrected in the World Centre, December 1985)

1. A General Warehouse Will Be Founded which Will Have Seven Revenues

"...Likewise a general storehouse should be founded with the appointment of a secretary. At the time of the harvest, with the approval of the members of that board, a determined percentage of the entire harvest should be appropriated for the storehouse."

"The storehouse is to have seven revenues: Tithes, taxes on animals, wealth without inheritors, all things found whose owners cannot be discovered, a third of all treasures (money) found in the earth, a third of the mines, and voluntary contributions."

"On the other hand, there are seven expenditures:

1. General running expenses of the institution — salaries etc., and the administration of public safety, including the department of hygiene.
1. Tithes to the general government (State).
1. Taxes on animals for the State.
1. Support of an orphanage.
1. Support of cripples and the incurable.
1. Support of educational institutions. [pg 549]
1. Supplying any deficiency for the expenses of the poor."

"The first revenue is the tithe. For example, if the income of a farmer is five hundred dollars and his necessary expenses are five hundred dollars, no tithes will be collected from him. Another's expenses being five hundred and his income one thousand dollars, one tenth will be taken from him, for he hath more than his needs; if he giveth one tenth his livelihood will not be disturbed. Another's expenses are one thousand dollars, and his income is five thousand dollars; as he hath four thousand dollars surplus, he will be required to give one and a half tenths. Another hath necessary expenses of one thousand dollars; but his income is ten thousand dollars; from him two tenths will be required. The necessary expenses of another person are five thousand dollars, and his income one hundred thousand; therefore, one fourth will be required from him. On the other hand, a person's income may be two hundred, but his needs absolutely essential for his livelihood are five hundred dollars; provided he hath not failed in effort and exertion or his farm hath not been blessed with a harvest, such a one must be helped from the general storehouse, so that he may not remain in need and may live in ease."

(Ibid.)



C. Economics

1. Bahá'í System Prevents Extremes of Wealth and Poverty

"...Of course conditions in the East differ where the Countries are rarely industrial and mostly agricultural; we should have to apply different laws from the West and that is why the principles of the Movement strike at the root which is common to them both. Abdu'l-Bahá has developed in various of His talks, which you will find in different compilations, the principles upon which the Bahá'í economic system would be based. A system that prevents among others the gradual

control of wealth in the hands of a few and the resulting state of both extremes, wealth and poverty."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 28, 1927: Extracts from the Bahá'í Writings on the Subject of Agriculture and Related Subjects, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice)

1. Should Not Confuse Methods Explained by Abdu'l-Bahá with Present Day Systems

"As to your fourth question, Shoghi Effendi believes that it is preferable not to confuse the methods explained by the Master with present systems. They may have many resemblances but also many points of difference. Moreover these general statements we have in the teachings have to be explained and applied by the House of Justice before we can really appreciate their significance."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 21, 1932: Ibid.)

1. Regarding Problems of Ownership, Control and Distribution of Capital

"Regarding your questions concerning the Bahá'í attitude on various economic problems, such as the problem of ownership, control and distribution of capital, and of other means of production, the problem of trusts and monopolies, and such economic experiments as social cooperatives; the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and [pg 550] Abdu'l-Bahá do not provide specific and detailed solutions to all such economic questions which mostly pertain to the domain of technical economics, and as such do not concern directly the Cause. True, there are certain guiding principles in Bahá'í Sacred Writings on the subject of economics, but these do by no means cover the whole field of theoretical and applied economics, and are mostly intended to guide further Bahá'í economic writers and technicians to evolve an economic system which would function in full conformity with the spirit and the exact provisions of the Cause on this and similar subjects. The International House of Justice will have, in consultation with economic experts, to assist in the formulation and evolution of the Bahá'í economic system of the future. One thing, however, is certain, that the Cause neither accepts the theories of the Capitalistic economics in full, nor can it agree with the Marxists and Communists in their repudiation of the principle of private ownership and of the vital sacred rights of the individual."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 10, 1930: Ibid.)

1. Voluntary Sharing

"The Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh advocate voluntary sharing, and this is a greater thing than the equalization of wealth. For equalization must be imposed from without, while sharing is a matter of free choice."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Peace More Than an End to War, Wilmette, p. 115)

1. Spirit that Permeates Economic Life Will Crystallize into Definite Institutions

"As you say, the Writings are not so rich on this subject and many issues at present baffling the minds of the world are not even mentioned. The primary consideration is the spirit that has to permeate our economic life and this will gradually crystallize itself into definite institutions and principles that will help to bring about the ideal conditions foretold by Bahá'u'lláh."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, December 20, 1931: Bahá'í News, No. 90, March 1935, p. 2)

1. **Social Inequality**

"...social inequality is the inevitable outcome of the natural inequality of men. Human beings are different in ability and should, therefore, be different in their social and economic standing. Extremes of wealth and poverty should, however, be totally abolished. Those whose brains have contributed to the creation and improvement of the means of production must be fairly rewarded, though these means may be owned and controlled by others."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 26, 1935)

1. **"Equality is a Chimera!"**

"Equality is a chimera! It is entirely impracticable! Even if equality could be achieved it could not continue — and if its existence were possible, the whole order of the world would be destroyed. The law of order must always obtain in the world of humanity. Heaven has so decreed in the creation of man."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Paris Talks, p. 152, London, 1969 ed.) [pg 551]

1. **Wages**

"...The Master has definitely stated that wages should be unequal, simply because that men are unequal in their ability, and hence should receive wages that would correspond to their varying capacities and resources. This view seems to contradict the opinion of some modern economists. But the friends should have full confidence in the words of the Master, and should give preference to His statements over those voiced by our so-called modern thinkers."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 26, 1935)

1. **Application of Spiritual Principles to Economic System**

"...There are practically no technical teachings on economics in the Cause, such as banking, the price system, and others. The Cause is not an economic system, nor can its Founders be considered as having been technical economists. The contribution of the Faith to this subject is essentially indirect, as it consists in the application of spiritual principles to our present-day economic system. Bahá'u'lláh has given us a few basic principles which should guide future Bahá'í economists in establishing such institutions which will adjust the economic relationships of the world."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 25, 1936: Bahá'í News, No. 103, October 1936, p. 2)

1. Profit Sharing Recommended to Solve One Form of Economic Problems

"No, Bahá'u'lláh did not bring a complete system of economics to the world."

"Profit-sharing is recommended as a solution to one form of economic problems."

"There is nothing in the teachings against some kind of capitalism; its present form, though, would require adjustments to be made."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 19, 1945: Bahá'í News, No. 210, August 1948, p. 3)

1. Man Will Always Have to Toil to Earn His Living

"...Whatever the progress of the machinery may be, man will have always to toil in order to earn his living. Effort is an inseparable part of man's life. It may take different forms with the changing conditions of the world, but it will be always present as a necessary element in our earthly existence. Life is after all a struggle. Progress is attained through struggle, and without such a struggle life ceases to have a meaning; it becomes even extinct. The progress of machinery has not made effort unnecessary. It has given it a new form, a new outlet."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 26, 1935)

1. Religion Alone Can Enable Man to Adjust the Economic Relationships of Society

"...By the statement 'the economic solution is divine in nature' is meant that religion alone can, in the last resort, bring in man's nature such a fundamental change as to enable him to adjust the economic relationships of society. It is only in this way that man can control the economic forces that threaten to disrupt the foundations of his existence, and thus assert his mastery over the forces of nature."

(Ibid.) [pg 552]

1. A New Universal Attitude Needs to be Fostered — Based on Spiritual Verities

"The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war. Few societies have dealt effectively with this situation. The solution calls for the combined application of spiritual, moral and practical approaches. A fresh look at the problem is required, entailing consultation with experts from a wide spectrum of disciplines, devoid of economic and ideological polemics, and involving the people directly affected in the decisions that must urgently be made. It is an issue that is bound up not only with the necessity for eliminating extremes of wealth and poverty but also with those spiritual verities the understanding of which can produce a new universal attitude. Fostering such an attitude is itself a major part of the solution."

(The Universal House of Justice: The Promise of World Peace, pp. 10-11, Haifa, 1985)



D. Projects

1. Participation in Projects Depends Largely on Certain Conditions in the Community

"The suggestions (concerning possible development projects) are now referred to you so that you may initiate consultation at the grass roots level of the local Bahá'í communities, involving Local Spiritual Assemblies of that area. In addition to projecting Counsellor ...'s broad ideas, you should seek the suggestions of the believers regarding local needs and initiatives. Your Assembly is also asked to consider the practicability of such projects and conduct a survey of the localities, indicating which of these would be able to host the projects. Among the criteria of capacity would be the following:

1. Strength of the community and its ability to benefit from projects spiritually as well as materially, including the beneficial effects of collective action upon the community and its participants.
1. Willingness of the local believers to participate, collaborate and support the projects.
1. Degree and dimension of the local contributions to the projects in terms of manpower (labour), materials and resources.
1. Presence of able people to manage the human resources and direct the energies of the friends, including strong liaisons between volunteers (international and national) and local believers."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, November 9, 1983: A Compilation on Social and Economic Development)

1. The Primary Objective of Such Projects Should Be Service to the Community, Not as a Business

"While it is the wish of the House of Justice to see social and economic development become a part of the life of Bahá'í communities, great care should be exercised that our limited efforts are directed to projects whose primary objective is not business but service to the community. Such projects as engagement in commercial activities and the erection of factories will surely divert the attention of Bahá'í institutions from directly promoting the Cause at this time. The Counsellors will be able to advise [pg 553] and guide you in selecting, if favourable conditions exist, modest projects which promote the welfare of members of the Bahá'í community, as well as the betterment of their fellow men."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 8, 1983: Ibid.)

1. Social and Economic Development Projects Should Meet Needs and Aspirations of Local Believers

"...Bahá'ís who wish to start a business as a group effort in the service of the Faith are advised to consult with their Local or National Spiritual Assemblies. Projects of economic and social

development undertaken by Bahá'í institutions, or assisted by them, should usually be quite modest at first, so that experience can be gained. They should be suited to the local situation and meet the particular needs and aspirations of the local believers. Gradually, as knowledge and experience are gained, each National Spiritual Assembly can encourage and develop larger projects and perhaps include even the whole national community in appropriate endeavours."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 7, 1984: Ibid.)

1. Two Fundamental Principles

"There are two principles which the House of Justice feels are fundamental to the generality of such projects of social and economic development, although, of course, there will be exceptions. The first is that they must be built on a substructure of existing, sufficiently strong local Bahá'í communities. The second is that the long-term conduct of the project should aim at self-sufficiency and not be dependent upon continuing financial support from outside."

"The first principle implies that the projects of social and economic development now to be undertaken are a natural stage of the growth of the Bahá'í community and are needed by the community itself although they will, of course, benefit a much wider segment of society. The Bahá'í world is in no position financially or from the point of view of manpower, to launch undertakings for the economic and social development of populations in areas where there are but few believers. The greatest need of all peoples is for the Faith itself, so that they may know the destiny towards which they as individuals and as members of society must strive, and will learn from the teachings those virtues and methods which will enable them to work together in harmony, forbearance and trustworthiness."

"The second principle must take into account that any project started by the Cause should be designed to grow soundly and steadily, and not to collapse from attrition. In other words, external assistance and funds, Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í, may be used for capital acquisitions, to make surveys, to initiate activities, to bring in expertise, but the aim should be for each project to be able to continue and to develop on the strength of local Bahá'í labour, funds and enthusiasm even if all external aid should be cut off."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, May 8, 1984)

1. Social and Economic Development Must Be Placed on a Spiritual Basis to Prove Productive

"...It cannot be over-emphasized that venturing into social and economic [pg 544] development rests upon the fundamental principles enshrined in the Teachings concerning the inter-relationship between the spiritual and material aspects of life, and if social and economic activity is not placed on a spiritual basis it may well prove counter-productive or even harmful, as without a spiritual base the people are likely to become corrupt or materialistic."

"As the friends deepen their understanding of the message of the Universal House of Justice dated 20 October 1983, they will rise to the challenge and re-orient their thoughts and actions to

meet the situations which they encounter in their daily life, drawing on the wisdom of consultation and sustained by the high and noble spiritual principles of our Faith."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 12, 1984)

1. Suggestions for Projects Are Welcome

"Suggestions for projects for development are welcome from whatever source they spring but ideally they should emanate from the local communities and receive support of the Local and National Assemblies; it should not be necessary to send people to countries to solicit projects. However, if a community has the desire to plan a special project, it is free to call upon people with experience to assist in the planning, design and implementation of the scheme."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, November 1, 1983: A Compilation on Social and Economic Development)

1. Projects May Receive Help in Finances and Manpower from Bahá'í Sources

"The message of the House of Justice dated 20th October 1983 has clearly set out the concepts, defined the objectives and outlined the guiding principles for the selection and implementation of Bahá'í development projects, programmes or activities. The vast majority of Bahá'í projects will be primarily generated at the grass roots, and, initially as required, will receive help from Bahá'í sources, in terms of finances and manpower. The projects will, as you have surmised, be non-profit making, concerned mainly with activities closely related to education, health and hygiene, agriculture and simple community development activities. It is hoped that all these types of projects will reflect the strength of the spiritual principles enshrined in the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh."

"It is important that our undertakings be modest in their scope at the present time. Then, as we gain in confidence and experience and as our resources increase, our work will encompass expanded objectives, and the friends will explore new areas of social and economic activity."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 23, 1983: Ibid.)



E. Objectives for Social and Economic Development

1. The Preservation of Cultural Identities and Customs

"Bahá'ís should obviously be encouraged to preserve their inherited cultural identities, as long as the activities involved do not contravene the principles of the Faith. The perpetuation of such cultural characteristics is an expression of unity in diversity. [pg 555] Although most of these festive celebrations have no doubt stemmed from religious rituals in bygone ages, the believers should not be deterred from participating in those in which, over the course of time, the religious meaning has given way to purely culturally oriented practices. For example, Naw-Ruz

itself was originally a Zoroastrian religious festival, but gradually its Zoroastrian connotation has almost been forgotten. Iranians, even after their conversion to Islam, have been observing it as a national festival. Now Naw-Ruz has become a Bahá'í Holy Day and is being observed throughout the world, but, in addition to the Bahá'í observance, many Iranian Bahá'ís continue to carry out their past cultural traditions in connection with this Feast. Similarly, there are a number of national customs in every part of the world which have cultural rather than religious connotations."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Malaysia, May 26, 1982)

1. Arts, Crafts and Sciences

"The third Tajalli is concerning arts, crafts and sciences. Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words. Great indeed is the claim of scientists and craftsmen on the peoples of the world. Unto this beareth witness the Mother Book on the day of His return. Happy are those possessed of a hearing ear. In truth, knowledge is a veritable treasure for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him. Thus hath the Tongue of Grandeur spoken in this Most Great Prison."

(Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, pp. 51-52)

1. Wealth is Praiseworthy — If Acquired by Efforts and Grace of God, and if Expended for Philanthropic Purposes

"Wealth is praiseworthy in the highest degree, if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for philanthropic purposes. Above all, if a judicious and resourceful individual should initiate measures which would universally enrich the masses of the people, there could be no undertaking greater than this, and it would rank in the sight of God as the supreme achievement, for such a benefactor would supply the needs and insure the comfort and well-being of a great multitude. Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy. If, however, a few have inordinate riches while the rest are impoverished, and no fruit or benefit accrues from that wealth, then it is only a liability to its possessor. If, on the other hand, it is expended for the promotion of knowledge, the founding of elementary and other schools, the encouragement of art and industry, the training of orphans and the poor — in brief, if it is dedicated to the welfare of society — its possessor will stand out before God and man as the most excellent of all who live on earth and will be accounted as one of the people of paradise."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: The Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 24-25, Wilmette, 1975)

1. The Promotion of Education

"The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is [pg 556] inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples

is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uninformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of time."

(Ibid., p. 109)



F. Requisites for Success

1. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkar — The Spiritual Precedes the Material

"A symbol of this process may be seen in the House of Worship and its dependencies. The first part to be built is the central edifice which is the spiritual heart of the community. Then, gradually, as the outward expression of this spiritual heart, the various dependencies, those 'institutions of social service as shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant' are erected and function. This process begins in an embryonic way long before a Bahá'í community reaches the stage of building its own Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, for even the first local centre that a Bahá'í community erects can begin to serve not only as the spiritual and administrative centre and gathering place of the community, but also as the site of a tutorial school and the heart of other aspects of community life. The principle remains, however, that the spiritual precedes the material. First comes the illumination of hearts and minds by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, and then the grass roots stirring of the believers wishing to apply these teachings to the daily life of their community. Such stirrings can be fostered, encouraged and assisted by the national and continental institutions of the Faith, but without them any activities introduced from above might well prove abortive."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, May 8, 1984)

1. The Spiritual Principle Induces an Attitude, a Dynamic, a Will, an Aspiration

"There are spiritual principles, or what some call human values, by which solutions can be found for every social problem. Any well-intentioned group can in a general sense devise practical solutions to its problems, but good intentions and practical knowledge are usually not enough. The essential merit of spiritual principle is that it not only presents a perspective which harmonizes with that which is imminent in human nature, it also induces an attitude, a dynamic, a will, an aspiration, which facilitate the discovery and implementation of practical measures. Leaders of governments and all in authority would be well served in their efforts to solve problems if they would first seek to identify the principles involved and then be guided by them."

(The Universal House of Justice: The Promise of World Peace, p. 28, Wilmette, 1985)



G. Tutorial Schools

1. The Importance of Establishing Tutorial Schools

"The importance of establishing such schools has repeatedly been emphasized by the House of Justice. They not only are instruments for the immediate consolidation of Bahá'í communities and neighbourhood areas, but also serve to train Bahá'í children and youth in rendering services to the Faith and demonstrate the fact that Bahá'ís are engaged in humanitarian services to the community at large. By their establishment, Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike are assisted. In addition, such schools foster a healthy relationship between Bahá'í communities and institutions, inasmuch as they are called upon to help the communities by providing teachers, facilities, etc. Some of the local friends may be inspired to contribute land and/or building materials for the schools, or may wish to help in their construction."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, January 3, 1983)

1. Bahá'í Youth and Young Adults Should Be Willing to Become Teachers

"The Universal House of Justice is confident there are literally hundreds of Bahá'í youth and young adults who would willingly and happily become teachers in tutorial schools, especially if the National Spiritual Assembly assured them of adequate wages and secure employment. It may be possible for their salaries to be paid by charging reasonable tuition fees to students attending the schools. This in itself would be a major step in educating new believers to contribute to the Fund, and would help the schools to become self-supporting."

(Ibid.)

1. School Should Be Planned by Bahá'ís in Consultation with Non-Bahá'ís

"The establishment of a school is presumably to meet the needs of the Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í community. It should be planned by the Bahá'ís and if advisable, in consultation with the non-Bahá'ís; it should be presented as an effort of the community; the collaboration and the cooperation of all should be invited and assured."

"If adequate manpower is available, it should be managed by the Bahá'í community and its management be responsible to the Local Spiritual Assembly of the locality in which it is situated, or the National Spiritual Assembly."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Uruguay, June 18, 1986)

1. A Privately Owned Kindergarten Could Be Considered a Social and Economic Activity for Statistics

"In regard to the kindergarten which belongs to a Bahá'í pioneer family, it could be considered as a private social and economic activity and would be listed as such, although it is clearly

recognized that the Bahá'í community does not have any responsibility for the management or operation of such a school."

"The individual initiative of the friends should be carefully nurtured and encouraged so that they may, guided by the spiritual principles of our Faith, arise to fulfil their spiritual responsibilities."

(Ibid.)

1. Contributions from Non-Bahá'ís for Maintenance of Tutorial Schools

"Your letter ... about accepting donations from non-Bahá'ís for the maintenance of tutorial schools has been received, and we have been asked to reply as follows."

"Bahá'ís may receive contributions from non-Bahá'ís for charitable activities whose beneficiaries are non-Bahá'ís as well. However, it is very important to ensure that the acceptance of funds from any source should in no way affect the school's direction and policy."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, January 13, 1978) [pg 559]

