

Becoming A Brilliant Star **Conative/Volitional Development**

Man Possesses Volition; Nature Does Not

1. Man possesses certain virtues of which nature is deprived. He exercises volition; nature is without will. For instance, an exigency of the sun is the giving of light. It is controlled--it cannot do otherwise than radiate light--but it is not volitional. An exigency of the phenomenon of electricity is that it is revealed in sparks and flashes under certain conditions, but it cannot voluntarily furnish illumination. An exigency or property of water is humidity; it cannot separate itself from this property by its own will. Likewise, all the properties of nature are inherent and obedient, not volitional; therefore, it is philosophically predicated that nature is without volition and innate perception. In this statement and principle we agree with the materialists. But the question which presents food for reflection is this: How is it that man, who is a part of the universal plan, is possessed of certain qualities whereof nature is devoid? Is it conceivable that a drop should be imbued with qualities of which the ocean is completely deprived? The drop is a part; the ocean is the whole. Could there be a phenomenon of combustion or illumination which the great luminary the sun itself did not manifest? Is it possible for a stone to possess inherent properties of which the aggregate mineral kingdom is lacking? For example, could the fingernail which is a part of human anatomy be endowed with cellular properties of which the brain is deprived?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 80-81

All That An Individual Can Possess Can Be Manifested Only As A Result Of Volition

2. And now, concerning thy question regarding the creation of man. Know thou that all men have been created in the nature made by God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Unto each one hath been prescribed a pre-ordained 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. Your own acts testify to this truth. Consider, for instance, that which hath been forbidden, in the Bayán, unto men. God hath in that Book, and by His behest, decreed as lawful whatsoever He hath pleased to decree, and hath, through the power of His sovereign might, forbidden whatsoever He elected to forbid. To this testifieth the text of that Book. Will ye not bear witness? Men, however, have wittingly broken His law. Is such a behavior to be attributed to God, or to their proper selves? Be fair in your judgment. Every good thing is of God, and every evil thing is from yourselves. Will ye not comprehend? This same truth hath been revealed in all the Scriptures, if ye be of them that understand. Every act ye meditate is as clear to Him as is that act when already accomplished. There is none other God besides Him. His is all creation and its empire. All stands revealed before Him; all is recorded in His holy and hidden Tablets. This fore-knowledge of God, however, should not be regarded as having caused

the actions of men, just as your own previous knowledge that a certain event is to occur, or your desire that it should happen, is not and can never be the reason for its occurrence.

Bahá'u'lláh
Gleanings, pp. 149-150

3. ...The incomparable Creator hath created all men from one same substance, and hath exalted their reality above the rest of His creatures. Success or failure, gain or loss, must, therefore, depend upon man's own exertions. The more he striveth, the greater will be his progress. We fain would hope that the vernal showers of the bounty of God may cause the flowers of true understanding to spring from the soil of men's hearts, and may wash them from all earthly defilements.

Bahá'u'lláh
Gleanings, pp. 81-82

Our Past Is Not As Important As What We Intend To Do With Our Future

4. “Our past is not the thing that matters so much in this world as what we intend to do with our future. The inestimable value of religion is that when a man is vitally connected with it, through a real and living belief in it and in the Prophet Who brought it, he receives a strength greater than his own which helps him to develop his good characteristics and overcome his bad ones. The whole purpose of religion is to change not only our thoughts but our acts; when we believe in God and His Prophet and His Teachings, we find we are growing, even though we perhaps thought ourselves incapable of growth and change!”

Lights of Guidance, p. 209

The Mirror Of God’s Beauty Can Be Cleansed Through Exertion Of Spiritual Faculties

5. There can be no doubt whatever that, in consequence of the efforts which every man may consciously exert and as a result of the exertion of his own spiritual faculties, this mirror can be so cleansed from the dross of earthly defilements and purged from satanic fancies as to be able to draw nigh unto the meads of eternal holiness and attain the courts of everlasting fellowship. In pursuance, however, of the principle that for every thing a time hath been fixed, and for every fruit a season hath been ordained, the latent energies of such a bounty can best be released, and the vernal glory of such a gift can only be manifested, in the Days of God. Invested though each day may be with its pre-ordained share of God's wondrous grace, the Days immediately associated with the Manifestation of God possess a unique distinction and occupy a station which no mind can ever comprehend. Such is the virtue infused into them that if the hearts of all that dwell in the heavens and the earth were, in those days of everlasting delight, to be brought face to face with that Day Star of unfading glory and attuned to His Will, each would find itself exalted above all earthly things, radiant with His light, and sanctified through His grace.

Bahá'u'lláh
Gleanings, pp. 262-263

Knowledge, Volition And Action Necessary For Attainment Of Any Object

6. The attainment of any object is conditioned upon knowledge, volition and action. Unless these three conditions are forthcoming, there is no execution or accomplishment. In the erection of a house it is first necessary to know the ground, and design the house suitable for it; second, to obtain the means or funds necessary for the construction; third, actually to build it. Therefore, a power is needed to carry out and execute what is known and admitted to be the remedy for human conditions--namely, the unification of mankind. Furthermore, it is evident that this cannot be realized through material process and means. The accomplishment of this unification cannot be through racial power, for races are different and diverse in tendencies. It cannot be through patriotic power, for nationalities are unlike. Nor can it be effected through political power since the policies of governments and nations are various. That is to say, any effort toward unification through these material means would benefit one and injure another because of unequal and individual interests. Some may believe this great remedy can be found in dogmatic insistence upon imitations and interpretations. This would likewise be without foundation and result. Therefore, it is evident that no means but an ideal means, a spiritual power, divine bestowals and the breaths of the Holy Spirit will heal this world sickness of war, dissension and discord. Nothing else is possible; nothing can be conceived of. But through spiritual means and the divine power it is possible and practicable.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 157-158

Strain Every Nerve To Acquire Both Inner And Outer Perfections

7. Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

Bahá’u’lláh
Compilation of Compilations, Vol I (Bahá’í Education), p. 247;
(Excellence in All Things), p. 368

8. Strive as much as ye can to turn wholly toward the Kingdom, that ye may acquire innate courage and ideal power.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Selections From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 206

Source Of Courage And Power Is The Promotion Of The Word Of God

9. The source of courage and power is the promotion of the Word of God, and steadfastness in His Love.

Bahá’u’lláh
Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 156

Exert The Utmost Endeavour To Rehabilitate The Conditions In All Regions

10. Were man to appreciate the greatness of his station and the loftiness of his destiny he would manifest naught save goodly character, pure deeds, and a seemly and praiseworthy conduct. If the learned and wise men of goodwill were to impart guidance unto the people, the whole earth would be regarded as one country. Verily this is the undoubted truth. This servant appealeth to every diligent and enterprising soul to exert his utmost endeavour and arise to rehabilitate the conditions in all regions and to quicken the dead with the living waters of wisdom and utterance, by virtue of the love he cherisheth for God, the One, the Peerless, the Almighty, the Beneficent.

Bahá'u'lláh
Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 172

Movement Is Essential; You Must Ever Press Forward

11. ...it is evident that movement is essential to all existence. All material things progress to a certain point, then begin to decline. This is the law which governs the whole physical creation....

My hope for you is that you will progress in the world of spirit, as well as in the world of matter; that your intelligence will develop, your knowledge will augment, and your understanding be widened.

You must ever press forward, never standing still; avoid stagnation, the first step to a backward movement, to decay.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Paris Talks, pp. 89-90

Focus On That Which Will Cause The Word Of God To Be Exalted

12. Centre your attention unceasingly upon that which will cause the Word of God to be exalted. In this Most Great Revelation goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character are regarded as the hosts of God, likewise is His blessed and holy Word. These hosts are the lodestone of the hearts of men and the effective means for unlocking doors. Of all the weapons in the world this is the keenest.

Bahá'u'lláh
Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 256

Labor To Destroy The Animal Condition Of Self

13. Likewise, reflect upon the perfection of man's creation, and that all these planes and states are folded up and hidden away within him.

Dost thou reckon thyself only a puny form

When within thee the universe is folded?

Then we must labor to destroy the animal condition, till the meaning of humanity shall come to light.

Bahá'u'lláh
The Seven Valleys, p. 34

Suffering Is Necessary For Growth

14. God alone ordereth all things and is all-powerful. Why then does He send trials to His servants?

The trials of man are of two kinds.

a) The consequences of his own actions. If a man eats too much, he ruins his digestion; if he takes poison he becomes ill or dies. If a person gambles he will lose his money; if he drinks too much he will lose his equilibrium. All these sufferings are caused by the man himself, it is quite clear therefore that certain sorrows are the result of our own deeds.

b) Other sufferings there are, which come upon the Faithful of God. Consider the great sorrows endured by Christ and by His apostles!

Those who suffer most, attain to the greatest perfection.

Those who declare a wish to suffer much for Christ's sake must prove their sincerity; those who proclaim their longing to make great sacrifices can only prove their truth by their deeds. Job proved the fidelity of his love for God by being faithful through his great adversity, as well as during the prosperity of his life. The apostles of Christ who steadfastly bore all their trials and sufferings--did they not prove their faithfulness? Was not their endurance the best proof?

These griefs are now ended.

Caiaphas lived a comfortable and happy life while Peter's life was full of sorrow and trial; which of these two is the more enviable? Assuredly we should choose the present state of Peter, for he possesses immortal life whilst Caiaphas has won eternal shame. The trials of Peter tested his fidelity. Tests are benefits from God, for which we should thank Him. Grief and sorrow do not come to us by chance, they are sent to us by the Divine Mercy for our own perfecting.

While a man is happy he may forget his God; but when grief comes and sorrows overwhelm him, then will he remember his Father who is in Heaven, and who is able to deliver him from his humiliations.

Men who suffer not, attain no perfection. The plant most pruned by the gardeners is that one which, when the summer comes, will have the most beautiful blossoms and the most abundant fruit.

The labourer cuts up the earth with his plough, and from that earth comes the rich and plentiful harvest. The more a man is chastened, the greater is the harvest of spiritual virtues shown forth by him. A soldier is no good General until he has been in the front of the fiercest battle and has received the deepest wounds.

The prayer of the prophets of God has always been, and still is: Oh God, I long to lay down my life in the path to Thee! I desire to shed my blood for Thee, and to make the supreme sacrifice.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Paris Talks, pp. 49-51

Exert Thyself Night And Day Until Spiritual Powers May Penetrate Thy Heart And Soul

15. If thou seekest to be intoxicated with the cup of the Most Mighty Gift, cut thyself from the world and be quit of self and desire. Exert thyself night and day until spiritual powers may penetrate thy heart and soul. Abandon the body and the material, until the merciful powers may become manifest; because not until the soil is become pure will it develop through the heavenly

bounty; not until the heart is purified, will the radiance of the Sun of Truth shine therein. I beg of God that thou wilt day by day increase the purity of thy heart, the cheerfulness of thy soul, the light of thy insight and the search for Truth.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Bahá’i World Faith, p. 362

Knowledge, Science And Other Perfections Can Be Acquired Through Effort And Perseverance

16. It is from the bounty of God that man is selected for the highest degree; and the differences which exist between men in regard to spiritual progress and heavenly perfections are also due to the choice of the Compassionate One. For faith, which is life eternal, is the sign of bounty, and not the result of justice. The flame of the fire of love, in this world of earth and water, comes through the power of attraction and not by effort and striving. Nevertheless, by effort and perseverance, knowledge, science and other perfections can be acquired; but only the light of the Divine Beauty can transport and move the spirits through the force of attraction. Therefore, it is said: "Many are called, but few are chosen."¹

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Some Answered Questions, p. 130

Diligently Observe Whatsoever The Creator Commandeth

17. ...O thou who hast surrendered thy will to God! By self-surrender and perpetual union with God is meant that men should merge their will wholly in the Will of God, and regard their desires as utter nothingness beside His Purpose. Whatsoever the Creator commandeth His creatures to observe, the same must they diligently, and with the utmost joy and eagerness, arise and fulfil. They should in no wise allow their fancy to obscure their judgment, neither should they regard their own imaginings as the voice of the Eternal.

Bahá’u’lláh
Gleanings, p. 337

Follow Your Own Counsel; Your Deeds Must Match Your Speech

18. Whoso ariseth among you to teach the Cause of his Lord, let him, before all else, teach his own self, that his speech may attract the hearts of them that hear him. Unless he teacheth his own self, the words of his mouth will not influence the heart of the seeker. Take heed, O people, lest ye be of them that give good counsel to others but forget to follow it themselves. The words of such as these, and beyond the words the realities of all things, and beyond these realities the angels that are nigh unto God, bring against them the accusation of falsehood.

Bahá’u’lláh
Gleanings, p. 277

¹ Matt. 22:14

Act In Such A Manner As To Be Known As Trustworthy

19. Were a man in this day to adorn himself with the raiment of trustworthiness it were better for him in the sight of God than that he should journey on foot towards the holy court and be blessed with meeting the Adored One and standing before His Seat of Glory. Trustworthiness is as a stronghold to the city of humanity, and as eyes to the human temple. Whosoever remaineth deprived thereof shall, before His Throne, be reckoned as one bereft of vision.

Bahá'u'lláh

Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Trustworthiness), pp. 329-330

Persevere In God's Service

20. Go thou straight on and persevere in His service. Say: O people! The Day, promised unto you in all the Scriptures, is now come. Fear ye God, and withhold not yourselves from recognizing the One Who is the Object of your creation. Hasten ye unto Him. Better is this for you than the world and all that is therein. Would that ye could perceive it!

Bahá'u'lláh

Gleanings, p. 314

21. Persevere thou conscientiously in the service of the Cause and, through the power of the Name of thy Lord, the Possessor of all things visible and invisible, preserve the station conferred upon thee. I swear by the righteousness of God! Were anyone apprised of that which is veiled from the eyes of men, he would become so enraptured as to wing his flight unto God, the Lord of all that hath been and shall be.

Bahá'u'lláh

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 232

22. Persevere thou in helping His Cause through the strengthening power of the hosts of wisdom and utterance. Thus hath it been decreed by God, the Gracious, the All-Praised. Blessed is the believer who hath in this Day embraced the Truth and the man of fixed resolve whom the hosts of tyranny have been powerless to affright.

Bahá'u'lláh

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 249

23. Walk, therefore, with a sure step and engage with the utmost assurance and confidence in the promulgation of the divine fragrances, the glorification of the Word of God and firmness in the Covenant. Rest ye assured that if a soul ariseth in the utmost perseverance and raiseth the Call of the Kingdom and resolutely promulgateth the Covenant, be he an insignificant ant he shall be enabled to drive away the formidable elephant from the arena, and if he be a feeble moth he shall cut to pieces the plumage of the rapacious vulture.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Selections ... 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 209

Moderation is Important

24. Moderation is indeed highly desirable. Every person who in some degree turneth towards the truth can himself later comprehend most of what he seeketh. However, if at the outset a word is uttered beyond his capacity, he will refuse to hear it and will arise in opposition.

Bahá'u'lláh
Compilation of Compilations, Vol I (Individual and Teaching), p. 293

Knowledge Must Be Acted Upon

25. It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action....

Bahá'u'lláh
Gleanings, p. 250; Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 115-116; Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 166

26. maid-servant of God! Chant the Words of God and, pondering over their meaning, transform them into actions!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Abbas, vol. I, p. 85

27. All the heavenly Books, divine Prophets, sages and philosophers agree that warfare is destructive to human development, and peace constructive. They agree that war and strife strike at the foundations of humanity. Therefore, a power is needed to prevent war and to proclaim and establish the oneness of humanity.

But knowledge of the need of this power is not sufficient. Realizing that wealth is desirable is not becoming wealthy. The admission that scientific attainment is praiseworthy does not confer scientific knowledge. Acknowledgment of the excellence of honor does not make a man honorable. Knowledge of human conditions and the needed remedy for them is not the cause of their betterment. To admit that health is good does not constitute health. A skilled physician is needed to remedy existing human conditions. As a physician is required to have complete knowledge of pathology, diagnosis, therapeutics and treatment, so this World Physician must be wise, skillful and capable before health will result. His mere knowledge is not health; it must be applied and the remedy carried out.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 157

28. High aims and pure motives, however laudable in themselves, will surely not suffice if unsupported by measures that are practicable and methods that are sound. Wealth of sentiment, abundance of good-will and effort, will prove of little avail if we should fail to exercise discrimination and restraint and neglect to direct their flow along the most profitable channels. The unfettered freedom of the individual should be tempered with mutual consultation and

29. sacrifice, and the spirit of initiative and enterprise should be reinforced by a deeper realization of the supreme necessity for concerted action and a fuller devotion to the common weal.

Shoghi Effendi
Bahá'í Administration, p. 87

30. We are united in the one aim and hope that all shall be as one and every heart illumined by the Love of our Divine Father, God!

May all our actions be spiritual, and all our interests and affections be centred in the Kingdom of Glory!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Paris Talks, p. 88

31. You who are the servants of God fight against oppression, hate and discord, so that wars may cease and God's laws of peace and love may be established among men.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Paris Talks, p. 101

Work With All Your Strength

32. Work! Work with all your strength, spread the Cause of the Kingdom among men; teach the self-sufficient to turn humbly towards God, the sinful to sin no more, and await with glad expectation the coming of the Kingdom.

Love and obey your Heavenly Father, and rest assured that Divine help is yours. Verily I say unto you that you shall indeed conquer the world!

Only have faith, patience and courage--this is but the beginning, but surely you will succeed, for God is with you!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Paris Talks, p. 101

Let Each Morn Be Better Than It Eve

33. peoples of the world! Forsake all evil, hold fast that which is good. Strive to be shining examples unto all mankind, and true reminders of the virtues of God amidst men. He that riseth to serve My Cause should manifest My wisdom, and bend every effort to banish ignorance from the earth. Be united in counsel, be one in thought. Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. Take heed that your words be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires and your deeds be cleansed from craftiness and suspicion. Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavours be spent in promoting your personal interest. Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. Adversity is followed by success and rejoicings follow woe. Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low.

Beware lest ye sow tares of dissension among men or plant thorns of doubt in pure and radiant hearts.

Bahá'u'lláh
Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 138

Firmness And Steadfastness Are Essential

34. The essential thing is firmness and steadfastness.

'Abdu'l-Bahá
Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 696

Put Trust In God And Follow In His Way

35. The essence of these words is this: they that tread the path of faith, they that thirst for the wine of certitude, must cleanse themselves of all that is earthly--their ears from idle talk, their minds from vain imaginings, their hearts from worldly affections, their eyes from that which perisheth. They should put their trust in God, and, holding fast unto Him, follow in His way. Then will they be made worthy of the effulgent glories of the sun of divine knowledge and understanding, and become the recipients of a grace that is infinite and unseen, inasmuch as man can never hope to attain unto the knowledge of the All-Glorious, can never quaff from the stream of divine knowledge and wisdom, can never enter the abode of immortality, nor partake of the cup of divine nearness and favour, unless and until he ceases to regard the words and deeds of mortal men as a standard for the true understanding and recognition of God and His Prophets.

Bahá'u'lláh
Kitáb-i-Íqán, pp. 3-4

If We Exert An Effort God Will Grant Succour And Grace

36. Indulge not your bodies with rest, but work with all your souls, and with all your hearts cry out and beg of God to grant you His succour and grace. Thus may ye make this world the Abhá Paradise, and this globe of earth the parade ground of the realm on high. If only ye exert the effort, it is certain that these splendours will shine out, these clouds of mercy will shed down their rain, these life-giving winds will rise and blow, this sweet-smelling musk will be scattered far and wide.

'Abdu'l-Bahá
Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 245

Source: Huitt, W. (2011). *Becoming a Brilliant Star: Conative/volitional development*. Valdosta, GA. Available at <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/religion/bahai/brilstar/07conatn.pdf>