



Equity

A prayer to begin with

I beseech Thee, O my God, by all the transcendent glory of Thy Name, to clothe Thy loved ones in the robe of justice and to illumine their beings with the light of trustworthiness. Thou art the One that hath power to do as He pleaseth and Who holdeth within His grasp the reins of all things, visible and invisible.

—*Bahá'u'lláh*

Definition of Equity

- Justice according to natural law or right, specifically: freedom from bias or favoritism
- Something that is equitable (dealing fairly and equally with all concerned)
- Synonyms: justice, fair-mindedness, objectivity, impartiality

At the individual level, justice is that faculty of the human soul that enables each person to distinguish truth from falsehood. In the sight of God, Bahá'u'lláh avers, justice is “the best beloved of all things” since it permits each individual to see with his own eyes rather than the eyes of others, to know through his own knowledge rather than the knowledge of his neighbor or his group. It calls for fair-mindedness in one’s judgments, for equity in one’s treatment of others, and is thus a constant if demanding companion in the daily occasions of life.

—*Bahá'í International Community*

The second attribute of perfection is justice and impartiality. This means to have no regard for one's own personal benefits and selfish advantages...

It means to consider the welfare of the community as one's own. It means, in brief, to regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest.

—*Abdu'l-Bahá*

Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no
commandment greater than these.

—*The Bible*

We hope that thou wilt cause the light of justice to shine more brightly. By the righteousness of God! Justice is a powerful force. It is, above all else, the conqueror of the citadels of the hearts and souls of men, and the revealer of the secrets of the world of being, and the standard-bearer of love and bounty.

Verily, justice is a lamp that guideth man aright amidst the darkness of the world and shieldeth him from every danger. It is indeed a shining lamp.

—*Bahá'u'lláh*

O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just; that is next to piety; and fear God. For God is well acquainted with all that ye do.

—*Quran*

The welfare of any segment of humanity is inextricably bound up with the welfare of the whole. Humanity's collective life suffers when any one group thinks of its own well-being in isolation from that of its neighbours or pursues economic gain without regard for how the natural environment, which provides sustenance for all, is affected. A stubborn obstruction, then, stands in the way of meaningful social progress: time and again, avarice and self-interest prevail at the expense of the common good.

—*Universal House of Justice*

Take from this world only to the measure of your needs,
and forgo that which exceedeth them. Observe equity in
all your judgements, and transgress not the bounds of
justice, nor be of them that stray from its path.

—*Bahá'u'lláh*

No one is free from the exacting demands of justice; all will be called upon to continuously re-examine their own attitudes, values, and relationships with others.

—*Bahá'í International Community*

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.

—*Bahá'u'lláh*

Questions for Discussion

- Why are justice and equity given such high importance in the sacred teachings of religion? What does this tell us about its impact on human collective life and many of the challenges we are facing now as global community?
- “...Justice is a lamp that guideth man aright...and shieldeth him from every danger.” How does justice *protect* us? How does this idea illustrate that justice and equity for all is a benefit for all, as opposed to contemporary thought which often suggests that giving justice to a segment of society that has been disadvantaged, will mean that those who currently hold power will somehow loose out?
- Why is it stated that justice “above all else” is the conqueror of the hearts and souls of people?
- How does continuously re-examining our attitudes, values, and relationships with others relate to justice and the idea that being fair-minded in our judgments and equitable in our treatment of others “is a constant, if demanding companion in the daily occasions of life.”