

Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hannen

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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Notes by Joseph H. Hannen

This is a beautiful assembly. I am very happy that white and black are together. This is the cause of my happiness, for you all are the servants of one God and, therefore, brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers. In the sight of God there is no distinction between whites and blacks; all are as one. Anyone whose heart is pure is dear to God — whether white or black, red or yellow. Among the animals colors exist. The doves are white, black, red, blue; but notwithstanding[pg 426] this diversity of color they flock together in unity, happiness and fellowship, making no distinction among themselves, for they are all doves. Man is intelligent and thoughtful, endowed with powers of mind. Why, then, should he be influenced by distinction of color or race, since all belong to one human family? There is no sheep which shuns another as if saying, “I am white, and you are black.” They graze together in complete unity, live together in fellowship and happiness. How then can man be limited and influenced by racial colors? The important thing is to realize that all are human, all are one progeny of Adam. Inasmuch as they are all one family, why should they be separated?

I had a servant who was black; his name was Isfandíyár. If a perfect man could be found in the world, that man was Isfandíyár. He was the essence of love, radiant with sanctity and perfection, luminous with light. Whenever I think of Isfandíyár, I am moved to tears, although he passed away fifty years ago. He was the faithful servant of Bahá'u'lláh and was entrusted with His secrets. For this reason the Sháh of Persia wanted him and



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inquired continually as to his whereabouts. Bahá'u'lláh was in prison, but the Sháh had commanded many persons to find Isfandiyár. Perhaps more than one hundred officers were appointed to search for him. If they had succeeded in catching him, they would not have killed him at once. They would have cut his flesh into pieces to force him to tell them the secrets of Bahá'u'lláh. But Isfandiyár with the utmost dignity used to walk in the streets and bazaars. One day he came to us. My mother, my sister and myself lived in a house near a corner. Because our enemies frequently injured us, we were intending to go to a place where they did not know us. I was a child at that time. At midnight Isfandiyár came in. My mother said, "O Isfandiyár, there are a hundred policemen seeking for you. If they catch you, they will not kill you at once but will torture you with fire. They will cut off your fingers. They will cut off your ears. They will put out your eyes to force you to tell them the secrets of Bahá'u'lláh. Go away! Do not stay here." He said, "I cannot go because I owe money in the street and in the stores. How can I go? They will say that the servant of Bahá'u'lláh has bought and consumed the goods and supplies of the storekeepers without paying for them. Unless I pay all these obligations, I cannot go. But if they take me, never mind. If they punish me, there is no harm in that. If they kill me, do not be grieved. But to go away is impossible. I must remain until I pay all I owe. Then I will go." For one month Isfandiyár went about in the streets and bazaars. He had things to[pg 427] sell, and from his earnings he gradually paid his creditors. In fact, they were not his debts but the debts of the court, for all our properties had been confiscated. Everything we had was taken away from us. The only things that remained were our debts. Isfandiyár paid them in full; not a single penny remained unpaid. Then he came to us, said good-bye and went away. Afterward Bahá'u'lláh was released from prison. We went to Baghdád, and Isfandiyár came there. He wanted to stay in the same home. Bahá'u'lláh, the Blessed Perfection, said to him, "When you fled away, there was a Persian minister who gave you shelter at a time when no one else could give you protection. Because he gave you shelter and protected you, you must be faithful to him. If he is satisfied to have you go, then come to us; but if he does not want you to go, do not leave him." His master said, "I do not want to be separated from Isfandiyár. Where can I find another like him, with such sincerity, such faithfulness, such character, such power? Where can I find one? O Isfandiyár! I am not willing that you should go, yet if you wish to go, let it be according to your own will." But because the Blessed Perfection had said, "You must be faithful," Isfandiyár stayed with his master until he died. He was a point of light. Although his color was black, yet his character was luminous; his mind was luminous; his face was luminous. Truly, he was a point of light.

Then it is evident that excellence does not depend upon color. Character is the true criterion of humanity. Anyone who possesses a good character, who has faith in God and is firm, whose actions are good, whose speech is good — that one is accepted at the threshold of God no matter what color he may be. In short — praise be to God! — you are the servants of God. The love of Bahá'u'lláh is in your hearts. Your souls are

rejoicing in the glad tidings of Bahá'u'lláh. My hope is that the white and the black will be united in perfect love and fellowship, with complete unity and brotherhood. Associate with each other, think of each other, and be like a rose garden. Anyone who goes into a rose garden will see various roses, white, pink, yellow, red, all growing together and replete with adornment. Each one accentuates the beauty of the other. Were all of one color, the garden would be monotonous to the eye. If they were all white or yellow or red, the garden would lack variety and attractiveness; but when the colors are varied, white, pink, yellow, red, there will be the greatest beauty. Therefore, I hope that you will be like a rose garden. Although different in colors, yet — praise be to God! — you receive rays from the same sun. From [pg 428] one cloud the rain is poured upon you. You are under the training of one Gardener, and this Gardener is kind to all. Therefore, you must manifest the utmost kindness towards each other, and you may rest assured that whenever you are united, the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá will reach you, the heavenly favors will descend, the bounties of God will be bestowed, the Sun of Reality will shine, the cloud of mercy will pour its showers, and the breeze of divine generosity will waft its fragrances upon you.

I hope you will continue in unity and fellowship. How beautiful to see blacks and whites together! I hope, God willing, the day may come when I shall see the red men, the Indians, with you, also Japanese and others. Then there will be white roses, yellow roses, red roses, and a very wonderful rose garden will appear in the world.

