

Outline of the Ridván 2000 message of the Universal House of Justice

1. *How marvellous a difference* four years have made.
2. The culture of the Bahá'í community experienced a **change**.
 - *A learning mode* from which purposeful action was pursued.
 - Training institutes
3. **Training institutes**
 - Local *study circles*
 - a) 106 study circles in Mongolia: increase of new believers.
 - The size of the community is increasing through *transformation*.
 - This transformation is caused by:
 - a) Drawing on the power of *prayer*.
 - b) Meditating on the *sacred Word*.
 - c) Participation in *devotional gatherings*.
 - The increase of new believers is now geographically *widespread*.
4. The role of the **Counsellors** and the International Teaching Centre.
5. **Systematic and strategic planning** helps the processes of growth and development.
6. *At all levels*, elements of the Bahá'í administration became involved in the planning process.
 - **Institutional capacity** to cope with entry by troops were created:
 1. Establishment of *training institutes*.
 2. Establishment of *Regional Bahá'í Councils*.
7. **Bahá'í World Centre:**
 - Construction of the *Terraces* and the buildings on the *Arc* will be completed by 31 December 2000.
 - The *new pilgrim house in Haifa* is ready for use (21 April 2000).
 - Architectural plans for a *new pilgrim house in Bahjí* were approved.
 - *A new volume of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings* is being published.

8. *Pioneers*

- 3,000 *believers* settled as long- and short-term international pioneers.
- Many countries usually on the receiving end had themselves dispatched pioneers abroad (maturation of national communities).
- *Canada and the United States* sent many pioneers and travelling teachers, including many *youth*.
- Many believers of *African descent* in the United States went to Africa for travel teaching.

9. *Proclamation*

- *House of Worship in India*: five million visitors last year.
- *Media campaign* in the United States: 60,000 inquirers responded.
- Unsolicited, sympathetic articles in the *print media*.
- Regular *Bahá'í programmes* in radio and television (Congo, Liberia).
- *International media* used the Shrine of the Báb and the terraces for worldwide millennium programmes.

10. *The use of arts*

- Numerous *drama and dance workshops* in many parts of the world.
- Where *folk art* was used, particularly in Africa, the teaching work was greatly enhanced.
 - a) Light of Unity Projects in *Ghana and Liberia*.
 - b) Communal Harmony Group in *India*.

11. *Translation and publication of Bahá'í literature*

- Especially in Africa and Asia.
- The *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* appeared in a complete Arabic edition and in other languages.

12. *Spiritual Assemblies*

- Since 1997 *Local Spiritual Assemblies* can only be formed on the first day of Ridván.
- Eight new *National Spiritual Assemblies* were formed, bringing the total to 181.

13. *Bahá'í scholarly activity*

- Impressive enrichment of *Bahá'í literature*.
- Production of a body of *dissertations* examining various contemporary problems in the light of Bahá'í principles.
- *Five new affiliates* of the network of Associations of Bahá'í Studies.
- *Papua New Guinea's* first Bahá'í studies conference.
- The Japanese Association's ground-breaking focus on the spiritual origins of traditional Japanese scholarship.

14. ***Social and economic development***

- An *increase* from 1,350 to 1,800 activities.
- *13 regional seminars* in which 700 representatives from 60 countries participated.
- *Pilot projects* for youth empowerment and literacy, community health worker training, the advancement of women, and moral education.
 - a) Guyana: 1,500 *literacy* facilitators.
 - b) Malaysia: eight modules for the *advancement of women*, which became the basis for training sessions held in Africa, Asia and Latin America.
- Panama: a plan to integrate *Bahá'í radio stations* with the work of training institutes.
- 12 institutes are experimenting in areas including *literacy, community health worker training, and vocational training*.
- Cameroon: *combating river blindness* in collaboration with the WHO. More than 30,000 individuals were treated.
- Ethiopia: 8,000 students in the *private university* 'Unity College.'
- Switzerland: Landegg Academy helps to *remedy the social consequences of conflict in the Balkans*.
- Bolivia: Núr University, in collaboration with Ecuador, offered training to more than 1,000 school teachers in its moral leadership programme.

15. ***External affairs***

- A dynamic relationship with the United Nations, governments, NGO's and the media.
- Two key objectives:

- a) To influence the processes towards *world peace*.
 - b) *To defend the Faith*.
- Iran
 - a) A new measure of respect and support.
 - b) As a consequence of the interventions of world leaders and the United Nations, executions virtually stopped, and the number of prisoners was drastically reduced.
16. The self-sacrificing spirit, the fortitude, and the indomitable faith of ***the Bahá'ís of Iran***.
- The blindness of the persecutors.
17. ***External affairs strategy***:
- *Human rights*
 - a) 99 National Spiritual Assemblies have the capacity for diplomatic work.
 - *The status of women*
 - a) 52 national offices for the advancement of women.
 - b) Contributions of numerous Bahá'í women and men to conferences and workshops.
 - c) Bahá'í representatives selected to crucial positions on key committees.
 - *Global prosperity*
 - *Moral development*
18. ***Disseminating information about the Bahá'í Faith***.
- *'The Bahá'í World'* Web site: 25,000 visits a month.
 - Statement *'Who is Writing the Future?'*
 - The Persian-language *radio programme 'Payam-e-Doost'* on the Internet.
 - *A highly original television programme*, applying moral principles to day-to-day problems (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, and Macedonia).
19. ***The Bahá'í International Community*** as an NGO has won trust as a unifying agent in major discussions shaping the future of humankind.
- A leading role in the organization of the *Millennium Forum* (May 2000), which will produce views and recommendations for the *Millennium Summit* (September 2000).

20. *The interfaith dialogue*

- *Cape Town*: The Parliament of the World's Religions
 - a) 6,000 attendees
 - b) A strong Bahá'í delegation
- *Jordan*: A conference on conflict and religion in the Middle East.

The annual meeting of the World Conference on Religion and Peace.
Bahá'ís were invited participants.
- *Vatican City* and *New Delhi*: Bahá'í representatives attended events sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church.
 - a) *New Delhi*: In the presence of Pope John Paul II, Counsellor Zena Sorabjee was one of the representatives of religions addressing the gathering.
- *United Kingdom*: Bahá'í representatives attended an interfaith celebration of the new millennium in the Royal Gallery of Westminster Palace. Reference was made to the gathering of the 'nine major religions of the United Kingdom.'
- *Germany*: For the first time Bahá'ís were included in an interfaith dialogue, as the result of the publishing of a 600-page book, refuting a book written by a Covenant-breaker in 1981.
- *United Kingdom*: Representatives of the World Bank and of nine major religions held a meeting to work together more effectively to overcome world poverty.
- *Conclusion*: This is a new phenomenon, and shows the religious communities are striving to achieve the spirit of friendliness and fellowship that Bahá'u'lláh urges His followers to show.

21. *The twin processes of integration and of disintegration.*

- At times direct involvement of the Faith.
- Disintegration:
 - a) *Wars* in some 40 places.
 - b) *Total breakdown of civil order* paralyzed a number of countries.

- c) *Terrorism* as a political weapon became epidemic.
- d) A surge of *international criminal networks* raised alarm.
- Integration:
 - a) Attempts at implementing the methods of *collective security*.
 - b) A call for an *international criminal court* to be established.
 - c) World leaders are scheduled to meet in a *Millennium Summit*.
 - d) New methods of *communications*.
 - e) The economic disintegration in Asia prompted efforts to find ways of bringing a sense of *equity to international trade and finance*.

22. *We come thus to a bridge between times.*

- The wrapping up of the twentieth century.
- A new stage in the unfolding of the Formative Age.
- World-shaping trends have synchronized:
 - a) The construction projects on *Mount Carmel*.
 - b) World leaders took bold steps towards *a global political peace*.
 - c) Local and national *Bahá'í institutions* moved to new levels in their *evolution*.
- The Administrative System stands, at the end of the century, before the gaze of the world in the wholeness of its essential form.
- The *capacities* developed must now be *applied*.

23. *Twelve Month Plan*

- Institutes must *activate* their programs.
- *New institutes* must be formed where needed.
- *Systematize the teaching work* undertaken through individual initiative and institutional sponsorship.
 - a) Establishment of '*Area Growth Programmes*.'
- Ridván 2001: Five Year Plan.

24. *Children*

- Our children need to be *nurtured spiritually* and to be *integrated* into the life of the Cause.

- They *should not be left to drift* in a world so laden with moral dangers.
 - a) Millions are *dislocated socially and alienated* by parents and other adults.
 - i. This is caused by *selfishness, materialism and godlessness*.
 - ii. It is a sure mark of *society in decline*, and cuts through all races, classes, nations and economic conditions.
 - b) In so many parts of the world children are employed soldiers, exploited as labourers, sold into virtual slavery, forced into prostitution, made the objects of pornography, abandoned by parents centred on their own desires, etc.
 - i. Many such horrors are inflicted *by the parents themselves* upon their own children.
 - ii. The *spiritual and psychological damage* defies estimation.
 - iii. *Our worldwide community cannot escape* the consequences of these conditions.

25. ***Spiritual education of children and junior youth***

- Institutes must *train teachers* of children's classes.
- The community as a whole, must show *a proper attitude* towards children and take a general interest in their welfare. Such an attitude should be far removed from that of a rapidly declining order.

26. ***Children are the most precious treasure a community can possess.***

- *Love demands discipline*, the courage to accustom children to *hardship*, not to indulge their whims or leave them entirely to their own devices.
- An *atmosphere* needs to be maintained in which children feel that they belong to the community and share in its purpose.
- They must lovingly but insistently be guided *to live up to Bahá'í standards, to study and teach* the Cause in ways that are suited to their circumstances.

27. ***Junior youth (age 12-15)***

- A special group with *special needs*.
- *Creative attention* must be devoted to...engage their interests, mold their capacities, and involve them in social interaction with older youth.
- The employment of *arts* can be of great value.

28. *Parents*

- They bear the *primary responsibility* for the upbringing of their children.
- *Constant attention* to the spiritual education of their children.
- Wrong ways of thinking:
 - i. It is the exclusive responsibility of the *community*.
 - ii. In order to preserve the *independence* of children to investigate truth, the Faith should not be taught to them.
 - iii. Some parents feel *inadequate* to take on such a task.
- Independent of the level of their education...they should *not ever underestimate their capacity* to mold their children's moral character.
- They exercise indispensable *influence* through the home environment they consciously create by:
 - i. Their *love of God*.
 - ii. Their striving to *adhere to His laws*.
 - iii. Their *spirit of service* to His Cause.
 - iv. Their *lack of fanaticism*.
 - v. Their *freedom* from the corrosive effects of *backbiting*.
- Every parent has the responsibility to conduct herself or himself in such a way as to elicit the spontaneous *obedience to parents* to which the Teachings attach so high a value.
- Support Bahá'í *children's classes*.
- Children live in a world that informs them of *harsh realities*. Many of them are thereby forced to *mature prematurely*, and among these are those who look for *standards and discipline* by which to guide their lives.

29. *Occupation of the permanent seat of the International Teaching Centre.*

- In *January 2001* the Continental Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members from throughout the world will gather in the Holy Land to celebrate this occasion.
- This will turn out to be one of the *historic happenings* of the Formative Age, and will produce undoubted benefits for the Bahá'í community.
- Gratitude to the very dear Hands of the Cause of God 'Alí-Akbar Furútan and 'Alí Muhammad Varqá.

30. *This Twelve Month Plan*

- We cross a bridge to which we shall never return.
- Dedicated to *Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánum*.
 - a) She taught the Faith in 185 countries.
 - b) Her example illumines thousands upon thousands throughout the planet.