

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

5 January 1986

[To an individual]

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The Universal House of Justice has directed us to transmit the following in reply to your letter dated 19 December 1985.

Concerning your request for material relating to the role of women in society and in the establishment of peace, a compilation of extracts from the Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and from letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi and the House of Justice, is enclosed. These extracts concern the equality of women, their role, and, either directly or indirectly, their importance to the attainment of peace.

Additionally, from one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's previously untranslated Tablets, the following extract is taken:

The handmaidens of God and the bondswomen in His divine Court should reveal such attributes and attitudes amongst the women of the world as would cause them to stand out and achieve renown in the circles of women. That is, they should associate with them with supreme chastity and steadfast decency, with unshakable faith, articulate speech, an eloquent tongue, irrefutable testimony and high resolve. Beseech God that thou mayest attain unto all these bounties.

'Abdu'l-Bahá also stated:

The woman is indeed of the greater importance to the race. She has the greater burden and the greater work. Look at the vegetable and the animal worlds. The palm which carries the fruit is the tree most prized by the date grower. The Arab knows that for a long journey the mare has the longest wind. For her greater strength and fierceness, the lioness is more feared by the hunter than the lion.

... The woman has greater moral courage than the man; she has also special gifts which enable her to govern in moments of danger and crisis...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London, pp. 102–03)

Consider, for instance, a mother who has tenderly reared a son for twenty years to the age of maturity. Surely she will not consent to having that son torn asunder and killed in the field of battle. Therefore, as woman advances toward the degree of man in power and privilege, with the right of vote and control in human government, most assuredly war will cease; for woman is naturally the most devoted and staunch advocate of international peace.

(Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 375)

A further extract about women and peace is taken from a letter written on behalf of the Guardian on 24 March 1945:

What 'Abdu'l-Bahá meant about the women arising for peace is that this is a matter which vitally affects women, and when they form a conscious and overwhelming mass of public opinion against war there can be no war. The Bahá'í women are already organized through being members of the Faith and the Administrative Order. No further organization is needed. But they should, through teaching and through the active moral support they give to

every movement directed towards peace, seek to exert a strong influence on other women's minds in regard to this essential matter.

With reference to the membership of the House of Justice being possible only for men, a compilation on this subject is also enclosed. The following extracts are contained in this compilation, but have been selected for separate mention. The first is from *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, section 38:

The House of Justice, however, according to the explicit text of the Law of God, is confined to men; this for a wisdom of the Lord God's which will ere long be made manifest as clearly as the sun at high noon.

And from a letter dated 14 April 1975 written on behalf of the House of Justice to an individual believer, are taken these extracts:

The Universal House of Justice has asked us to assure you that it appreciates the deep concern you express in your recent letter about the membership of the Universal House of Justice being confined to men, and it understands your feeling of frustration at not being able to find an answer that would help you to accept that this is not an injustice being imposed on womankind. The House of Justice agrees with you that our Sacred Writings are replete with passages affirming the equality of both sexes; that from the spiritual point of view, there is no difference between women and men. In fact, many statements made by 'Abdu'l-Bahá extol women. He has said that "in some respects woman is superior to man." ...

The Universal House of Justice points out that when we accept the Manifestation of God for our time, we must accept what He says though at the moment we may not comprehend the meaning of some of His statements. Some things, such as Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings regarding life after death, we have to accept on faith.

May you be guided and sustained in promoting the Word of God at the meetings you are planning and in the opportunities that occur in your daily life.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat