

**Potentialities and their Manifestation: A Selection of Passages
from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb
and from the Writings and Talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá**

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Note to the reader: There are many more passages from the Bahá'í writings on potentialities and latent capacities than those selected for this compilation. In order to not repeat too often the same idea, only a selection of the passages has been chosen by this compiler.

The Potentialities of the Might of God

Take heed that ye do not vacillate in your determination to embrace the truth of this Cause — a Cause through which the potentialities of the might of God have been revealed, and His sovereignty established.¹ —Bahá'u'lláh

The Potentialities of the Word of God

It hath been decreed by Us that the Word of God and all the potentialities thereof shall be manifested unto men in strict conformity with such conditions as have been foreordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. We have, moreover, ordained that its veil of concealment be none other except its own Self. Such indeed is Our Power to achieve Our Purpose. Should the Word be allowed to release suddenly all the energies latent within it, no man could sustain the weight of so mighty a Revelation. Nay, all that is in heaven and on earth would flee in consternation before it.² —Bahá'u'lláh

No sooner had mankind attained the stage of maturity, than the Word revealed to men's eyes the latent energies with which it had been endowed — energies which manifested themselves in the plenitude of their glory when the Ancient Beauty appeared, in the year sixty, in the person of 'Alí-Muḥammad, the Báb.³

--Bahá'u'lláh

The Potentialities of All Created Things and their Manifestation

Whensoever I raise mine eyes to the heavens and witness their loftiness, I recognize naught therein but the wondrous heights of Thy supreme power and sovereign authority. And whensoever I turn my gaze towards Thine earth and observe the potentialities wherewith it hath been endowed, I perceive naught but the peerless signs of Thine immutable nature and abiding constancy.⁴

—Bahá'u'lláh

In this day, the fertilizing winds of the grace of God have passed over all things. Every creature hath been endowed with all the potentialities it can carry. . . . Every tree hath been endowed with the choicest fruits, every ocean enriched with the most luminous gems.⁵ —Bahá'u'lláh

Consider, moreover, how the fruit, ere it is formed, lieth potentially within the tree. Were the tree to be cut into pieces, no sign nor any part of the fruit, however small, could be detected. When it appeareth, however, it manifesteth itself, as thou hast observed, in its wondrous beauty and glorious perfection. Certain fruits, indeed, attain their fullest development only after being severed from the tree.⁶ –Bahá'u'lláh

Praise be to Thee, O my God, for having adorned the preamble of the book of eternity with this most luminous Day, a Day whereon Thou didst shed the splendour of Thy most excellent names and most exalted attributes upon all created things. This, verily, is a Day whereon Thou hast ordained that each of Thy names be endowed with the potentialities of all Thy names. Blessed, then, be they that have turned towards Thee, attained Thy presence, and hearkened unto Thy call.⁷ – Bahá'u'lláh

Every created thing will be enabled (so great is this reflecting power) to reveal the potentialities of its preordained station, will recognize its capacity and limitations, and will testify to the truth that “He, verily, is God; there is none other God besides Him.”...⁸ --Bahá'u'lláh

No created thing shall ever attain its paradise unless it appeareth in its highest prescribed degree of perfection. For instance, this crystal representeth the paradise of the stone whereof its substance is composed. Likewise there are various stages in the paradise for the crystal itself.... So long as it was stone it was worthless, but if it attaineth the excellence of ruby — a potentiality which is latent in it — how much a carat will it be worth? Consider likewise every created thing.⁹ –The Báb

[W]hoever possesseth power over anything must elevate it to its uttermost perfection that it not be deprived of its own paradise. For example, the paradise of a sheet of paper on which a few excellent lines are inscribed is that it be refined with patterns of gold illumination, adornment, and excellence that are customary for the most exalted parchment scrolls. Then the possessor of that paper hath elevated it to its utmost degree of glory. Should he know of a higher degree of refinement and fail to manifest it upon that paper, he would deprive it of its paradise, and he would be held accountable, for why hast thou, despite the possession of the means, withheld the effusion of grace and favour?¹⁰

–The Báb

For, in this religion no other command is as rigorously enjoined as the duty of refinement, and it is forbidden that one bring any object into being in a state of imperfection when one hath the power to manifest it in full perfection.

For example, should one build an edifice and fail to elevate it to the utmost state of perfection possible for it, there would be no moment in the life of that edifice when angels would not beseech God to torment him; nay, rather, all the atoms of that edifice would do the same. For each thing, within its own station, yearneth to attain unto the utmost height of excellence in its own level. Thus, should a man who is capable not realize and respond to the yearning of his capability, he will be held accountable therefor....¹¹ –The Báb

. . . the terrestrial globe was created, from the beginning, with all its elements, substances, minerals, parts, and components, but these appeared only gradually:

first the minerals, then the plants, then the animals, and finally man. But from the beginning, these kinds and species were latent in the earthly realm and appeared gradually thereafter. For the supreme law of God and the universal natural order encompasses all things and subjects them to its rule. When you consider this universal order, you see that not a single thing reaches the limit of perfection immediately upon coming into existence, but grows and develops gradually until it reaches that stage.¹² --'Abdu'l-Bahá

. . . electricity was once a hidden, or latent, natural force. It would have remained hidden if the human intellect had not discovered it.¹³ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

He [Man] discovers latent realities within the bosom of the earth, uncovers treasures, penetrates secrets and mysteries of the phenomenal world and brings to light that which according to nature's jealous laws should remain hidden, unknown and unfathomable. Through an ideal inner power man brings these realities forth from the invisible plane to the visible.¹⁴ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

In brief, all the present arts and sciences, inventions and discoveries man has brought forth were once mysteries which nature had decreed should remain hidden and latent, but man has taken them out of the plane of the invisible and brought them into the plane of the visible.¹⁵ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

Love revealeth with unfailing and limitless power the mysteries latent in the universe.¹⁶ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

The Potentialities of Human Beings (individually and collectively) and their Manifestation

The Prophets and Chosen Ones have all been commissioned by the One True God, magnified be His glory, to nurture the trees of human existence with the living waters of uprightness and understanding, that there may appear from them that which God hath deposited within their inmost selves.¹⁷ --Bahá'u'lláh

Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded. 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.¹⁸ --Bahá'u'lláh

The Purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves.¹⁹ --Bahá'u'lláh

Since the Ancient Beauty has flung open the doors of joy and glad-tidings before the faces of the people of the world, He has delivered this mighty utterance:

"I have come to this world to mine gems. If the tiniest gem be latent within a stone, and if that stone be hidden beneath the seven seas, I shall not cease My work until I

have extracted the gem from that stone. He saith, exalted be He: 'God, exalted be His glory, hath sent a Trusted One in every age to bring forth Mystic Gems from the mine of man.'²⁰ –Bahá'u'lláh (provisional translation)

God grant that all men may turn unto the treasures latent within their own beings.²¹ -Bahá'u'lláh

Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it a recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favor, so enduring a bounty.

These energies with which the Daystar of Divine bounty and Source of heavenly guidance hath endowed the reality of man lie, however, latent within him, even as the flame is hidden within the candle and the rays of light are potentially present in the lamp.²² –Bahá'u'lláh

For in him are potentially revealed all the attributes and names of God to a degree that no other created being hath excelled or surpassed.²³ --Bahá'u'lláh

We have created all that are in heaven and on earth in the nature made by God. Whosoever turneth unto this blessed Countenance shall manifest the potentialities of that inborn nature, and whosoever remaineth veiled therefrom shall be deprived of this invisible and all-encompassing grace.²⁴ –Bahá'u'lláh

Through the Teachings of this Day Star of Truth every man will advance and develop until he attaineth the station at which he can manifest all the potential forces with which his inmost true self hath been endowed.²⁵ –Bahá'u'lláh

The potentialities inherent in the station of man, the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality, must all be manifested in this promised Day of God.²⁶ --Bahá'u'lláh

Unto each one hath been prescribed a preordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition.²⁷ –Bahá'u'lláh

Know that the soul which is common to all men cometh forth following the commingling of things and after their maturation, as thou dost observe in the germ: once it hath developed to its predestined stage, God manifesteth the soul that was latent within it.²⁸ --Bahá'u'lláh

Lofty is the station of man! Not long ago this exalted Word streamed forth from the treasury of Our Pen of Glory: Great and blessed is this Day — the Day in which all that lay latent in man hath been and will be made manifest.²⁹

–Bahá'u'lláh

They (the Manifestations of God) are commissioned to use the inspiration of Their words, the effusions of Their infallible grace and the sanctifying breeze of Their Revelation for the cleansing of every longing heart and receptive spirit from the dross

and dust of earthly cares and limitations. Then, and only then, will the Trust of God, latent in the reality of man, emerge, as resplendent as the rising Orb of Divine Revelation, from behind the veil of concealment, and implant the ensign of its revealed glory upon the summits of men's hearts.³⁰

--Bahá'u'lláh

. . . the merciful God, our Creator, has deposited within human realities certain latent and potential virtues. Through education and culture these virtues deposited by the loving God will become apparent in the human reality, even as the unfoldment of the tree from within the germinating seed.³¹ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

He [Man] has consciousness, volition, memory, intelligent power, divine attributes and virtues of which nature is completely deprived, bereft and minus; therefore man is higher and nobler by reason of the ideal and heavenly force latent and manifest in him.³² --'Abdu'l-Bahá

Hoping that his [the Shah of Iran] reign will rival the glorious past, he has sought to establish equity and righteousness and to foster education and the processes of civilization throughout this noble land, and to translate from potentiality into actuality whatever will insure its progress.³³ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

Or if by using one's perceptive faculties, one can draw analogies from present circumstances and the conclusions arrived at by collective experience, and can envisage as coming realities situations now only potential, would it be unreasonable to take such present measures as would guarantee our future security?³⁴ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

All created beings embody the potentiality of material perfection, but the power of intellectual investigation and scientific acquisition is a higher virtue specialized to man alone. Other beings and organisms are deprived of this potentiality and attainment. God has created or deposited this love of reality in man.³⁵ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

Every child is potentially the light of the world — and at the same time its darkness; wherefore must the question of education be accounted as of primary importance. From his infancy, the child must be nursed at the breast of God's love, and nurtured in the embrace of His knowledge, that he may radiate light, grow in spirituality, be filled with wisdom and learning, and take on the characteristics of the angelic host.³⁶ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

Man is in the ultimate degree of materiality and the beginning of spirituality; that is, he is at the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection. He is at the furthest degree of darkness and the beginning of the light. That is why the station of man is said to be the end of night and the beginning of day, meaning that he encompasses all the degrees of imperfection and that he potentially possesses all the degrees of perfection. He has both an animal side and an angelic side, and the role of the educator is to so train human souls that the angelic side may overcome the animal. Thus, should the divine powers, which are identical with perfection, overcome in man the satanic powers, which are absolute imperfection, he becomes the noblest of all creatures, but should the converse take place, he becomes the

vilest of all beings. That is why he is the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection.³⁷ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

Ye should therefore consider how the compelling power of conscience can be awakened, so that this lofty ideal [universal peace] may be translated from the realm of thought into that of reality. For it is clear and evident that the execution of this mighty endeavour is impossible through ordinary human feelings but requireth the powerful sentiments of the heart to transform its potential into reality.³⁸ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

Man is a child of God, most noble, lofty and beloved by God, his Creator. Therefore, he must ever strive that the divine bounties and virtues bestowed upon him may prevail and control him. Just now the soil of human hearts seems like black earth, but in the innermost substance of this dark soil there are thousands of fragrant flowers latent. We must endeavor to cultivate and awaken these potentialities, discover the secret treasure in this very mine and depository of God, bring forth these resplendent powers long hidden in human hearts.³⁹ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

She [Woman] must become proficient in the arts and sciences and prove by her accomplishments that her abilities and powers have merely been latent.⁴⁰
--'Abdu'l-Bahá

The latent talents with which the hearts of these children are endowed will find expression through the medium of music.⁴¹ --'Abdu'l-Bahá

O Thou kind Lord! . . . Reveal and unfold the virtues which Thou hast made latent and concealed in these human realities.⁴² --'Abdu'l-Bahá

End Notes

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- ¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Questions and Answers, no. 106 (Bahá'í World Centre: Haifa, Israel, 1992) 189.
- ² Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988) 208.
- ³ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 77.
- ⁴ Bahá'u'lláh, *Days of Remembrance: Selections from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh for Bahá'í Holy Days* (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 2017) 162.
- ⁵ Bahá'u'lláh, *Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 2002) 55.
- ⁶ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 155.
- ⁷ Bahá'u'lláh, *Days of Remembrance*, 258.
- ⁸ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 262.
- ⁹ The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 1976) 88.
- ¹⁰ The Báb, Persian Bayan 4:11, in Nader Saiedi, *Gate of the Heart: Understanding the Writings of the Báb* (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Association for Bahá'í Studies and Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008) 255.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.* 317.
- ¹² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions, 2nd Edition* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing, 2014) 77.
- ¹³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982) 351.
- ¹⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 178.
- ¹⁵ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 359.
- ¹⁶ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978) 27.
- ¹⁷ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Questions and Answers, no. 106, 139.
- ¹⁸ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988) 161–162.
- ¹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 287.
- ²⁰ Bahá'u'lláh, *Panj Kanz* (Five Treasures), Fifth Treasure.
(<http://bahaiprovisionaltablets.blogspot.com/2018/01/panj-kanz-five-treasures-oral-discourse.html>)
- ²¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, 72.
- ²² Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 65.
- ²³ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 177.
- ²⁴ Bahá'u'lláh, *Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, 60.
- ²⁵ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 68.
- ²⁶ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 340.
- ²⁷ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 149.
- ²⁸ Bahá'u'lláh, *Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, 59.
- ²⁹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, 220.
- ³⁰ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 67.
- ³¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 99.
- ³² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 178.
- ³³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing, 2007) 11.
- ³⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, 14.
- ³⁵ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), 49.
- ³⁶ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, 130-131.
- ³⁷ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions, 2nd Edition*, 234.
- ³⁸ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets to the Hague*, 9. (<https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/abdu-baha/tablets-hague-abdu-baha/tablets-hague-abdu-baha.pdf?7624fad4>)
- ³⁹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 293.
- ⁴⁰ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 283.
- ⁴¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 52.
- ⁴² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í Prayers*, (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2002) 88.