

Detachment

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DETACHMENT

Compiled by Kate Lindsey

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DEFINITIONS:*

de.tach.ment noun

1. The act or process of disconnecting or detaching; separation.
2. The state of being separate or detached.
3. Indifference to or remoteness from the concerns of others; aloofness: preserved a chilly detachment in his relations with the family.
4. Absence of prejudice or bias; disinterest: strove to maintain her professional detachment in the case.

de.tach (di-tach1) verb, transitive

1. To separate or unfasten; disconnect: detach a check from the checkbook; detach burs from one's coat.
2. To remove from association or union with something: detach a calf from its mother; detached herself from the group.

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THE ESSENCES OF DETACHMENT

These Essences of detachment, these resplendent Realities are the channels of God's all-pervasive grace.

(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, page 67)

The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High. The light which these souls radiate is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples. They are like unto leaven which leaveneth the world of being, and constitute the animating force through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. Through them the clouds rain their bounty upon men, and the earth bringeth forth its fruits. All things must have a cause, a motive power, an animating principle. These souls and symbols of detachment have provided, and will continue to provide, the supreme moving impulse in the world of being. (Baha'u'llah: Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, pages 156-157)

DOING DETACHMENT

The essence of detachment is for man to turn his face towards the courts of the Lord, to enter His Presence, behold His Countenance, and stand as witness before Him.

(Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 155)

Please God, that we avoid the land of denial, and advance into the ocean of acceptance, so that we may perceive, with an eye purged from all conflicting elements, the worlds of unity and diversity, of variation and oneness, of limitation and detachment, and wing our flight unto the highest and innermost sanctuary of the inner meaning of the Word of God.

(Baha'u'llah: Kitab-i-Iqan, page 160)

O peoples of the earth! God, the Eternal Truth, is My witness that streams of fresh and soft-flowing waters have gushed from the rocks, through the sweetness of the words uttered by your Lord, the Unconstrained; and still ye slumber. Cast away that which ye possess, and, on the wings of detachment, soar beyond all created things. Thus biddeth you the Lord of creation, the movement of Whose Pen hath revolutionized the soul of mankind.

(Baha'u'llah: Kitab-i-Aqdas, ¶ 54)

Blessed are they that have soared on the wings of detachment and attained the station which, as ordained by God, overshadoweth the entire creation, whom neither the vain imaginations of the learned, nor the multitude of the hosts of the earth have succeeded in deflecting from His Cause. Who is there among you, O people, who will renounce the world, and draw nigh unto God, the Lord of all names? Where is he to be found who, through the power of My name that transcendeth all created things, will cast away the things that men possess, and cling, with all his might, to the things which God, the Knower of the unseen and of the seen, hath bidden him observe? Thus hath His bounty been sent down unto men, His testimony fulfilled, and His proof shone forth above the Horizon of mercy. Rich is the prize that shall be won by him who hath believed and exclaimed: "Lauded art Thou, O Beloved of all worlds! Magnified be Thy name, O Thou the Desire of every understanding heart!"

(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, pages 34-35)

Arise in the name of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge, and, with absolute detachment from the learning of men, lift up your voices and proclaim His Cause. I swear by the Day Star of Divine Revelation! The very moment ye arise, ye will witness how a flood of Divine knowledge will gush out of your hearts, and will behold the wonders of His heavenly wisdom manifested in all their glory before you. Were ye to taste of the sweetness of the sayings of the All-Merciful, ye would unhesitatingly forsake your selves, and would lay down your lives for the Well-Beloved.

(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, pages 84-85)

Pass beyond the narrow retreats of your evil and corrupt desires, and advance into the vast immensity of the realm of God, and abide ye in the meads of sanctity and of detachment, that the fragrance of your deeds may lead the whole

of mankind to the ocean of God's unfading glory. Forbear ye from concerning yourselves with the affairs of this world and all that pertaineth unto it, or from meddling with the activities of those who are its outward leaders.

(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, page 241)

Should any man, in this Day, arise and, with absolute detachment from all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, set his affections on Him Who is the Day Spring of God's holy Revelation, he will, verily, be empowered to subdue all created things, through the potency of one of the Names of the Lord, his God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Know thou of a certainty that the Day Star of Truth hath, in this Day, shed upon the world a radiance, the like of which bygone ages have never witnessed. Let the light of His glory, O people, shine upon you, and be not of the negligent.

(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, page 319)

O 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.

(Baha'u'llah: The Hidden Words, Arabic #68)

ALAS! ALAS! O LOVERS OF WORLDLY DESIRE!

Even as the swiftness of lightning ye have passed by the Beloved One, and have set your hearts on satanic fancies. Ye bow the knee before your vain imagining, and call it truth. Ye turn your eyes towards the thorn, and name it a flower. Not a pure breath have ye breathed, nor hath the breeze of detachment been wafted from the meadows of your hearts. Ye have cast to the winds the loving counsels of the Beloved and have effaced them utterly from the tablet of your hearts, and even as the beasts of the field, ye move and have your being within the pastures of desire and passion.

(Baha'u'llah: The Hidden Words, Persian #45)

O SON OF PASSION!

Cleanse thyself from the defilement of riches and in perfect peace advance into the realm of poverty; that from the well-spring of detachment thou mayest quaff the wine of immortal life.

(Baha'u'llah: The Hidden Words, Persian #55)

O MY SERVANT!

The best of men are they that earn a livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all worlds.

The mystic and wondrous Bride, hidden ere this beneath the veiling of utterance, hath now, by the grace of God and His divine favor, been made manifest even as the resplendent light shed by the beauty of the Beloved. I

bear witness, O friends! that the favor is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established. Let it now be seen what your endeavors in the path of detachment will reveal. In this wise hath the divine favor been fully vouchsafed unto you and unto them that are in heaven and on earth. All praise to God, the Lord of all Worlds.

(Baha'u'llah: The Hidden Words, Persian #82)

Shouldst thou step into the realm of complete detachment, thou wilt readily testify that no day is mightier than this Day, and that no resurrection more awful than this Resurrection can ever be conceived.

(Baha'u'llah: Kitab-i-Iqan, page 144)

At one time this sublime Word was heard from the Tongue of Him Who is the Possessor of all being and the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below--exalted is the glory of His utterance -: Piety and detachment are even as two most great luminaries of the heaven of teaching. Blessed the one who hath attained unto this supreme station, this habitation of transcendent holiness and sublimity.

(Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 253)

Adorn the heads of Thy loved ones with the crown of detachment and attire their temples with the raiment of righteousness....

How great the difference between the condition of these people and the station of such valiant souls as have passed beyond the sea of names and pitched their tents upon the shores of the ocean of detachment....

Attire them, O Lord, with the robe of righteousness and illumine them with the splendours of the light of detachment. Summon then to their assistance the hosts of wisdom and utterance that they may exalt Thy Word amongst Thy creatures and proclaim Thy Cause amidst Thy servants. Verily, potent art Thou to do what Thou wilt, and within Thy grasp lie the reins of all affairs. No God is there but Thee, the Mighty, the Ever-Forgiving.

(Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pages 57-59)

Our greatest efforts must be directed towards detachment from the things of the world; we must strive to become more spiritual, more luminous, to follow the counsel of the Divine Teaching, to serve the cause of unity and true equality, to be merciful, to reflect the love of the Highest on all men, so that the light of the Spirit shall be apparent in all our deeds, to the end that all humanity shall be united, the stormy sea thereof calmed, and all rough waves disappear from off the surface of life's ocean henceforth unruffled and peaceful. Then will the New Jerusalem be seen by mankind, who will enter through its gates and receive the Divine Bounty.

('Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, page 87)

THE PROGRESS OF THE SOUL

"Does the soul progress more through sorrow or through the joy in this world?"

The mind and spirit of man advance when he is tried by suffering. The more the

ground is ploughed the better the seed will grow, the better the harvest will be. Just as the plough furrows the earth deeply, purifying it of weeds and thistles, so suffering and tribulation free man from the petty affairs of this worldly life until he arrives at a state of complete detachment. His attitude in this world will be that of divine happiness. Man is, so to speak, unripe: the heat of the fire of suffering will mature him. Look back to the times past and you will find that the greatest men have suffered most.

('Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, page 178)

It will never be abrogated, for it is spiritual and not material truth; it is faith, knowledge, certitude, justice, piety, righteousness, trustworthiness, love of God, benevolence, purity, detachment, humility, meekness, patience and constancy. It shows mercy to the poor, defends the oppressed, gives to the wretched and uplifts the fallen. These divine qualities, these eternal commandments, will never be abolished; nay, they will last and remain established for ever and ever.

('Abdu'l-Baha: Some Answered Questions, page 47)

Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favour and grace; and this plane of sacrifice is the realm of dying to the self, that the radiance of the living God may then shine forth. The martyr's field is the place of detachment from self, that the anthems of eternity may be upraised. Do all ye can to become wholly weary of self, and bind yourselves to that Countenance of Splendours; and once ye have reached such heights of servitude, ye will find, gathered within your shadow, all created things. This is boundless grace; this is the highest sovereignty; this is the life that dieth not. All else save this is at the last but manifest perdition and great loss. Praise be to God, the gate of boundless grace is opened wide, the heavenly table is set, the servants of the Merciful and His handmaids are present at the feast. Strive ye to receive your share of this eternal food, so that ye shall be loved and cherished in this world and the next.

('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pages 76-77)

The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all earthly things, forsook all their cares and belongings, purged themselves of self and passion, and with absolute detachment scattered far and wide and engaged in calling the peoples of the world to the divine guidance; till at last they made the world another world, illumined the surface of the earth, and even to their last hour proved self-sacrificing in the pathway of that beloved One of God. Finally in various lands they suffered glorious martyrdom. Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps!

('Abdu'l-Baha: Will and Testament, pages 10-11)

Those persons who are selected to serve the public, or are appointed to administrative positions, should perform their duties in a spirit of true servitude and ready compliance. That is to say, they should be distinguished by their goodly disposition and virtuous character, content themselves with their allotted remuneration, and act with trustworthiness in all their doings. They should keep themselves aloof from unworthy motives, and be far removed above

covetous designs; for rectitude, probity and righteousness are among the most potent means for attracting the grace of God and securing both the prosperity of the country and the welfare of the people. Glory and honour for man are not to be found in fortunes and riches, least of all in those which have been unlawfully amassed through extortion, embezzlement and corruption practised at the expense of an exploited populace. Supreme honour, nobility and greatness in the human world, and true felicity in this life and the life to come--all consist in equity and uprightness, sanctity and detachment. If a man would seek distinction, he should suffice himself with a frugal provision, seek to better the lot of the poor of the realm, choose the way of justice and fair-mindedness, and tread the path of high-spirited service. Such a one, needy though he be, shall win imperishable riches and attain unto everlasting honour. ('Abdu'l-Baha: From a Tablet--translated from the Persian.

Cited in Trustworthiness, section 2067,
pages 342-343 of Compilation of Compilations)

In this wondrous Dispensation the favours of the Glorious Lord are vouchsafed unto the handmaidens of the Merciful. Therefore, they should, like unto men, seize the prize and excel in the field, so that it will be proven and made manifest that the penetrative influence of the Word of God in this new Dispensation hath caused women to be equal with men, and that in the arena of tests they will outdo others. Therefore, the true bondswomen of the Blessed Beauty must be revived by the spirit of detachment, and refreshed by the breezes of attraction. With hearts overflowing with the love of God, with souls gladdened by the heavenly glad-tidings, and with extreme humility and lowliness, let them speak out with eloquent speech, and praise and glorify the Great Lord, for they are the manifestations of His bounty and adorned with the crown of splendour.

('Abdu'l-Baha: From a Tablet translated from the Persian.
Cited in Women, page 36)

The advice that Shoghi Effendi gave you regarding the division of your time between serving the Cause and attending to your other duties was also given to many other friends both by Baha'u'llah and the Master. It is a compromise between the two verses of the "Aqdas", one making it incumbent upon every Baha'i to serve the promotion of the Faith and the other that every soul should be occupied in some form of occupation that will benefit society. In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah says that the highest form of detachment in this day is to be occupied with some profession and be self-supporting. A good Baha'i, therefore, is the one who so arranges his life as to devote time both to his material needs and also to the service of the Cause.

(From a letter dated 26 February 1933
written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer.
Cited in Living the Life, pages 5-6)

Nothing is more contrary to the spirit of the Cause than discord and strife, which are the inevitable outcome of selfishness and greed. Pure detachment and selfless service, these should be the sole motives of every true believer. And

unless each and every one of the friends succeeds in translating such qualities into living action, no hope of further progress can be entertained. It is now that unity of thought and action is most needed. It is now, when the Cause is entering a new phase of development, when its Administration is being gradually consolidated amid the welter and chaos of a tottering civilization, that the friends should present a united front to those forces of internal dissension, which, if not completely wiped out, will bring our work to inevitable destruction.

(From a letter dated 24 September 1933
written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer.
Cited in *Living the Life*, page 6)

They further impress upon them the virtue of trustworthiness and godliness, of purity of motive, kindness of heart, and detachment from the fetters of this material world. They call upon them so to sanctify themselves that they will rise above the corrupt and evil influences that exercise so powerful a sway over the Western world, and charge them to abide by the counsel of moderation at all times and under all conditions. They urge them to make detailed inquiry into the various branches of contemporary learning--arts and sciences alike--and to concentrate their attention on serving the general interests of the people; to deepen themselves by attentive study of the sacred Texts, and to apply the divine guidance they contain to the circumstances, needs and conditions of society today; to refrain from entering into the tangled affairs of political parties and to have neither concern for, nor involvement in, the controversies of politicians, the wranglings of theologians or any of the ailing social theories current amongst men.

(Shoghi Effendi: 30 January 1926
to the Spiritual Assemblies throughout the East—
translated from the Persian. Cited in *Trustworthiness*,
section 2079, page 348 of *Compilation of Compilations*)

PRAYERS FOR DETACHMENT

They whose sight is keen, whose ears are retentive, whose hearts are enlightened, and whose breasts are dilated, recognize both truth and falsehood, and distinguish the one from the other. Recite thou this prayer that hath flowed from the tongue of this Wronged One, and ponder thereon with a heart rid of all attachment, and with ears that are pure and sanctified, be attentive to its meaning, that haply thou mayest inhale the breath of detachment and have pity upon thyself and upon others:

"My God, the Object of my adoration, the Goal of my desire, the All-Bountiful, the Most Compassionate! All life is of Thee, and all power lieth within the grasp of Thine omnipotence. Whosoever Thou exaltest is raised above the angels, and attaineth the station: 'Verily, We uplifted him to a place on high!'; and whosoever Thou dost abase is made lower than dust, nay, less than nothing. O Divine Providence! Though wicked, sinful, and intemperate, we still seek from Thee a 'seat of truth,' and long to behold the countenance of the Omnipotent King. It is Thine to command, and all sovereignty belongeth to Thee, and the

realm of might boweth before Thy behest. Everything Thou doest is pure justice, nay, the very essence of grace. One gleam from the splendors of Thy Name, the All-Merciful, sufficeth to banish and blot out every trace of sinfulness from the world, and a single breath from the breezes of the Day of Thy Revelation is enough to adorn all mankind with a fresh attire.

Vouchsafe Thy strength, O Almighty One, unto Thy weak creatures, and quicken them who are as dead, that haply they may find Thee, and may be led unto the ocean of Thy guidance, and may remain steadfast in Thy Cause. Should the fragrance of Thy praise be shed abroad by any of the divers tongues of the world, out of the East or out of the West, it would, verily, be prized and greatly cherished. If such tongues, however, be deprived of that fragrance, they assuredly would be unworthy of any mention, in word or yet in thought.

We beg of Thee, O Providence, to show Thy way unto all men, and to guide them aright. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Most Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing."

(Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pages 9-10)

All laud and honor to Thee, O my God! Thou well knowest the things which, for a score of years, have happened in Thy days, and have continued to happen until this hour. No man can reckon, nor can any tongue tell, what hath befallen Thy chosen ones during all this time. They could obtain no shelter, nor find any refuge in which they could abide in safety. Turn, then, O my God, their fear into the evidences of Thy peace and Thy security, and their abasement into the sovereignty of Thy glory, and their poverty into Thine all-sufficient riches, and their distress into the wonders of Thy perfect tranquillity. Vouchsafe unto them the fragrances of Thy might and Thy mercy, and send down upon them, out of Thy marvelous loving-kindness, what will enable them to dispense with all except Thee, and will detach them from aught save Thyself, that the sovereignty of Thy oneness may be revealed and the supremacy of Thy grace and Thy bounty demonstrated.

Wilt Thou not, O my God, look upon the tears which Thy loved ones have shed? Wilt Thou not pity, O my Beloved, the eyes which have been dimmed by reason of their separation from Thee, and because of the cessation of the signs of Thy victory? Wilt Thou not behold, O my Master, the hearts wherein have beaten the wings of the dove of longing and love for Thee? By Thy glory! Things have come to such a pass that hope hath well nigh been banished from the hearts of Thy chosen ones, and the breaths of despair are ready to seize them, by reason of what hath befallen them in Thy days.

Behold me, then, O my God, how I have fled from myself unto Thee, and have abandoned my own being that I may attain unto the splendors of the light of Thy Being, and have forsaken all that keepeth me back from Thee, and maketh me forgetful of Thee, in order that I may inhale the fragrances of Thy presence and Thy remembrance. Behold how I have stepped upon the dust of the city of Thy forgiveness and Thy bounty, and dwelt within the precincts of Thy transcendent mercy, and have besought Thee, through the sovereignty of Him Who is Thy

Remembrance and Who hath appeared in the robe of Thy most pure and most august Beauty, to send down, in the course of this year, upon Thy loved ones what will enable them to dispense with any one except Thee, and will set them free to recognize the evidences of Thy sovereign will and all-conquering purpose, in such wise that they will seek only what Thou didst wish for them through Thy bidding, and will desire naught except what Thou didst desire for them through Thy will. Sanctify, then, their eyes, O my God, that they may behold the light of Thy Beauty, and purge their ears, that they may listen to the melodies of the Dove of Thy transcendent oneness. Flood, then, their hearts with the wonders of Thy love, and preserve their tongues from mentioning any one save Thee, and guard their faces from turning to aught else except Thyself. Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou, verily, art the Almighty, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

Protect, moreover, O my Beloved, through Thy love for them and through the love they bear to Thee, this servant, who hath sacrificed his all for Thee, and expended whatsoever Thou hast given him in the path of Thy love and Thy good pleasure, and preserve him from all that Thou abhorrest, and from whatsoever may hinder him from entering into the Tabernacle of Thy holy sovereignty, and from attaining the seat of Thy transcendent oneness. Number him, then, O my God, with such as have allowed nothing whatever to deter them from beholding Thy beauty, or from meditating on the wondrous evidences of Thine everlasting handiwork, that he may have fellowship with none except Thee, and turn to naught save Thyself, and discover in whatever hath been created by Thee in the kingdoms of earth and heaven nothing but Thy wondrous Beauty and the revelation of the splendors of Thy face, and be so immersed beneath the billowing oceans of Thine overruling providence and the surging seas of Thy holy unity, that he will forget every mention except the mention of Thy transcendent oneness, and banish from his soul the traces of all evil suggestions, O Thou in Whose hands are the kingdoms of all names and attributes!

Lauded be Thy name, O Thou Who art the Goal of my desire! I swear by Thy glory! How great is my wish to attain unto a detachment so complete that were there to appear before me those countenances which are hid within the chambers of chastity, and the beauty of which Thou didst veil from the eyes of the entire creation, and whose faces Thou didst sanctify from the sight of all beings, and were they to unveil themselves in all the glory of the splendors of Thine incomparable beauty, I would refuse to look upon them, and would behold them solely for the purpose of discerning the mysteries of Thy handiwork, which have perplexed the minds of such as have drawn nigh unto Thee, and awed the souls of all them that have recognized Thee. I would, by Thy power and Thy might, soar to such heights that nothing whatsoever would have the power to keep me back from the manifold evidences of Thy transcendent dominion, nor would any earthly scheme shut me out from the manifestations of Thy Divine holiness.

Glorified, immeasurably glorified art Thou, O my God, and my Beloved, and my Master, and my Desire! Shatter not the hopes of this lowly one to attain the shores of Thy glory, and deprive not this wretched creature of the immensities

of Thy riches, and cast not away this suppliant from the doors of Thy grace, and Thy bounty, and Thy gifts. Have mercy, then, upon this poor and desolate soul who hath sought no friend but Thee, and no companion except Thee, and no comforter save Thee, and no beloved apart from Thee, nor cherished any desire but Thyself.

Cast, then, upon me, O my God, the glances of Thy mercy, and forgive me my trespasses and the trespasses of them that are dear to Thee, and which come in between us and the revelation of Thy triumph and Thy grace. Cancel Thou, moreover, our sins which have shut off our faces from the splendors of the Day-Star of Thy favors. Powerful art Thou to do Thy pleasure. Thou ordainest what Thou willest, and art not asked of what Thou wishest through the power of Thy sovereignty, nor canst Thou be frustrated in whatsoever Thou prescribest through Thine irrevocable decree. No God is there save Thee, the Almighty, the Most Powerful, the Ever-living, the Most Compassionate.

(Baha'u'llah: Prayers and Meditations, pages 334-339)

As to thee, O handmaid of God, softly recite thou this commune to thy Lord, and say unto Him:

O God, my God! Fill up for me the cup of detachment from all things, and in the assembly of Thy splendours and bestowals, rejoice me with the wine of loving Thee. Free me from the assaults of passion and desire, break off from me the shackles of this nether world, draw me with rapture unto Thy supernal realm, and refresh me amongst the handmaids with the breathings of Thy holiness. O Lord, brighten Thou my face with the lights of Thy bestowals, light Thou mine eyes with beholding the signs of Thine all-subduing might; delight my heart with the glory of Thy knowledge that encompasseth all things, gladden Thou my soul with Thy soul-reviving tidings of great joy, O Thou King of this world and the Kingdom above, O Thou Lord of dominion and might, that I may spread abroad Thy signs and tokens, and proclaim Thy Cause, and promote Thy Teachings, and serve Thy Law, and exalt Thy Word. Thou art verily the Powerful, the Ever-Giving, the Able, the Omnipotent.

('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pages 174-175)