

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom

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1 Mulk 171 B.E.

To the friends gathered at the Feast of Mulk

Dearly loved Friends,

The National Spiritual Assembly sends its warmest love to all the followers of the Greatest Name.

As you may know, the Universal House of Justice sent a soul-stirring message dated 18 December 2014 to the Bahá'ís in Iran concerning the concept of the Mashriq'l-Adhkár. Having consulted upon this outpouring of guidance, the National Assembly felt moved to share some of its reflections, together with passages from the letter, with the friends at the Feast of Mulk.

It was most interesting to read that the Master's vision of the Mashriq'l-Adhkár "provided for a variety of settings and circumstances in which the concept ... in its embryonic form" can be expressed. He wrote in this regard:

As to the Mashriq'l-Adhkár, it is of the utmost importance.... It may assume any form, for even if it be an underground pit, that pit shall become a sheltering paradise, an exalted bower, and a garden of delight. It shall become a centre wherein the spirits are gladdened and the hearts attracted to the Abhá Kingdom.

We understand from this letter that the "term "Mashriq'l-Adhkár" has variously been used to designate the gathering of the believers for prayers at dawn; a structure where the divine verses are recited; the entire institution of the Mashriq'l-Adhkár and its dependencies; and the central edifice itself, often also referred to as a "Temple" or a "House of Worship". All these can be regarded as aspects of the gradual implementation of the law set out for humankind by Bahá'u'lláh in His Most Holy Book." So it is something that every individual, family, neighbourhood and community can engage in today as a "collective centre of society to promote cordial affection ... as a universal place of worship open to all the inhabitants of a locality irrespective of their religious affiliation, background, ethnicity, or gender...". All can contribute to the unfoldment of this Divine law.

The letter goes on to explain that the concept of worship is "inseparable from service". In this connection Shoghi Effendi states:

... Bahá'í worship ... cannot afford lasting satisfaction and benefit to the worshiper himself, much less to humanity in general, unless and until translated and transfused into that dynamic and disinterested service to the cause of humanity ...

Then the letter offers this most beautiful description of prayer:

The Twin Luminaries of this resplendent age have taught us this: Prayer is the essential spiritual conversation of the soul with its Maker, direct and without intermediation. It is the

spiritual food that sustains the life of the spirit. Like the morning's dew, it brings freshness to the heart and cleanses it, purifying it from attachments of the insistent self. It is a fire that burns away the veils and a light that leads to the ocean of reunion with the Almighty. On its wings does the soul soar in the heavens of God and draw closer to the divine reality. Upon its quality depends the development of the limitless capacities of the soul and the attraction of the bounties of God, but the prolongation of prayer is not desirable. The powers latent in prayer are manifested when it is motivated by the love of God, beyond any fear or favour, and free from ostentation and superstition. It is to be expressed with a sincere and pure heart conducive to contemplation and meditation so that the rational faculty can be illumined by its effects. Such prayer will transcend the limitation of words and go well beyond mere sounds. The sweetness of its melodies must gladden and uplift the heart and reinforce the penetrating power of the Word, transmuting earthly inclinations into heavenly attributes and inspiring selfless service to humankind.


The letter further states:

We have called upon the Bahá'ís to see in their endeavours of community building the creation of a new pattern of how society can be. Taken in its entirety, that pattern fosters capacity for service—for the education of young generations, for the empowerment of the youth, for the spiritual education of children, for the enhancement of the capacity to draw upon the influence of the Word of God in accompanying others into the field of service, and for the social and economic advancement of a people in the light of the divine teachings for the age. Essential to that pattern is the devotional meeting...

The National Assembly hopes that through reflecting on the foregoing at Feast, all will derive a fresh measure of inspiration and understanding from these blessed words of the Supreme Body. Moreover, we urge the friends to continue considering how our lives and actions can be increasingly imbued with spirit of this guidance, particularly as the Fast approaches, which is of course a special period for prayer and spiritual rejuvenation.

With little over a year left in the current Plan, we also call upon the friends across the UK to make a concerted effort to pray that the goals before us may be reached. May our prayers then find expression in lives of service and in our assiduous efforts to offer the Healing Message of Bahá'u'lláh to our compatriots.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,


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of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom

cc. Counsellor Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi