

Youth Preparing for a Life of Service

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Hopelessness

Today the world is assailed by an array of destructive forces. Materialism, rooted in the West, 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.

(Universal House of Justice, To Baha'is in the Cradle of the Faith, 2 April 2010)

Hopelessness

One result is 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.

(Universal House of Justice, To Baha'is in the Cradle of the Faith, 2 April 2010)

A shift in perspective - values

To alleviate a variety of problems born of the economic inequalities so prevalent in the world today, social and economic development will require, especially among the younger generations, a fundamental shift in perspective, one that changes the way in which certain essential concepts are viewed--the true purpose of life, the nature of progress, the meaning of true happiness and well-being, and the place that material pursuits should assume in one's individual and family life.

Deeds, not words

The wrong in the world continues to exist just because people talk only of their ideals, and do not strive to put them into practice. If actions took the place of words, the world's misery would very soon be changed into comfort.

A man who does great good, and talks not of it, is on the way to perfection.

The man who has accomplished a small good and magnifies it in his speech is worth very little.

Living a Bahá'í life

Let those who meet you know, without your proclaiming the fact, that you are indeed a Bahá'í.

Put into practice the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, that of kindness to all nations. Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone, let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks* 1, The Duty of Kindness and Sympathy towards Strangers and Foreigners, 16 October 1911)

A new kind of education

Passivity is bred by the forces of society today. A desire to be entertained is nurtured from childhood, with increasing efficiency, cultivating generations willing to be led by whoever proves skilful at appealing to superficial emotions. Even in many educational systems students are treated as though they were receptacles designed to receive information.

Education

As a starting point, the program of education must be based on a clear vision of the kind of society that we wish to live in; and the kind of individuals that will bring this about. It needs to help learners reflect on the purpose of life and help them to step out of their cultural realities to develop alternative visions and approaches to the problems at hand and to understand the manifold consequences of their behaviors and to adjust these accordingly.

Transforming education

The curriculum cannot simply aim to impart relevant knowledge and skills; rather it should aim to develop the vast potential inherent in the human being. Individuals must be assisted to channel this potential towards the betterment of their communities and the advancement of society as a whole.

(Bahá'í International Community, [Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism](#), 2010)

Choosing individual vocations

...individual Bahá'ís striving to contribute to society's progress in ways available to them

As a personal response to Bahá'u'lláh's summons to work for the betterment of the world, believers have variously chosen to adopt certain vocations and have sought out opportunities to support the activities of like-minded groups and organizations.

(Universal House of Justice, 30 December 2021, §20)

The Role of Youth

The key to resolving these social ills rests in the hands of a youthful generation

- convinced of the nobility of human beings;
- eagerly seeking a deeper understanding of the true purpose of existence;
- able to distinguish between divine religion and mere superstition;
- clear in the view of science and religion as two independent yet complementary systems of knowledge that propel human progress;

The Role of Youth

- conscious of and drawn to the beauty and power of unity in diversity;
- secure in the knowledge that real glory is to be found in service to one's country and to the peoples of the world;
- and mindful that the acquisition of wealth is praiseworthy only insofar as it is attained through just means and expended for benevolent purposes, for the promotion of knowledge and toward the common good.

The Role of Youth

Thus must our youth prepare themselves to shoulder the tremendous responsibilities that await them. And thus will they prove immune to the atmosphere of greed that surrounds them and press forward unwavering in the pursuit of their exalted goals.

(Universal House of Justice, To Baha'is in the Cradle of the Faith, 2 April 2010)

A positive vision

No matter how bleak conditions may appear at any given time, no matter how dismal the immediate prospects for bringing about unity, there is no cause for despair. The distressing state of the world can only spur us to redouble our commitment to constructive action. “These are not days of prosperity and triumph” cautions Bahá’u’lláh. “The whole of mankind is in the grip of manifold ills. Strive, therefore, to save its life through the wholesome medicine which the almighty hand of the unerring Physician hath prepared.”

Meaningful work for youth

The meaningful engagement of young people becomes even more important as urban populations swell and, with them, the increase of slums, rising crime rates, use of drugs, unemployment, breakdown of family structures and social isolation.... Lack of meaningful employment only feeds their hopelessness and frustration.

(Bahá'í International Community, [Eradicating Poverty: Moving Forward As One](#), 2008)

Meaningful work

Yet it is not only the quantity but also the quality and meaning of work that needs to be reconsidered. Whether tilling the soil or selling goods, one's work should not be reduced to a means for acquiring more goods or as an expendable cost of production. One's work is the means of developing one's craft, of refining one's character, and contributing to the welfare and progress of society.

(Bahá'í International Community, [Eradicating Poverty: Moving Forward As One](#), 2008)

Public discourse on environment

One of the pressing concerns of humanity today is how the resources of nature can be utilized in a way that safeguards the health of the environment, and there is a large community of people who are giving attention to this challenge. Some are scientists investigating climate change or searching for means to curb pollution. Others are working to raise consciousness about the effects of present-day society on the natural world. Still others are associated with endeavors aimed at establishing environmentally sound policies.

Sustainability - valuing nature

As trustees or stewards of the planet's resources and biodiversity, we must:

- ensure sustainability and equity of resource use into distant future
- consider the environmental consequences of development activities
- temper our actions with moderation and humility
- value nature in more than economic terms
- understand the natural world and its role in humanity's collective development both material and spiritual

Focus on Hope

- focus on hope, a rare commodity today
- be positive, full of creative imagination
- draw on the fantastic potential hiding within all of us
- youth are the hope of the future
- today will only be a start
- tomorrow is already the future
- the more we build forward, the more that future will open up