

[AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

Naw-Rúz 179

To the faithful and patient followers of
Bahá'u'lláh in the sacred land of Iran

As we write these lines to those devoted followers of the Divine Beloved on the occasion of this auspicious day, the Festival of Naw-Rúz, to convey to you our love and affection, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the world are directing their energies towards reflecting deeply on the requirements of the new stage of their endeavours. Together, and with like-minded individuals, and with large numbers of those who desire the betterment of the world and the well-being of its peoples, they are engaged in conversation and the exchange of insights, and are consulting about the manner of their participation in the process of spiritual transformation and the promotion of the welfare of their societies in accordance with the teachings of Him Who is the Lifegiver of the world. Reports indicate the unprecedented response of the loved ones of God and their friends and co-workers who, rank upon rank, are participating in conferences convened in numerous parts of the world and in different settings, particularly at the local level. This response is an indication both of the growing capacity of the Bahá'í community and of the ever-growing spiritual receptivity of the peoples of the world. These friends are eager to attain a dynamic spiritual life and achieve a profound transformation of social relations that is founded on the principle of the oneness of humanity.

A complete century has now elapsed since the start of the Formative Age, which began with the Ascension of the peerless Person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The extent of the growth of the Bahá'í community in the first century of this Age, the diffusion of the light of the Faith to the furthest corners of the world, the entry of individuals from every people and nation into its fold, the expansion of the circle of its endeavours, and the rise in the degree of vision and insight on the part of its followers with regard to their mission—all these, truly, astound the human mind. One marvels at how, after the departure of their kind Master, His followers throughout the world—that handful of feeble ones devoted to their peerless Beloved, those lovers who were burning in the fire of separation from Him, mournful and anxious in His absence—succeeded through unshakeable determination and matchless sacrifice to carry out the admonitions of their far-sighted Master contained in His Tablets of the Divine Plan, and were enabled to establish the Cause of God upon so strong a foundation. Assuredly, confirmations made the drops to become seas, and endowed the atoms with the splendour of the sun.

In this luminous, epic drama, the share of the lovers of the Abhá Beauty and valiant knights of the Lord in the sacred Cradle of the Cause of God is great indeed. It is clear in the mirror of history, and reciting its countless evidences is obviously impossible within these few lines. A river of ink is required and a mountain of paper needed. The contribution of those dear friends to the protection and progress of the Cause of God at every juncture, to the very limits of their means and despite every obstacle and restriction, is worthy of admiration and of endless praise. Future generations will undoubtedly recount it in detail. At this moment in history,

reflection upon the outcome of a whole century of effort and labour brings to mind the weighty and celebrated statement of the beloved Guardian, who, after enumerating the achievements of the Bahá'ís of the world, referred to the sacrifices of the oppressed and courageous believers in Iran and described with these perspicuous words a spiritual truth that is a mystery from the invisible Realm: “These have come about solely from the powerful effect of the bitter cruelty tasted as if it were purest honey all these long years by those who are overwhelmed in tribulation at the hands of the malevolent in that sorely afflicted land.”

After a hundred years of endeavour—and of sacrifice, trial, and learning—all that the Bahá'ís of the world have attained, and which, in the past twenty-five years in particular, took a new form and acquired new systems and organization, has prepared them for the fulfilment of an exalted spiritual and moral mission. Its principal purpose is to release that mighty and heavenly power that brings about the betterment of the world, a power latent in the reality and essence of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, so that it may, day by day, become increasingly manifest and conduce to the building of society. The release of this power, briefly stated, implies a profound inner and outer transformation. Its purpose is the appearance of a heavenly character, the emergence of conduct and manner befitting the station of a human being, and the manifestation of unity and harmony in the various strata of society. This creative power promotes and brings about the spiritual, moral, and intellectual progress of peoples, so that they may concentrate on both material and spiritual education and may advance in knowledge and understanding; that the younger generation may become equipped, as rational and loyal citizens, with the requirements of service to humanity; that contending individuals, tribes, and peoples may become united; that thoughts and perspectives may harmonize around the axis of unity and oneness, in order that this foundational principle and other divine teachings may be manifested in practical ways in collective life; that through the strengthening of cooperation and goodwill, collaboration and solidarity, the pillars of society may be fortified and social cohesion may increase; that individuals may become as members of one family; that progressive and noble societies may emerge; that the culture of society may be affected by these developments, and both reflect and reinforce them; and that the three protagonists in this collective enterprise—the individual, the community, and the institutions—each in its own reality as well as in relation to one another, may make considerable advances. The signs of the appearance of this power are present in even the most basic activities inspired by the Bahá'í teachings. But in those places, whether villages in rural areas or neighbourhoods in cities, where the spiritual enterprise has advanced to higher levels and where large numbers of souls have joined their voices to the call of the Faith for the construction of a society based on divine principles, the release of this power has become an obvious reality and its effects plain to see. The process of learning pursued by the Bahá'í world along this path and the coherence of the areas of endeavour of the community of the Greatest Name have been described in detail in our message of 30 December 2021, and you will have seen that this new stage in the labours of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the world will, for a quarter of a century, be directed towards learning more about the release of this power and its manifestation in diverse places in the world.

In the closing years of the first century of the Formative Age, one of the most significant advances of the Bahá'í community in countless parts of the world has been that the dynamism of the youth and their activities has not been limited to their acquisition of perfections, their efforts to prepare themselves, and the service they render to society. There has been a considerable expansion of their loving enthusiasm to be sources of encouragement and motivation, collaborators and companions, guides and supporters of other members of the

community, to the degree that, in most countries of the world, younger generations now walk alongside others in the front ranks of the community and shoulder greater responsibilities than before. Witnessing this groundswell of love and the appearance of this enhanced capacity prompted us to make possible their participation in Bahá'í elections at a younger age. At a time when, more than ever before, materialism is inducing souls, whether in societies of the East or the West, to be occupied with the pursuit of beguiling and ephemeral aims and desires, the dazzling lustre shed by the Bahá'í youth in recent years is a reflection of this statement of the Blessed Beauty: "Blessed is he who in the prime of his youth and the heyday of his life will arise to serve the Cause of the Lord of the beginning and of the end, and adorn his heart with His love. The manifestation of such a grace is greater than the creation of the heavens and of the earth."

In this context, when we view the Bahá'í youth in the hallowed land of Iran, we are filled with awe. Their spirit of steadfastness and their commitment to their spiritual mission in the path of service to their sacred homeland and its people, in spite of the countless injustices and numberless wrongs they suffer, have made them models and examples to all the youth of the Bahá'í world, for they have sallied forth in the arena of love and fidelity to the Abhá Beauty, endeavouring to attain heavenly qualities and acquire knowledge and insight, while at the same time striving to fulfil their spiritual responsibilities. The intrepid youth in the Cradle of the Faith must know that they are the pride of the Bahá'í world and should commit to heart and memory the lofty aim that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has envisaged for them: "'Abdu'l-Bahá eagerly anticipates that each one of you may become even as a fearless lion moving in the pastures of human perfection and a musk-laden breeze wafting over the meads of virtue."

Faithful and long-standing friends of the Abhá Beauty: At a time when the world is in turmoil and its order shaken, when its peoples are in a state of fear and anxiety and exposed to dangers and difficulties, when the heart of every conscientious person burns with anguish, and when the global Bahá'í community, in response to the condition of the world and its peoples, has once again committed itself to discharge its spiritual and social mission and to propagate a culture of peace and unity, of tolerance and amity, throughout the world, we are certain that the friends of God in Iran, too, will gird up the loins of endeavour and, more than ever before, strive to walk the path of service and, in collaboration with other people of goodwill, determine to help society in their homeland; to open wide the circle of unity and extend the compass of oneness; to seek to put into practice the teachings of God for the betterment of the world and find suitable spaces in which to share with their well-intentioned compatriots the experience they have gained and continue to gain in this path; to participate in the constructive and diverse discourses of society; and inspired by the teachings and reliant on the community's experience, to make evident the practicability of the different dimensions of the principles of peace and justice in this radiant age. Through their conduct, let them become embodiments of the divine admonitions, and through their actions, let them become servants of the world of humanity. Let them pay special attention to the culture of their own community so that the divine precepts may become ever more manifest in their individual and collective lives, and their capacities may increasingly blossom. What evokes our admiration is that, despite numerous limitations, those friends are well aware of their spiritual obligations, and they endeavour, to the extent possible, to benefit from what their spiritual brothers and sisters throughout the world have learned and the experience they have acquired.

We adorn the ending of this message with words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the flame of Whose perfect example was at every moment during this past year aglow in the hearts, thoughts, and

deeds of the people of Bahá. A brief address which that luminous Being delivered to the believers in the final hours of His abundantly fruitful travels to America ended with the following words. Consider with what eloquence the Centre of the Covenant describes the perpetual aims of Bahá'ís and sums up, even as distilled nectar, their abiding duties:

Turn all your thoughts toward bringing joy to hearts. Beware! Beware! lest ye offend any heart. Assist the world of humanity as much as possible. Be the source of consolation to every sad one, assist every weak one, be helpful to every indigent one, care for every sick one, be the cause of glorification to every lowly one, and shelter those who are overshadowed by fear.

In brief, let each one of you be as a lamp shining forth with the light of the virtues of the world of humanity. Be trustworthy, sincere, affectionate and replete with chastity. Be illumined, be spiritual, be divine, be glorious, be quickened of God, be a Bahá'í.

Beloved friends: We greet you and all the pure-hearted people of Iran at the start of the new year, and offer prayers in the Holy Shrines that struggles and conflicts may cease, the light of peace and reconciliation shine forth, and the tabernacle of unity be pitched in the midmost heart of the world.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]