



Bahá'í Views on Wealth & Prosperity

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Part I – Bahá'í Views

One of the principles of Bahá'í Faith is “*A spiritual solution to the economic problem*”. Furthermore “*Elimination of extreme wealth and poverty*” has been prescribed as part of this solution. At a first glance, one might think wealth is forbidden in the faith however many scriptures put emphasis on the importance, station, purpose and destiny of wealth.

Importance of Wealth

Bahá'u'lláh describes the importance and need of material wealth for every individual:

“...man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty. Having attained the stage of fulfilment and reached his maturity, man standeth in need of wealth, and such wealth as he acquireth through crafts or professions is commendable and praiseworthy in the estimation of men of wisdom, and especially in the eyes of servants who dedicate themselves to the education of the world and to the edification of its peoples.”

(Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Page: 35)

Station of Wealth

Abdu'l-Bahá clearly states the station and purpose of wealth:

*“**Wealth is praiseworthy in the highest degree**, if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for **philanthropic purposes**.”*

(Abdu'l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 24)

Our Blessings and Responsibilities

Shoghi Effendi has blessed the material well being of American friends:

“My fervent prayer at the three Holy Shrines is that the bountiful Lord may bless His American friends who constitute the vanguard of His host in the Western world, and prosper them in their material affairs and pursuits, that the Cause which stands today in sore need of material help and assistance may advance, rapidly and unhindered, towards the fulfillment of its destiny.”

(Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 53)

“An outpouring of treasure, no less copious than the blood shed so lavishly in the Apostolic Age of the Faith by those who in the heart of the Asiatic continent proclaimed its birth to the world, can befit their spiritual descendants, who, in the present Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation, have championed the Cause, and assumed so preponderating a share in the erection of its Administrative Order, and are now engaged in the final stage of the building of the House that incarnates the soul of that Faith in the American continent”

(Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith, p. 68)



Furthermore we have a responsibility as a nation to raise the standards of humanity:

“... O God! Let this American democracy become glorious in spiritual degrees even as it has aspired to material degrees, and render this just government victorious. Confirm this revered nation to upraise the standard of the oneness of humanity, to promulgate the Most Great Peace, to become thereby most glorious and praiseworthy among all the nations of the world.”

(Compilations, Baha'i Prayers, p. 24)

Purpose of Wealth

Abdu'l-Bahá defines philanthropic purposes in detail:

“Above all, if a judicious and resourceful individual should initiate measures which would universally enrich the masses of the people, there could be no undertaking greater than this, and it would rank in the sight of God as the supreme achievement, for such a benefactor would supply the needs and insure the comfort and well-being of a great multitude. Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy. If, however, a few have inordinate riches while the rest are impoverished, and no fruit or benefit accrues from that wealth, then it is only a liability to its possessor. If, on the other hand, it is expended for the promotion of knowledge, the founding of elementary and other schools, the encouragement of art and industry, the training of orphans and the poor -- in brief, if it is dedicated to the welfare of society -- its possessor will stand out before God and man as the most excellent of all who live on earth and will be accounted as one of the people of paradise.”

(Abdu'l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 24)

In summary, it is evident that wealth has a high station within the Bahá'í writings. A clear goal, purpose and blessings have been provided in regards to wealth. However, how does one acquire the wealth needed to carry out what Abdu'l-Bahá has prescribed? How can anyone become a *judicious and resourceful individual* while most people are struggling to support their material means?

Part II – Financial Literacy

Current Global Financial Status

We live in an era where economy has become a world affair. Most financial structures have evolved to complex and sophisticated systems. This complexity is evident in all levels of personal, family, small business and large corporations' finances. One would think that such an important part of the global society would receive significant attention. However it is apparent that existing educational systems at various levels (schools, colleges, universities and families) are lacking the necessary curriculum and instructions to train children, youth, college students, adults, couples and families. This is one the primary reasons for the current generation to drown itself deeper and deeper into financial troubles.

Root Cause

Although monetary hardships such as lack of income – in particular – are believed to be the root cause of these troubles, most financial challenges can be traced back to Abdu'l-Bahá's quote:



“Economy is the foundation of human prosperity. The spendthrift is always in trouble. Prodigality on the part of any person is an unpardonable sin. We must never live on others like a parasitic plant. Every person must have a profession, whether it be literary or manual, and must live a clean, manly, honest life, an example of purity to be imitated by others. It is more kingly to be satisfied with a crust of stale bread than to enjoy a sumptuous dinner of many courses, the money for which comes out of the pockets of others. The mind of a contented person is always peaceful and his heart at rest. He is like a monarch ruling over the whole world. How happily such a man helps himself to his frugal meals! How joyfully he takes his walks, how peacefully he sleeps!” (Compilations, Baha'i Scriptures, p. 452)

Prodigal: [adjective] wastefully or recklessly extravagant: prodigal expenditure. Spendthrift: [adjective] wastefully extravagant.

Solution

The remedy to financial illnesses and addictions can be found in Baha'u'llah's quotes:

O SON OF BEING!

“Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee. Get thou from it thy radiance and seek none other than Me. For I have created thee rich and have bountifully shed My favor upon thee”

(The Arabic Hidden Words)

“The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.”

(Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 259)

In the long obligatory prayer, we are reminded on daily basis of these gems:

“Thou seest, O my God, how my tears prevent me from remembering Thee and from extolling Thy virtues, ...!”

- Purpose - Thankfulness - Creativity
- Patience - Generosity - Detachment
- Responsibility - Truthfulness - Courage
- Moderation - Love - Determination

Furthermore Abdu'l-Bahá describes two of these gems as the most important:

“Truthfulness is the foundation of all the virtues of the world of humanity. Without truthfulness, progress and success in all of the worlds of God are impossible for a soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also become realized.”

(Baha'i World Faith - Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 383)

“If man be imbued with all good qualities but be selfish, all the other virtues will fade or pass away and eventually he will grow worse.”

(Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá v1, p. 136)

Spiritual Muscles

You can think of these virtues as muscles of your mind. Your body has about 640 muscles and your mind can possess up to 1000 virtues. Even though you cannot see your muscles you know that they are there. Your



muscles help you do various tasks such as walking, talking, breathing, and so much more. As you train your muscles, they become stronger, and the combination of your muscles helps you become a more powerful person who can do great things.

On the other hand if you do not exercise, your muscles become weak and turn into fat, which will make it difficult for you to move. You can discover and develop your virtues through prayers and actions;

"...make of my prayer a fire that will burn away the veils which have shut me out from Thy beauty ..."
(Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah, p. 317)

"Say, O brethren! Let deeds, not words, be your adorning." (Baha'u'llah, The Persian Hidden Words)

"Let your actions cry aloud to the world that you are indeed Bahá'ís, for it is actions that speak to the world and are the cause of the progress of humanity." (Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 80)

Discovering and developing key virtues such as purposefulness, patience, responsibility, moderation, thankfulness, selflessness, generosity, love and truthfulness, along with learning specifics of how local economy elements operate individually and as a whole is vital to anyone's growth.

As discussed earlier, achieving Abdu'l-Bahá's teachings to use wealth for philanthropic purposes, requires attainment of various types of wealth (knowledge, time, expertise, life and material means). Such an endeavor can only be accomplished by defining an effective plan, purpose and becoming comfortable and detached from the wealth.

It is very easy to become a slave to support outrageous temptations and desires. It is also quite possible to marry your occupation and leave no time to fulfill your destiny. Career Evolution, a process where each profession becomes a stepping stone for the next level, can provide some guidelines. From college education we move to employment to attain the necessary experiences for the next steps. Self employment, entrepreneurial and investing can be the next logical milestones with the ultimate goal of philanthropy which can lead to God's presence. Abdu'l-Bahá describes the role of charity & philanthropy:

"The progress of man's spirit in the divine world, after the severance of its connection with the body of dust, is through the bounty and grace of the Lord alone, or through the intercession and the sincere prayers of other human souls, or through the charities and important good works which are performed in its name."
(Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 240)

Per Abdu'l-Bahá's teachings, final destiny of wealth is for the welfare of others. To achieve this point we must first become aware and thankful of countless blessings in our surroundings. Furthermore, sharing what is often taken for granted becomes the secret of right living as Baha'u'llah describes:

"We must be like the fountain or spring that is continually emptying itself of all that it has and is continually being refilled from an invisible source. To be continually giving out for the good of our fellows undeterred by fear of poverty and reliant on the unfailing bounty of the Source of all wealth and all good -- this is the secret of right living."

In conclusion, humans are blessed in many ways to attain and use wealth for specific reasons.

Bahá'í Faith has brought us all the necessary tools to be Wealthy, Prosperous and Philanthropic.