



MEDITATIONS ON

RECOGNISING

Interconnectedness

ELEVATE

For the principle of the oneness of humankind, as proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh, asks not merely for cooperation among people and nations. It calls for a complete reconceptualisation of the relationships that sustain society. The deepening environmental crisis, driven by a system that condones the pillage of natural resources to satisfy an insatiable thirst for more, suggests how entirely inadequate is the present conception of humanity's relationship with nature; the deterioration of the home environment, with the accompanying rise in the systematic exploitation of women and children worldwide, makes clear how pervasive are the misbegotten notions that define relations within the family unit; the persistence of despotism, on the one hand, and the increasing disregard for authority, on the other, reveal how unsatisfactory to a maturing humanity is the current relationship between the individual and the institutions of society; the concentration of material wealth in the hands of a minority of the world's population gives an indication of how fundamentally ill-conceived are relationships among the many sectors of what is now an emerging global community. The principle of the oneness of humankind implies, then, an organic change in the very structure of society.

The Universal House of Justice

○ 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

...*T*his endless universe is like the human body,
and... all its parts are connected one with another
and are linked together in the utmost perfection.

That is, in the same way that the parts, members and organs of the human body are interconnected, and that they mutually assist, reinforce and influence each other, so too are the parts and members of this endless universe connected with, and spiritually and materially influenced by, one another.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

*F*or all beings are linked together like a chain;
and mutual aid, assistance, and interaction are among their intrinsic properties
and are the cause of their formation, development, and growth.
It is established through numerous proofs and arguments that every single thing
has an effect and influence upon every other,
either independently or through a causal chain.
In sum, the completeness of each and every thing—
that is, the completeness which you now see in man, or in other beings,
with regard to their parts, members, and powers—
arises from their component elements,
their quantities and measures,
the manner of their combination,
and their mutual action, interaction, and influence.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

*J*ust as the appearance of the rational soul in this realm of existence is made possible through the complex association of countless cells, whose organisation in tissues and organs allows for the realisation of distinctive capacities, so can civilisation be seen as the outcome of a set of interactions among closely integrated, diverse components which have transcended the narrow purpose of tending to their own existence. And just as the viability of every cell and every organ is contingent upon the health of the body as a whole, so should the prosperity of every individual, every family, every people be sought in the well-being of the entire human race.

The Universal House of Justice

*R*eflect upon the inner realities of the universe,
the secret wisdoms involved,
the enigmas, the inter-relationships, the rules that govern all.
For every part of the universe is connected with every other part
by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance,
nor any slackening whatever...

'Abdu'l-Bahá

The welfare of any segment of humanity is inextricably bound up with the welfare of the whole. Humanity's collective life suffers when any one group thinks of its own well-being in isolation from that of its neighbours' or pursues economic gain without regard for how the natural environment, which provides sustenance for all, is affected. A stubborn obstruction, then, stands in the way of meaningful social progress: time and again, avarice and self-interest prevail at the expense of the common good. Unconscionable quantities of wealth are being amassed, and the instability this creates is made worse by how income and opportunity are spread so unevenly both between nations and within nations. But it need not be so. However much such conditions are the outcome of history, they do not have to define the future, and even if current approaches to economic life satisfied humanity's stage of adolescence, they are certainly inadequate for its dawning age of maturity. There is no justification for continuing to perpetuate structures, rules, and systems that manifestly fail to serve the interests of all peoples.

The Universal House of Justice

*W*e 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 Bahá'í approach to resolution of the manifold problems affecting human society rests upon the assertion by Bahá'u'lláh that these ills are but various symptoms and side effects of the basic disease, which the Divine Physician has diagnosed to be disunity.

Bahá'u'lláh has made it abundantly clear that the first step essential for the health and harmony of the whole of mankind is its unification.

He says, "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established" (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 203).

By contrast, the approach of most people is the exact opposite: their concentration is on attempts to remedy the multitude of ills besetting mankind, with the expectation that the resolution of these problems will lead ultimately to unity.

The Universal House of Justice

*T*he time has come when those who preach the dogmas of materialism, whether of the east or of the west, whether of capitalism or socialism, must give account of the moral stewardship they have presumed to exercise. Where is the "new world" promised by these ideologies? ...Why is the vast majority of the world's peoples sinking ever deeper into hunger and wretchedness when wealth on a scale undreamed of by the Pharaohs, the Caesars, or even the imperialist powers of the nineteenth century is at the disposal of the present arbiters of human affairs?

The Universal House of Justice

...*A*dherence to the principle of the oneness of humanity will have a direct and enduring impact on man's spiritual, social and physical environments. Universal acceptance of this principle will entail a major restructuring of the world's educational, social, agricultural, industrial, economic, legal and political systems. This restructuring will facilitate the emergence of a sustainable, just and prosperous world civilisation. Ultimately only a spiritually based civilisation - in which science and religion work in harmony - will be able to preserve the ecological balance of the earth, foster stability in human population, and advance both the material and the spiritual well-being of all peoples and nations.

Bahá'í International Community

*T*he oneness of mankind...implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced... It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarisation of the whole civilised world - a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units.

Shoghi Effendi

*T*here is no thing as a single-issue struggle
because we do not live single-issue lives.

Audre Lorde

In this time of transition to a new social order, processes of social integration gather momentum alongside related processes of disintegration.

Collapsed moral foundations, outworn institutions and a sense of disillusionment foment chaos and decline in the social order while, at the same time, integrative forces raise up new bases for collaboration and transform the nature and scope of collective action.

Such integrative processes are evidenced by growing social networks facilitated by information technology;

expanded suffrage and formal participation in governance;

collective approaches to knowledge generation and dissemination;

the spread of education and consciousness-raising

regarding human interdependence;

the evolution of new mechanisms of international cooperation, and the like.

Similarly, one discerns emerging processes of decision-making

that are increasingly inclusive, unifying and just,

and that challenge partisanship as a means of addressing problems

facing increasingly interdependent communities.

Bahá'í International Community

*T*here 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 harmonises with that which is immanent 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

...*T*he shift towards a more just, peaceful and sustainable society will require attention to a harmonious dynamic between the material and non-material (or moral) dimensions of consumption and production. The latter, in particular, will be essential for laying the foundation for just and peaceful human relations; these include the generation of knowledge, the cultivation of trust and trustworthiness, eradication of racism and violence, promotion of art, beauty, science, and the capacity for collaboration and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Bahá'í International Community

The movement to redefine cultural norms in light of the exigencies of justice and sustainability is well underway. In different measures, leading cultural institutions, including governments, education and media, as well as businesses, religious organisations and civil society are bringing the values of sustainability to the forefront of public consciousness. Broader visions of human purpose and prosperity are moving from the periphery to the center of public discourse. It is becoming clear that the pathway to sustainability will be one of empowerment, collaboration and continual processes of questioning, learning and action in all regions of the world. It will be shaped by the experiences of women, men, children, the rich, the poor, the governors and the governed as each one is enabled to play their rightful role in the construction of a new society. As the sweeping tides of consumerism, unfettered consumption, extreme poverty and marginalisation recede, they will reveal the human capacities for justice, reciprocity and happiness.

One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu - the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality - Ubuntu - you are known for your generosity. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole World. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Shed the light of a boundless love
on every human being whom you meet,
whether of your country, your race, your political party,
or of any other nation, colour or shade of political opinion.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

*T*he world is, in truth, moving on towards its destiny. The interdependence of the peoples and nations of the earth, whatever the leaders of the divisive forces of the world may say or do, is already an accomplished fact. Its unity in the economic sphere is now understood and recognized. The welfare of the part means the welfare of the whole, and the distress of the part brings distress to the whole. The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh has, in His own words, "lent a fresh impulse and set a new direction" to this vast process now operating in the world. The fires lit by this great ordeal are the consequences of men's failure to recognize it. They are, moreover, hastening its consummation. Adversity, prolonged, worldwide, afflictive, allied to chaos and universal destruction, must needs convulse the nations, stir the conscience of the world, disillusion the masses, precipitate a radical change in the very conception of society, and coalesce ultimately the disjointed, the bleeding limbs of mankind into one body, single, organically united, and indivisible.

Shoghi Effendi



Thou kind Lord!

Thou hast created all humanity from the same stock.

Thou hast decreed that all shall belong to the same household.

In Thy Holy Presence they are all Thy servants,

and all mankind are sheltered beneath Thy Tabernacle;

all have gathered together at Thy Table of Bounty;

all are illumined through the light of Thy Providence.

O God! Thou art kind to all, Thou hast provided for all,

dost shelter all, conferrest life upon all.

Thou hast endowed each and all with talents and faculties,

and all are submerged in the Ocean of Thy Mercy.

O Thou kind Lord! Unite all. Let the religions agree and make the nations one,

so that they may see each other as one family and the whole earth as one home.

May they all live together in perfect harmony.

O God! Raise aloft the banner of the oneness of mankind.

O God! Establish the Most Great Peace.

Cement Thou, O God, the hearts together.

O Thou kind Father, God! Gladden our hearts through the fragrance of Thy love. Brighten our eyes through the Light of Thy Guidance.

Delight our ears with the melody of Thy Word,

and shelter us all in the Stronghold of Thy Providence.

Thou art the Mighty and Powerful, Thou art the Forgiving

and Thou art the One Who overlooketh the shortcomings of all mankind.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

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2. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, from the Arabic, no.68. ↵
3. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2014). ↵
4. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2014). ↵
5. From a letter dated 2 March 2013 written by the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of Iran. ↵
6. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 137. ↵
7. From a letter dated 1 March 2017 written by the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World. ↵
8. From a letter dated 17 February 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer. ↵
9. From a letter dated 15 June 1987 written by the Universal House of Justice to two individuals. ↵
10. *The Universal House of Justice, The Promise of World Peace*, 1985. ↵
11. *The Conservation and Sustainable Development in the Baha'i Faith*, presented by the Baha'i International Community to the Summit on the Alliance Between Religions and Conservation, 3 May 1995. ↵
12. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), p.42-43. ↵
13. Audre Lorde, "Learning from the 60s," in *Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007), 138. ↵
14. Transforming Collective Deliberation: Valuing Unity and Justice, The Baha'i International Community's statement to the 48th Session of the Commission for Social Development. Priority theme of social integration, 3 February 2010. ↵
15. *The Universal House of Justice, The Promise of World Peace*, 1985. ↵

16. Baha'i International Community, 'Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism', a contribution to the 18th Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (New York: 3 May 2010). ↵
17. Baha'i International Community, 'Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism', a contribution to the 18th Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (New York: 3 May 2010). ↵
18. Archbishop Desmond Tutu quoted by Richardson, N. R. 2006. "Reflections on Reconciliation and Ubuntu." In: R Nicolson (Ed.). *Persons in Community: African Ethics in a Global Culture*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu Natal Press. ↵
19. *Paris Talks: Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1911* (London: Bahá'í Publishing, 1972),p.38. ↵
20. Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come*, pp. 122-23. ↵
21. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), 5 May 1912. ↵

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