

they first awaken in the morning.

Forms of Meditation

With the progressive breakdown of orthodox religion in the past few years, there has been an increasing tendency for people to turn to a variety of forms of meditation, some of which offer a very precise pattern by which meditation is to be accomplished, e.g., by recital of a certain phrase, or by adoption of a specified position.

In a letter to an individual believer, dated February 10, 1972, the Universal House of Justice commented that "although Bahá'u'lláh has given certain laws for prayer, including the obligatory prayers, He has specified no distinct type of meditation, and each individual is free to follow his own inclination in this regard."

The Supreme Body, in this same letter, went on to call attention to the fact that "the beloved Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf to an individual believer on January 27, 1952: 'He thinks it would be wise for the Bahá'ís to use Meditations given by Bahá'u'lláh, and not any set form of meditation recommended by someone else; but the believers must be left free in these details and allowed to have personal latitude in finding their own level of communion with God.'"

This guidance should be of great value to a Bahá'í who comes across a set form of meditation advocated by a movement or organization outside the Faith. Note the advice of the Guardian that it would be wise not to use such a meditative form, but rather to turn to the Meditations set out in the Holy Writings.

During a 40-year period unparalleled in human history, Bahá'u'lláh provided, in lavish abundance, the creative words of Divine Revelation. The Writings indicate that these words are infused with a spiritual power which is not present in the words of men. There is no limit to the understanding one can obtain from the words of Divine Revelation. Bahá'u'lláh states, in the Hidden Words, that "myriads of mystic tongues find utterance in one speech, and myriads of hidden mysteries are revealed in a single melody."

In *The Seven Valleys*, He uses poetic language in referring to the profound spiritual mysteries which lie within our grasp if we will immerse ourselves in the Revelation, when He states:

"The nightingale of the heart hath other songs and secrets, which make the heart to stir and the soul to clamour, but the mystery of inner meaning may be whispered only from heart to heart, confided only from breast to breast."

He also advises us in these loving words: "O My friend, listen with heart and soul to the songs of the spirit, and treasure them as thine own eyes."

Bahá'ís are blessed beyond measure with the bounty of the Divine Revelation brought by Bahá'u'lláh, a lavish banquet upon which we can feast endlessly and eternally through the faculty of meditation.

Meditation and World Peace

Another notion prevalent in our society is that meditation alone is a sufficient means by which world peace may be achieved. There are many people, doubtless of great sincerity and deeply concerned about the ruinous disorder invading human society, who believe that the process of meditation is sufficient to resolve the disunity and conflict in the world. Their view is that through meditation are generated love, unity and harmony; when a sufficient proportion of mankind meditates, these sentiments will prevail and the world will be at peace.

The Universal House of Justice addressed this issue, in the letter of February 1972 to an individual, stating: "We can be sure, moreover, that meditation by itself, however extensively applied, is not the cure for the present ills of the world."

The Supreme Body then pointed out: "The great need in this day is for mankind to learn how to live and work harmoniously in peace, and it is to this need — to the establishment of the oneness of mankind — that the Bahá'í Teachings are primarily directed. And it is here that the Covenant is so vital. Indeed 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated that 'the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant.'"

Other passages of the Writings emphasize that the Covenant is the Divinely-ordained means by which the spiritual forces of this Dispensation are channeled. Without the Covenant, unity cannot be established on a sure foundation and cannot endure. Without the Covenant, the noble aims of the Faith would stand condemned as being Utopian, and the Bahá'í community would be doomed to suffer the fate of internal division and antagonism which has afflicted all previous attempts to devise a Utopian society. The Covenant is our Divinely-provided guarantee that history will not repeat itself exactly, and that, in this Age, good intentions will ultimately be translated into an enduring transformation of human society. Through the Covenant the abstract becomes concrete, and vision gives rise to reality.

Meditation and Intuition

Some of the forms of meditation prevalent in our society place great importance on individual intuition. They may even go to the length of encouraging a person to regard the ideas which come to him through his meditations as being an infallible truth to be followed unquestioningly.

In contrast, there stands a passage written by the Guardian, and quoted by the Universal House of Justice, which states: "With regard to your question as to the value of intuition as a source of guidance for the individual, implicit faith in our intuitive powers is unwise, but through daily prayer and sustained effort one can discover, though not always and fully, God's Will intuitively. Under no circumstances, however, can a person be absolutely certain that he is recognizing God's Will, through the exercise of his intuition. It often happens that the latter results in completely misrepresenting the truth, and thus

becomes a source of error rather than of guidance."

It is evident that there are manifest dangers in regarding the prompting of one's intuition as being the voice of certain truth. As Bahá'ís we have access to the Holy Writings, the authoritative interpretations of the Guardian, and the infallible guidance of the Universal House of Justice; also, we have the privilege of turning to the Institutions of the Administrative Order for advice and counsel in matters pertaining to the Bahá'í teachings and Bahá'í community life.

Summary

Bahá'ís share with others in our society a high regard for meditation and the benefits it can offer. However, Bahá'ís differ significantly from others in that we are advised to center our meditative practices on the Holy Words of this Revelation, and we are warned against unquestioning reliance on our intuition.

To us, meditation is an important ingredient of Bahá'í life. All of these ingredients, including prayer, development of character, obedience to the laws of the Faith, teaching, participation in the Administration, go together to mould us into becoming the new creation promised by Bahá'u'lláh.

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