

MEDITATIONS ON

REFRAMING

Disintegration

ELEVATE

Soon will the present-day order be rolled up,
and a new one spread out in its stead.

Bahá'u'lláh

*A*s we view the world around us, we are compelled to observe the manifold evidences of that universal fermentation which, in every continent of the globe and in every department of human life, be it religious, social, economic or political, is purging and reshaping humanity in anticipation of the Day when the wholeness of the human race will have been recognised and its unity established.

A twofold process, however, can be distinguished, each tending, in its own way and with an accelerated momentum, to bring to a climax the forces that are transforming the face of our planet.

The first is essentially an integrating process, while the second is fundamentally disruptive.

The former, as it steadily evolves, unfolds a System which may well serve as a pattern for that world polity towards which a strangely-disordered world is continually advancing; while the latter, as its disintegrating influence deepens, tends to tear down, with increasing violence, the antiquated barriers that seek to block humanity's progress towards its destined goal.

Shoghi Effendi

In the revolutionary changes taking place in every sphere of life [is] the interaction of two fundamental processes.

One is destructive in nature, while the other is integrative; both serve to carry humanity, each in its own way, along the path leading towards its full maturity.

The operation of the former is everywhere apparent—in the vicissitudes that have afflicted time-honoured institutions, in the impotence of leaders at all levels to mend the fractures appearing in the structure of society, in the dismantling of social norms that have long held in check unseemly passions, and in the despondency and indifference exhibited not only by individuals but also by entire societies that have lost any vital sense of purpose. Though devastating in their effects, the forces of disintegration tend to sweep away barriers that block humanity's progress, opening space for the process of integration to draw diverse groups together and disclosing new opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.

Universal House of Justice

From every standpoint the world of humanity is undergoing a reformation. The laws of former governments and civilisations are in process of revision; scientific ideas and theories are developing and advancing to meet a new range of phenomena; invention and discovery are penetrating hitherto unknown fields, revealing new wonders and hidden secrets of the material universe; industries have vastly wider scope and production; everywhere the world of mankind is in the throes of evolutionary activity indicating the passing of the old conditions and advent of the new age of reformation. Old trees yield no fruitage; old ideas and methods are obsolete and worthless now. Old standards of ethics, moral codes and methods of living in the past will not suffice for the present age of advancement and progress.

Abdu'l-Bahá

Today the world is assailed by an array of destructive forces. Materialism...has now spread to every corner of the planet, breeding, in the name of a strong global economy and human welfare, a culture of consumerism. It skilfully and ingeniously promotes a habit of consumption that seeks to satisfy the basest and most selfish desires, while encouraging the expenditure of wealth so as to prolong and exacerbate social conflict. How vain and foolish a worldview! And meanwhile, a rising tide of fundamentalism, bringing with it an exceedingly narrow understanding of religion and spirituality, continues to gather strength, threatening to engulf humanity in rigid dogmatism. In its most extreme form, it conditions the resolution of the problems of the world upon the occurrence of events derived from illogical and superstitious notions. It professes to uphold virtue yet, in practice, perpetuates oppression and greed. Among the deplorable results of the operation of such forces are a deepening confusion on the part of young people everywhere, a sense of hopelessness in the ranks of those who would drive progress, and the emergence of a myriad social maladies.

*B*ut on the whole the crisis is serving a great purpose. It is broadening the outlook of man, teaching him to think internationally, forcing him to take into consideration the welfare of his neighbours if he wishes to improve his own condition.

Shoghi Effendi

A candid acknowledgement that prejudice, war and exploitation have been the expression of immature stages in a vast historical process and that the human race is today experiencing the unavoidable tumult which marks its collective coming of age is not a reason for despair but a prerequisite to undertaking the stupendous enterprise of building a peaceful world. That such an enterprise is possible, that the necessary constructive forces do exist, that unifying social structures can be erected, is the theme we urge you to examine.

Whatever suffering and turmoil the years immediately ahead may hold, however dark the immediate circumstances, the Bahá'í community believes that humanity can confront this supreme trial with confidence in its ultimate outcome.

Far from signalling the end of civilisation, the convulsive changes towards which humanity is being ever more rapidly impelled will serve to release the "potentialities inherent in the station of man" and reveal "the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality."

Universal House of Justice

*T*he call of Bahá'u'lláh is primarily directed against all forms of provincialism, all insularities and prejudices. If long-cherished ideals and time-honored institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine.

Shoghi Effendi

*H*uman society has arrived at a stage in its evolution when unity of the whole human race is imperative.

To not appreciate this reality is to not grasp the meaning of the current crisis in world affairs.

The principle of the oneness of humankind identifies the code for resolving the far-reaching issues involved ...this principle implies not only the ultimate peaceful goal that it signifies but involves, as well, your participation in the painful tasks entailed in attaining it.

Hence, you appreciate the global connotations of instances of oppression at home or abroad and accept the responsibility of striving, guided by the principles of the Faith and in collaboration with others whenever possible, to combat injustice, for the common good.

Universal House of Justice

*T*here is so much suffering,
such a great and desperate need for a true remedy
and the Bahá'ís should realise their sacred obligation
is to deliver the Message to their fellowmen at once,
and on as large a scale as possible.
If they fail to do so, they are really partly responsible
for prolonging the agony of humanity.

Shoghi Effendi

*F*ar from allowing themselves to be acculturated to the standards of society, then, Bahá'ís are called upon to be the vanguard and champions of a new civilisation.

Universal House of Justice

What should be stated plainly here is that Bahá'ís do not believe the transformation thus envisioned will come about exclusively through their own efforts. Nor are they trying to create a movement that would seek to impose on society their vision of the future. Every nation and every group--indeed, every individual--will, to a greater or lesser degree, contribute to the emergence of the world civilisation towards which humanity is irresistibly moving. Unity will progressively be achieved, as foreshadowed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in different realms of social existence, for instance, "unity in the political realm", "unity of thought in world undertakings", "unity of races" and the "unity of nations". As these come to be realised, the structures of a politically united world, which respects the full diversity of culture and provides channels for the expression of dignity and honour, will gradually take shape.

Universal House of Justice

O compassionate God!

Thanks be to Thee for Thou hast awakened and made me conscious.

Thou hast given me a seeing eye and favored me with a hearing ear,
hast led me to Thy kingdom and guided me to Thy path.

Thou hast shown me the right way
and caused me to enter the ark of deliverance.

O God! Keep me steadfast and make me firm and staunch.

Protect me from violent tests and preserve and shelter me
in the strongly fortified fortress of Thy Covenant and Testament.

Thou art the Powerful. Thou art the Seeing. Thou art the Hearing.

O Thou the Compassionate God.

Bestow upon me a heart which, like unto a glass,
may be illumined with the light of Thy love,
and confer upon me thoughts which may change this world
into a rose garden through the outpourings of heavenly grace.

Thou art the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Thou art the Great Beneficent God.

Abdu'l-Bahá

*A*n educational approach directed towards personal growth and societal transformation, and based on the belief that human beings are essentially spiritual, however, must go well beyond a mere statement of purpose. When words and actions are not directed by a moral force, scientific knowledge and technological know-how conduce as readily to misery as they do to prosperity and happiness. But moral values are not mere constructs of social processes. Rather, they are expressions of the inner forces that operate in the spiritual reality of every human being, and education must concern itself with these forces if it is to tap the roots of motivation and produce meaningful and lasting change.

Bahá'í International Community

*W*hen such a crisis sweeps over the world
no person should hope to remain intact.

We belong to an organic unit and when one part of the organism suffers
all the rest of the body will feel its consequence.

This is in fact the reason why Bahá'u'lláh calls
our attention to the unity of mankind.

But as Bahá'ís we should not let such hardship
weaken our hope in the future...

Shoghi Effendi

*N*ever lose thy trust in God.

Be thou ever hopeful,
for the bounties of God never cease to flow upon man.
If viewed from one perspective they seem to decrease,
but from another they are full and complete.
Man is under all conditions immersed in a sea of God's blessings.
Therefore, be thou not hopeless under any circumstances,
but rather be firm in thy hope.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

*U*nless the season of winter appear,
thunder roll, lightning flash, snow and rain fall,
hail and frost descend and the intensity of cold execute its command,
the season of the soul-refreshing spring would not come,
the fragrant breeze would not waft,
the moderation of temperature would not be realised,
the roses and hyacinths would not grow,
the surface of the earth would not become a delectable paradise, the
trees would not bloom,
neither would they bring forth fruits and leaves.
That fierce inclemency of cold, snow, frost and tempest
was the beginning of the manifestation
of these roses, hyacinths, buds, blossoms and fruits.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

O God, O Thou Who hast cast Thy splendor
 over the luminous realities of men,
 shedding upon them the resplendent lights of knowledge and guidance,
 and hast chosen them out of all created things for this supernal grace,
 and hast caused them to encompass all things,
 to understand their inmost essence, and to disclose their mysteries,
 bringing them forth out of darkness into the visible world!
 "He verily showeth His special mercy to whomsoever He will."

O Lord, help Thou Thy loved ones to acquire knowledge
 and the sciences and arts,
 and to unravel the secrets that are treasured up
 in the inmost reality of all created beings.
 Make them to hear the hidden truths that are written
 and embedded in the heart of all that is.
 Make them to be ensigns of guidance amongst all creatures,
 and piercing rays of the mind shedding forth their light in this, the "first life."
 Make them to be leaders unto Thee,
 guides unto Thy path, runners urging men on to Thy Kingdom.
 Thou verily art the Powerful, the Protector,
 the Potent, the Defender, the Mighty, the Most Generous.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

*I*t is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action... That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race.

The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth.

In another passage He hath proclaimed:

It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world.

The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.

Bahá'u'lláh

1. *Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), no.4, p.7. ↵
2. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991), p.170. ↵
3. From a letter dated 2 March 2013 written by the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of Iran. ↵
4. *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), p.438. ↵
5. From a letter dated 2 April 2010 written by the Universal House of Justice to the Believers in the Cradle of the Faith. ↵
6. From a letter dated 3 February 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, published in *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File* (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), no.436. ↵
7. From a letter dated October 1985 written by the Universal House of Justice to the Peoples of the World. ↵
8. *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p.42. ↵
9. From a letter dated 21 December 2006 written by the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of Egypt. ↵
10. From a letter dated 18 December 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, published in *Lights of Guidance*, no.425. ↵
11. From a letter dated 19 April 2013 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a number of individual Bahá'ís resident in Europe. ↵
12. From a letter dated 2 March 2013 written by the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of Iran. ↵
13. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, compiled by the United States Bahá'í Publishing Trust. ↵
14. Baha'i International Community Task Force on Education, 'Position Statement on Education' (New York: Baha'i International Community, 1989). ↵

15. From a letter dated 14 April 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, published in *Lights of Guidance*, no.425. ↵
16. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), no. 178, p.205. ↵
17. *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas* (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1909), p. 655. ↵
18. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, compiled by the United States Bahá'í Publishing Trust. ↵
19. *Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), no. 117, p.250; also published in 'Tablet of Maqsúd', *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), p.166-167. ↵

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