The Declaration of the Báb

Ages rolled away, until they attained their consummation in this, the Lord of days, the Day whereon the Day Star of the Bayán manifested itself above the horizon of mercy, the Day in which the Beauty of the All-Glorious shone forth in the exalted person of ‘Alí-Muḥammad, the Báb.
On the 23rd of May millions of Bahá’ís have gathered in every corner of our world to celebrate the Declaration of the Báb. Let us begin with a brief overview of how we got here.

As we celebrate the Declaration of the Báb, we are, since 2001 in the fifth epoch of the Formative Age. The Universal House of Justice, in their letter dated 16th of January 2001, wrote the following.

As the time for the Conference drew near, there were signs that the Faith had arrived at a point in its development beyond which a new horizon opens before us. Such intimations were communicated in our report last Ridvan of the change in culture of the Bahá’í community as training institutes emerged, as the construction projects on Mount Carmel approached their completion, and as the internal processes of institutional consolidation and the external processes towards world unity became more fully synchronized. They were elaborated in the message we addressed to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors a few days ago. But the extraordinary dynamics at work throughout the Conference crystallized these indications into a recognizable reality. With a spirit of exultation we are moved to announce to you: the Faith of Bahá’u’llah now enters the fifth epoch of its Formative Age.

The Bahá’í worlds is, together with thousands of others, engaged in systematically transforming the world from its grassroots by striving “to translate that which hath been written into reality and action”. We are at this stage in the unfolding of the Divine Plan because of the achievements of previous four epochs. In the previous epoch (fourth) we witnessed the maturation of the Institutions (beginning from 1986 and ended 2001 with the opening of the International Teaching Centre building). Prior to that, the third epoch “was characterized by the emergence of the Bahá’í Faith from obscurity and the initiation of social and economic development plans” (1963-1986). This was only possible as the Faith, in the second epoch of the Formative Age, was spread globally with the crowing event of the election of the Universal House of Justice concluding the epoch. However, before the Universal House of Justice could be elected, the Guardian saw it necessary to orchestrate the set up of the Administrative Order.

After the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which signalled the end of the Apostolic and Heroic Age and the start of the Formative Age, “Shoghi Effendi took up his responsibilities ad Guardian with an energy and resolve that would come to characterize his entire ministry. Uppermost on his mind seemed to be have been the establishment of the Universal House of Justice. He made this the subject of
consultations with knowledgeable and longstanding believers from both the East and the West, calling several of them to the Holy Land for this purpose. What is clear is that he soon made up his mind that the foundations of the Cause needed to be strengthened at the local and national levels as preparation for the election of the Universal House of Justice.” iii

This was only possible because of the stupendous achievements during the Ministry of ’Abdu’l-Bahá (1892 – 1921) where He cemented the foundation of the Covenant while protecting the Faith from fierce attacks and opposition.

This, in turn was only possible as Bahá’u’lláh had, with His Declaration in the Garden of Ridván just outside of Bagdad, exclaimed “This is the Day whereon naught can be seen except the splendors of the Light that shineth from the face of Thy Lord, the Gracious, the Most Bountiful. Verily, We have caused every soul to expire by virtue of Our irresistible and all-subduing sovereignty. We have, then, called into being a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men. I am, verily, the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days.” iv

“The whole earth,” writes Bahá’u’lláh, “is now in a state of pregnancy. The day is approaching when it will have yielded its noblest fruits, when from it will have sprung forth the loftiest trees, the most enchanting blossoms, the most heavenly blessings. Immeasurably exalted is the breeze that wafteth from the garment of thy Lord, the Glorified! For lo, it hath breathed its fragrance and made all things new!” v

The Declaration took place in the Ridván Garden because Bahá’u’lláh had been exiled from Tehran where He, before His banishment, was chained in the black pit of which He says:

"During the days I lay in the prison of Tehran, though the galling weight of the chains and the stench-filled air allowed Me but little sleep, still in those infrequent moments of slumber I felt as if something flowed from the crown of My head over My breast, even as a mighty torrent that precipiteth itself upon the earth from the summit of a lofty mountain. Every limb of My body would, as a result, be set afire. At such moments My tongue recited what no man could bear to hear." vi

He was imprisoned in the Black Pit due to His allegiance to the Bab, a Revelation He accepted when Mulla Husayn, as instructed by the Bab, visited Him after having met the Báb in Shiraz on the 23rd of May in 1844.

"The opening scene of the initial act of this great drama was laid in the upper chamber of the modest residence of the son of a mercer of Shiráz, in an obscure corner of that city. The time was the hour before sunset, on the 22nd day of May, 1844. The participants were the Báb, a twenty-five year old siyyid, of pure and holy lineage, and the young Mullá Ḥusayn, the first to believe in Him." vii
IN SHÍRÁZ

On that very day, a few hours before sunset, whilst walking outside the gate of the city, his eyes fell suddenly upon a Youth of radiant countenance, who wore a green turban and who, advancing towards him, greeted him with a smile of loving welcome. He embraced Mullá Husayn with tender affection as though he had been his intimate and lifelong friend. Mullá Husayn thought Him at first to be a disciple of Siyyid Kázim who, on being informed of his approach to Shíráz, had come out to welcome him.

In the words of Mulla Husayn: ‘The Youth who met me outside the gate of Shíráz overwhelmed me with expressions of affection and loving-kindness. He extended to me a warm invitation to visit His home, and there refresh myself after the fatigues of my journey. I prayed to be excused, pleading that my two companions had already arranged for my stay in that city, and were now awaiting my return. “Commit them to the care of God,” was His reply; “He will surely protect and watch over them.” Having spoken these words, He bade me follow Him. I was profoundly impressed by the gentle yet compelling manner in which that strange Youth spoke to me. As I followed Him, His gait, the charm of His voice, the dignity of His bearing, served to enhance my first impressions of this unexpected meeting.
“We soon found ourselves standing at the gate of a house of modest appearance. He knocked at the door, which was soon opened by an Ethiopian servant. “Enter therein in peace, secure,” were His words as He crossed the threshold and motioned me to follow Him. His invitation, uttered with power and majesty, penetrated my soul.”

“As I entered the house and followed my Host to His chamber, a feeling of unutterable joy invaded my being. Immediately we were seated, He ordered a ewer of water to be brought, and bade me wash away from my hands and feet the stains of travel. I pleaded permission to retire from His presence and perform my ablutions in an adjoining room. He refused to grant my request, and proceeded to pour the water over my hands. He then gave me to drink of a refreshing beverage, after which He asked for the samovaran and Himself prepared the tea which He offered me.

“That night, that memorable night, was the eve preceding the fifth day of Jamádiyu’l-Avval, in the year 1260 A.H. It was about an hour after sunset when my youthful Host began to converse with me. “Whom, after Siyyid Kázim,” He asked
me, “do you regard as his successor and your leader?” “At the hour of his death,” I replied, “our departed teacher insistently exhorted us to forsake our homes, to scatter far and wide, in quest of the promised Beloved. I have, accordingly, journeyed to Persia, have arisen to accomplish his will, and am still engaged in my quest.” “Has your teacher,” He further enquired, “given you any detailed indications as to the distinguishing features of the promised One?” “Yes,” I replied, “He is of a pure lineage, is of illustrious descent, and of the seed of Fâtimih. As to His age, He is more than twenty and less than thirty. He is endowed with innate knowledge. He is of medium height, abstains from smoking, and is free from bodily deficiency.”

He paused for a while and then with vibrant voice declared: “Behold, all these signs are manifest in Me!” He then considered each of the above-mentioned signs separately, and conclusively demonstrated that each and all were applicable to His person.

I [had] determined to regard the two following standards as those whereby I could ascertain the truth of whosoever might claim to be the promised Qá’im. The first was a treatise which I had myself composed, bearing upon the abstruse and hidden teachings propounded by Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim. Whoever seemed to me capable of unravelling the mysterious allusions made in that treatise, to him I would next submit my second request, and would ask him to reveal, without the least hesitation or reflection, a commentary on the Súrih of Joseph, in a style and language entirely different from the prevailing standards of the time.
“I was revolving these things in my mind, when my distinguished Host again remarked: “Observe attentively. Might not the Person intended by Siyyid Kázim be none other than I?” I thereupon felt impelled to present to Him a copy of the treatise which I had with me. “Will you,” I asked Him, “read this book of mine and look at its pages with indulgent eyes? I pray you to overlook my weaknesses and failings.” He graciously complied with my wish. He opened the book, glanced at certain passages, closed it, and began to address me. Within a few minutes He had, with characteristic vigour and charm, unravelled all its mysteries and resolved all its problems. Having to my entire satisfaction accomplished, within so short a time, the task I had expected Him to perform, He further expounded to me certain truths which could be found neither in the reported sayings of the imáms of the Faith nor in the writings of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim. These truths, which I had never heard before, seemed to be endowed with refreshing vividness and power.

“Had you not been My guest,” He afterwards observed, “your position would indeed have been a grievous one. The all-encompassing grace of God has saved you. It is for God to test His servants, and not for His servants to judge Him in accordance with their deficient standards. Were I to fail to resolve your perplexities, could the Reality that shines within Me be regarded as powerless, or My knowledge be accused as faulty? Nay, by the rightousness of God! it behoves, in this day, the peoples and nations of both the East and the West to hasten to this threshold, and here seek to obtain the reviving grace of the Merciful. Whoso hesitates will indeed be in grievous loss. Do not the peoples of the earth testify that the fundamental purpose of their creation is the knowledge and adoration of God? It behoves them to arise, as earnestly and spontaneously as you have arisen, and to seek with determination and constancy their promised Beloved.” He then proceeded to say: “Now is the time to reveal the commentary on the Súrih of Joseph.” He took up His pen and with incredible rapidity revealed the entire Súrih of Mulk, the first chapter of His commentary on the Súrih of Joseph. The overpowering effect of the manner in which He wrote was heightened by the gentle intonation of His voice which accompanied His writing. Not for one moment did He interrupt the flow of the verses which streamed from His pen. Not once did He pause till the Súrih of Mulk was finished. I sat enraptured by the magic of His voice and the sweeping force of His revelation.

At last I reluctantly arose from my seat and begged leave to depart. He smilingly bade me be seated, and said: “If you leave in such a state, whoever sees you will assuredly say: ‘This poor youth has lost his mind.’” At that moment the clock registered two hours and eleven minutes after sunset. That night, the eve of the fifth day of Jamádiyu’l-Avval, in the year 1260 A.H., corresponded with the eve preceding the sixty-fifth day after Naw-rúz, which was also the eve of the sixth day of Khurdád, of the year Nahang.
“This Revelation, so suddenly and impetuously thrust upon me, came as a thunderbolt which, for a time, seemed to have benumbed my faculties. I was blinded by its dazzling splendour and overwhelmed by its crushing force. Excitement, joy, awe, and wonder stirred the depths of my soul. Predominant among these emotions was a sense of gladness and strength which seemed to have transfigured me. How feeble and impotent, how dejected and timid, I had felt previously! Then I could neither write nor walk, so tremulous were my hands and feet. Now, however, the knowledge of His Revelation had galvanised my being. I felt possessed of such courage and power that were the world, all its peoples and its potentates, to rise against me, I would, alone and undaunted, withstand their onslaught. The universe seemed but a handful of dust in my grasp. I seemed to be the Voice of Gabriel personified, calling unto all mankind: “Awake, for lo! the morning Light has broken. Arise, for His Cause is made manifest. The portal of His grace is open wide; enter therein, O peoples of the world! For He who is your promised One is come!”

“In such a state I left His house and joined my brother and nephew.

**Divine Springtime**

The events of that momentous night in Shíráz were the outer expression that took place in the physical world. On the spiritual level, the Word of God was, once again after a thousand years, revealed to the World. The Power of the Word of God set in motion a regeneration of the entire world. The effect of the Declaration of a Manifestation of God is impossible for us to understand. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains it as follows.

*The appearances of the Manifestations of God are the divine springtime. When Christ appeared in this world, it was like the vernal bounty; the outpouring descended; the effulgences of the Merciful encircled all things; the human world found new life. Even the physical world partook of it. The divine perfections were upraised; souls were trained in the school of heaven so that all grades of human existence received life and light. Then by degrees these fragrances of heaven were discontinued; the season of winter came upon the world; the beauties of spring vanished; the excellences and perfections passed away; the lights and quickening were no longer evident; the phenomenal world and its materialities conquered everything; the spiritualities of life were lost; the world of existence became like unto a lifeless body; there was no trace of the spring left.*

Bahá'u'lláh revealed a Tablet called “Tablet of the Bell” (Lawh-i-Naqus) in Istanbul at the request of a believer. It was revealed on the eve of the Day of the
Declaration of the Báb and the Guardian recommended that this Tablet be recited in connection with the celebration of this Holy Day. The Tablet could be said to express what happens when a Manifestation declares His Mission. Below is a provisional translation of the Tablet of the Bell.

IN THY NAME THAT IS GOD,

Thou art verily God!

O sacred Monk, ring out the bells, for the day of God hath come, and the Beauty of the All-Glorious is established on the holy, shining throne. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O prophet of wisdom, Hud, beat thou upon thy drum, in the name of the Lord, the Precious, the Bountiful, for the Temple of Holiness is seated upon His high, unapproachable throne. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O Thou beauty of eternity, pluck with the fingers of the spirit at the strings of Thy lute that is wondrous and Holy, for the Heavenly Beauty hath come in His garment of glimmering silk. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O angel of light, sound thou thy trumpet to herald this appearance, for the letter HA hath mounted above the letter of pre-existent might. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O Nightingale of Praise, sing out upon thy boughs within this garden and land, the well-beloved Name, for the beauty of the red rose hath shone from the impenetrable veils. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O Thou Dove of Paradise, sing upon the boughs in this wondrous day, when the Lord hath cast His rays upon all creatures. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O Thou Bird of Eternity, soar into this firmament, for the bird of faithfulness hath winged his flight to the presence of the merciful Lord. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O Dwellers in Paradise, sing out and chant with melodious voices, for the melody of God is pealing from beyond the high pavilions of holiness. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!
O denizens of the Kingdom, sing in the name of the Well-beloved, for the beauty of commandment hath gleamed from behind the veils, in the shining mantle of the spirit. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O dwellers in the kingdom of names, adorn the zones of the furthermost heaven, for the Greatest Name is riding on the mighty clouds of holiness. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O people of the realm of holy attributes in the heaven of Abha, prepare to meet your God, for the breezes of sanctity have wafted from the exalted throne, and this is a manifest grace. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O thou Ridwan of the one God, rejoice within thyself, for the Ridwan of God, the Exalted, the Precious, the Wise, is made manifest. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O heaven of the grandeur, thank God within thyself, for the heaven of holiness is raised up in the realm of the sanctified heart. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O Sun of this earth, eclipse thy face, for the sun of eternity hath dawned in the luminous heaven. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O land of knowledge, swallow up thy learning, for the realm of wisdom is unfolding in the self of God, the Exalted, the Mighty, the Bountiful. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O lamp of the world, extinguish thyself, for the light of the Lord is kindled in the lamp of eternity, and hath illumined the denizens of heaven and earth. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O seas of the world, quiet your waves within you, for the crimson sea hath surged with a wondrous Cause. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O cock of everlasting life, crow out on the peaks of the realm of might, for the Herald of God hath sounded His Call from every lofty hill. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

O concourse of lovers, give out the glad tidings with all your heart, for the time of waiting is over, and the covenant hath come, and the Beloved hath shone in wondrous beauty. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!
O people of knowledge, rejoice within your souls, for the day of parting is gone by, the time of certainty hath come, and the beauty of this Youth hath shone in sacred raiment within the paradise of the steadfast Name. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

Lauded art Thou O my God! I implore Thee by Thy day in which all the prophetic days are resurrected, Thy day whereof a moment comprehendeth all the ages. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

And I implore Thee by Thy Name which Thou made king of the Kingdom of Names and ruler over all in earth and heaven. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

To make men free of all besides Thyself, and cause them to approach unto Thee and sever themselves from all but Thee. Verily Thou art the Powerful, the Precious, the Compassionate. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

Then kindle, O my Beloved, in their hearts the flame of Thy love, till it shall burn away the memory of all save Thee, that they may testify with themselves that verily Thou hast dwelt from everlasting on the heights of immortality, that nothing hath been joined with Thee, and that Thou ever art as Thou hast been. There is no God save Thee, the Mighty, the Beneficent. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

And those among Thy servants who seek to ascend the heights of Thy singleness, if their souls be set on the remembrance of aught else save Thee, they shall not be true believers in the unity of God, nor will the rank of a follower of the oneness of God be allotted them. Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!

The glory be to Thee, O my God, for as long as Thy command endureth. Wherefore send Thou down from the clouds of Thy Mercy that which shall cleanse the hearts of Thy lovers, and sanctify the souls of Thy friends.

Then raise them up in Thy Loftiness, and give them the victory over all on earth; for this is that which “We have desired to bring honor upon those who were brought low in the land, and to make them leaders of men, and to make them our heirs.” Glory to Thee, O God, O Thou who art God, O Thou who alone art God!
THE DIVINE WORD OF GOD

“. . . by a word of His command all that are in heaven and on earth have come to exist, and by His wish, which is the Primal Will itself, all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being, the world of the visible.” — Bahá’u’lláh

“Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth. All the wondrous works ye behold in this world have been manifested through the operation of His supreme and most exalted Will, His wondrous and inflexible Purpose. Through the mere revelation of the word ‘Fashioner,’ issuing forth from His lips and proclaiming His attribute to mankind, such power is released as can generate, through successive ages, all the manifold arts which the hands of man can produce. This, verily, is a certain truth. No sooner is this resplendent word uttered, than its animating energies, stirring within all created things, give birth to the means and instruments whereby such arts can be produced and perfected. All the wondrous achievements ye now witness are the direct consequences of the Revelation of this Name. In the days to come, ye will, verily, behold things of which ye have never heard before.” — Bahá’u’lláh

“Every single letter proceeding from Our mouth is endowed with such regenerative power as to enable it to bring into existence a new creation—a creation the magnitude of which is inscrutable to all save God.” — Bahá’u’lláh

“Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have . . . breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration.” — Bahá’u’lláh

“. . . the divine magnet—the power of the Word of God—will attract the hearts and bestow ecstasy and enthusiasm upon souls!” — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

THE SUBLIMITY OF THE BÁB’S EXALTED STATION

Wishing to stress the sublimity of the Báb’s exalted station as compared with that of the Prophets of the past, Bahá’u’lláh in that same epistle asserts: “No understanding can grasp the nature of His Revelation, nor can any knowledge comprehend the full measure of His Faith.” He then quotes, in confirmation of His argument, these prophetic words: “Knowledge is twenty and seven letters. All that the Prophets have revealed are two letters thereof. No man thus far hath known more than these two letters. But when the Qá’ím shall arise, He will cause the remaining twenty and five letters to be made manifest.” “Behold,” He adds, “how
great and lofty is His station! His rank excelleth that of all the Prophets and His Revelation transcendenteth the comprehension and understanding of all their chosen ones." "Of His Revelation," He further adds, "the Prophets of God, His saints and chosen ones, have either not been informed, or, in pursuance of God's inscrutable decree, they have not disclosed."

Of all the tributes which Bahá'u'lláh's unerring pen has chosen to pay to the memory of the Báb, His "Best-Beloved," the most memorable and touching is this brief, yet eloquent passage which so greatly enhances the value of the concluding passages of that same epistle. "Amidst them all," He writes, referring to the afflictive trials and dangers besetting Him in the city of Baghdád, "We stand life in hand wholly resigned to His Will, that perchance through God's loving kindness and grace, this revealed and manifest Letter (Bahá'u'lláh) may lay down His life as a sacrifice in the path of the Primal Point, the most exalted Word (the Báb). By Him, at Whose bidding the Spirit hath spoken, but for this yearning of Our soul, We would not, for one moment, have tarried any longer in this city."

Dearly-beloved friends! So resounding a praise, so bold an assertion issued by the pen of Bahá'u'lláh in so weighty a work, are fully re-echoed in the language in which the Source of the Bábí Revelation has chosen to clothe the claims He Himself has advanced. "I am the Mystic Fane," the Báb thus proclaims His station in the Qayyúmu'l-Ásá, "which the Hand of Omnipotence hath reared. I am the Lamp which the Finger of God hath lit within its niche and caused to shine with deathless splendor. I am the Flame of that supernal Light that glowed upon Sinai in the gladsome Spot, and lay concealed in the midst of the Burning Bush." "O Qurritu'l-Áyn!" He, addressing Himself in that same commentary, exclaims, "I recognize in Thee none other except the 'Great Announcement'—the Announcement voiced by the Concourse on high. By this name, I bear witness, they that circle the Throne of Glory have ever known Thee." "With each and every Prophet, Whom We have sent down in the past," He further adds, "We have established a separate Covenant concerning the 'Remembrance of God' and His Day. Manifest, in the realm of glory and through the power of truth, are the 'Remembrance of God' and His Day before the eyes of the angels that circle His mercy-seat." "Should it be Our wish," He again affirms, "it is in Our power to compel, through the agency of but one letter of Our Revelation, the world and all that is therein to recognize, in less than the twinkling of an eye, the truth of Our Cause."

"I am the Primal Point," the Báb thus addresses Muḥammad Sháh from the prison-fortress of Máh-Kú, "from which have been generated all created things... I am the Countenance of God Whose splendor can never be obscured, the light of God whose radiance can never fade... All the keys of heaven God hath chosen to place on My right hand, and all the keys of hell on My left... I am one of the sustaining pillars of the Primal Word of God. Whosoever hath recognized Me, hath known all that is
true and right, and hath attained all that is good and seemly… The substance wherewith God hath created Me is not the clay out of which others have been formed. He hath conferred upon Me that which the worldly-wise can never comprehend, nor the faithful discover.” “Should a tiny ant,” the Báb, wishing to stress the limitless potentialities latent in His Dispensation, characteristically affirms, “desire in this day to be possessed of such power as to be able to unravel the abstrusest and most bewildering passages of the Qur’án, its wish will no doubt be fulfilled, inasmuch as the mystery of eternal might vibrates within the innermost being of all created things.” “If so helpless a creature,” is ‘Abdu'l-Bahá’s comment on so startling an affirmation, “can be endowed with so subtle a capacity, how much more efficacious must be the power released through the liberal effusions of the grace of Bahá’u’lláh!”

**Prophesy Fulfilled**

On that momentous night, the Báb told Mulla Husayn the following.

“This night,” He declared, “this very hour will, in the days to come, be celebrated as one of the greatest and most significant of all festivals. Render thanks to God for having graciously assisted you to attain your heart’s desire, and for having quaffed from the sealed wine of His utterance. ‘Well is it with them that attain thereunto.’”

We are gathered here today to do exactly what the Báb prophesied. What an honour it is for us, to be part of a prophecy fulfilled. What was started on that memorable evening, continues today. We are all, in different degrees and capacities, part of contributing to the transformation of today’s world. With this work, we are connected to event that took place on the 23rd of May in 1844. We are all part of contributing the the transformation of the world, to carry forward what was initiated that night, just as future generations will carry forward the work we do today. Perhaps this beautiful story illustrates this.

Mirzá Mahmúd Furúghí was a noted Bahá’í in Khurásán and ranked in the forefront of the defenders of the Cause of the Almighty. Nothing perturbed him and he feared nothing, nor hesitated in his service.

After the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá he traveled far to delight his own eyes by beholding the Sign of God on Earth. After he had attained the Guardian’s presence for a whole week, he had heard nothing from the beloved Guardian’s mouth other than descriptions of institutions of the Faith and how to strengthen them.
Finally, the day arrived when, in the reception room, he found himself seated across from the Guardian. With his impressive and awe-inspiring figure, he was still the picture of devotion and surrender. Placing hands on his knees, he pleaded to the Guardian in a loud and eloquent tone: “Beloved Guardian, during the time of the Master, he often bestowed verbal and written honorifics, but so far your honeyed tongue has not granted any such favours.”

The beloved Guardian, with a winning smile and in utmost kindness and affection asked: “For example, what title was granted to you?” Mr. Furúghí replied in his deep voice: “He addressed me as the general of ‘Aramram Army.”

The Guardian responded in utter humility: “I am one of the soldiers of this army. What can I say?” Mr. Furúghí was deeply moved by this heavenly reply; tongue-tied he quietly left the Guardian’s presence and on foot went to Mt. Carmel to pay pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Báb. In a remote spot he prostrated and, seeking forgiveness with tears in his eyes, he kept saying: “Please forgive me; I was ignorant, now I know.”

It has escaped no one that this is difficult work. Success does not come easy. Inner transformation and social change requires sacrifice and time. Bahá’u’lláh says

O SON OF SPIRIT! My claim on thee is great, it cannot be forgotten. My grace to thee is plenteous, it cannot be veiled. My love has made in thee its home, it cannot be concealed. My light is manifest to thee, it cannot be obscured.

It is very difficult work, how else could it be? To transform the whole world, with all its structures, patterns and culture to bring to reality, that which has been written in the Writings, is the largest enterprise the world has ever seen. How can it be anything but extremely challenging? But Bahá’u’lláh gives a promise.

“These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the ‘Most Great Peace’ shall come.”

We just need to

“Have hope. It will not always be so. Is not the history of our Faith filled with accounts of inauspicious beginnings but marvellous results? How many times have the deeds of a few believers-young or old-or of a single family, or even of a lone soul, when confirmed by the power of divine assistance, succeeded in cultivating vibrant communities in seemingly inhospitable climes? Do not imagine that your own case is inherently any different. Change in a cluster, be it swift or hard won, flows neither from a formulaic approach nor from random activity; it proceeds to the rhythm of action, reflection, and consultation, and is propelled by plans that are
the fruit of experience. Beyond this, and whatever its immediate effects, service to the Beloved is, in itself, a source of abiding joy to the spirit.”

References

i Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, Nr CXVII
ii Mojan Momen, “Ages and Cycles”
iii Book 8, Unit 2, Section 4
iv Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, Nr XIV
v The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh page 169
vi Epistle to the Son of the Wolf page 22
vii God Passes By Chapter 1
viii Promulgation of Peace talk nr 4
ix The Kitáb-i-Íqán 98
x Gleanings 141-42
xi Quoted in The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh 107
xii Gleanings 92-93
xiii Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Vol. II 358
xiv Shoghi Effendi, Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh
xv Nabils Narrative page 61