

**Extract from a letter dated 24 November 2020 written on behalf of the
Universal House of Justice to an individual believer**

The Universal House of Justice has received your email letter of 12 July 2020, in which you raise several questions with respect to your role, as an individual, in contributing to the betterment of society in view of the present state of the world.... We have been instructed to share the following with you....

You express concern that societal forces appear to be driving people apart and ask how you may accurately read your immediate reality, so that you can not only identify these negative influences but also apply the teachings of the Faith to advance the process of integration. This is not an easy task; yet, it is what the House of Justice has been encouraging the believers to do through a process of learning characterized by action, reflection, consultation, and study. This study involves constant reference to the Bahá'í writings and the guidance of the House of Justice as well as the reading of literature and other materials available in the wider community and weighing the insights gleaned from them in the light of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.

The House of Justice has in recent years attempted to bring to the attention of those who long to eradicate the blight of present-day social ills the potentialities for transformation inherent in the systematic implementation of the instruments and methods of the current series of Plans. The friends are called to three simultaneous, overlapping, and coherent areas of action: community-building efforts in clusters; projects and activities for social action; and involvement in the discourses of society, whether in neighborhoods or in personal or professional associations. As the House of Justice highlighted in its Ridván 2015 message to the Bahá'ís of the world, "ultimately, it is systematic, determined, and selfless action undertaken within the wide embrace of the Plan's framework that is the most constructive response of every concerned believer to the multiplying ills of a disordered society." In such a context, the friends can gradually address the problems that face them and their surrounding communities.

Bahá'ís recognize that they must strive to remain conscious of the effects of the prevailing destructive forces in their society, lest, to one degree or another, they unwittingly become influenced by them. However, they must also be careful not to be swept up in a spiral of fear and darkness engendered by these forces but, rather, devote their energies to building up a new world. As they do so in the context of the Plan's framework, they will no doubt develop the capacity to protect themselves against these same forces. In this light, you are encouraged to identify other like-minded individuals, both from within the Bahá'í community as well as from the wider society, with whom you can collaborate in learning how to address pressing social issues at the grassroots through any of the three areas of action referred to above—for instance, participation in the discourses of society. Of course, in doing so, it is important to steer away from becoming entangled in the political dimensions of any particular issue and instead strive to uplift people's vision by calling attention to the root causes of the challenges at hand and the principles of the Faith that address them. To the extent that your efforts in this regard are pursued in a learning mode, you will, over time, be able to refine your approach and become more effective in your endeavors.

May the following words written on behalf of the beloved Guardian be a source of guidance and inspiration to you:

... It is becoming evident that the world is not yet through with its labour, the New Age not yet fully born, real Peace not yet right around the corner. We must have no illusions about how much depends on us and our success or failure. All humanity is disturbed and suffering and confused; we cannot expect to not be disturbed and not to suffer—but we don't have to be confused. On the contrary, confidence and assurance, hope and optimism are our prerogative. The successful carrying out of our various Plans is the greatest sign we can give of our faith and inner assurance, and the best way we can help our fellow-men out of their confusion and difficulties.

(From a letter dated 9 April 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi
to a National Spiritual Assembly)