



*Advancement
of
Women*

A Bahá'í Perspective

Janet A. Khan and Peter J. Khan

Contents

Preface	ix
Chapter 1: The Transformation of Human Society	
The Equality of Men and Women	5
The Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh	6
A Statement of Principles	6
The Bahá'í Administrative Order	7
The Use of Power	11
The Process of Change	11
Chapter 2: Defining Equality	
The Significance of Equality	19
A Brief Historical Survey	19
Attitudes toward Women in Antiquity	20
Teachings of the Manifestations of God	23
Religious Practice	27
Bahá'í Teachings on Equality	36
A Spiritual and Social Principle	37
The Education of Girls and Women	40
The Participation of Women in the World at Large	44

Contents

Complementarity, Not Uniformity	46
The Bahá'í Approach to Implementation	49
Creating the Psychological Climate for Change	49
Designing the Future	51
Methodology	52
The Present Day	53
Chapter 3: Family Dynamics and Peace	
The Family as Matrix	61
Traditional Family Values and Warfare	63
The Patriarchal Family	63
The Transmission of Attitudes to the Wider Society	70
Bahá'í Family Values and Peace	74
The Bahá'í Family	74
The Role of Parents	76
Collaboration, Cooperation, and Encouragement	79
Decision-Making	81
The Bahá'í Family's Contribution to Creating Peace	87
Changing Attitudes	88
Teaching the Skill of Consultation	89
Fostering Women's Development and Participation	90
Chapter 4: Women and Bahá'í Law	
Equality and Law	97
The Nature of Bahá'í Law	98
Women and the Laws of Personal Conduct	102
Devotional Practices	102
Sexual Conduct	105
Marriage and Divorce	111
Financial Rights	118
Service on Bahá'í Institutions	120
The Application of Bahá'í Law	134
Chapter 5: Implementing Equality: The Ministries of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá	
Belief and Practice	139
The Actions of Bahá'u'lláh	140

His Teachings	140
His Guidance and Encouragement to Women	142
Examples from His Personal Relationships	145
Ásíyih <i>Khán</i> um	146
Bahíyyih <i>Khán</i> um	148
Other Bahá'í Women	149
The Role of 'Abdu'l-Bahá	152
The Exemplar of the Bahá'í Faith	153
Authoritative Interpreter	162
Timeliness	162
Enlarging the Context	163
Challenging Stereotypic Thinking	167
Use of Analogy	167
Use of Rhetorical Questions	167
Use of the Direct Challenge	168
Use of Examples from History	169
Use of Contemporary Examples	171
Assigning Responsibilities	172
Ethel Rosenberg	172
Corinne True	173
Agnes Parsons	176
Ella Cooper and Helen Goodall	177
Lua Getsinger	178
Agnes Alexander and Martha Root	178
Providing Encouragement	180
Promoting the Enlightenment of Women	183
Fostering Intellectual Development	191
The Power of Example	194
Chapter 6: Implementing Equality: The Role of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice	
The Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation	201
The Role of Shoghi Effendi	203
Interpreting the Teachings	204
Developing the Administrative Order	205
Fostering the Advancement of Women	212

Contents

International Assignments to Women	216
Effie Baker	216
Keith Ransom-Kehler	217
Martha Root	221
Amelia E. Collins	223
The Role of the Universal House of Justice	225
Elucidating the Teachings	226
Advancing the Process of Implementation	228
Fostering Women's Participation in Bahá'í Administration	235
The Office for the Advancement of Women	240
Promoting the Social and Economic Development of Women	249
Education	251
Health Care	255
Attitudinal Change	258
Significance of the Examples	261
Chapter 7: Practicing Equality	
The Moral Imperative	267
Translating the Bahá'í Teachings into Practice	268
The Spiritual Dimension	269
Individual Conduct	271
Interaction with Society	277
Applying the Principle of Equality of the Sexes	283
At the Individual Level	283
Within Marriage and Family	287
Within the Community	291
Facing the Future with Confidence	294
Appendix: <i>Two Wings of A Bird: The Equality of Women and Men</i>, a statement by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States	299
Notes	307
Bibliography	333
Index	339