

**“It’s a moral issue” -
How the Current Endeavours of
the Bahá’í Community
Contribute to the Global Response
to the Challenge of
Climate Change.**

**Tessa Scrine,
IEF Conference, December 2011**



*"We have to act together to solve this global crisis....
This is really not a political issue so much as a moral issue"*



A Divine Civilisation

"O thou who longest for spiritual attributes, goodly deeds, and truthful and beneficial words! The outcome of these things is an upraised heaven, an outspread earth, rising suns, gleaming moons, scintillating stars, crystal fountains, flowing rivers, subtle atmospheres, . palaces, lofty trees, heavenly fruits, rich harvests, warbling birds, crimson leaves, and perfumed blossoms. Thus I say: "Have mercy, have mercy O my Lord, the All-Merciful, upon my blameworthy attributes, my wicked deeds, my unseemly acts, and my deceitful and injurious words!" For the outcome of these is realised in the contingent realm as hell and hellfire, and the infernal and fetid trees, as utter malevolence, loathsome things, sicknesses, misery, pollution, and war and destruction".

-Bahá'u'lláh

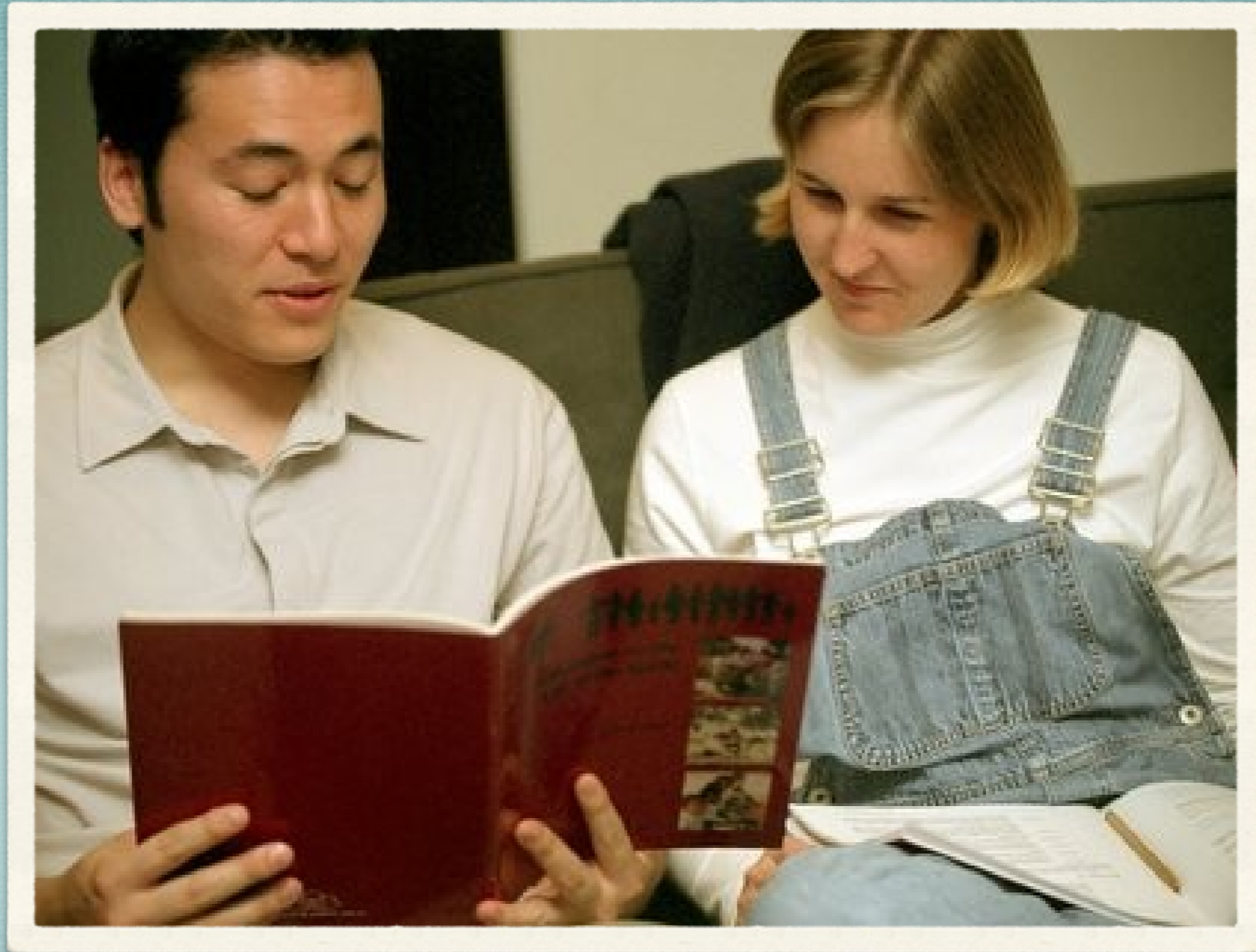
"Material civilisation has reached an advanced plane, but now there is need of spiritual civilisation. Material civilisation alone will not satisfy; it cannot meet the conditions and requirements of the present age; its benefits are limited to the world of matter. There is no limitation to the spirit of man, for spirit in itself is progressive, and if the divine civilisation be established, the spirit of man will advance. Every developed susceptibility will increase the effectiveness of man. Discoveries of the real will become more and more possible, and the influence of divine guidance will be increasingly recognised. All this is conducive to the divine form of civilisation. This is what is meant in the Bible by the descent of the New Jerusalem. The heavenly Jerusalem is none other than divine civilisation, and it is now ready. It is to be and shall be organised, and the oneness of humankind will be a visible fact." -

Abdu'l-Bahá

"How long shall we drift on the wings of passion and vain desire; how long shall we spend our days like barbarians in the depths of ignorance and abomination? ... We should continually be establishing new bases for human happiness and creating and promoting new instrumentalities toward this end. How excellent, how honorable is man if he arises to fulfil his responsibilities; how wretched and contemptible, if he shuts his eyes to the welfare of society and wastes his precious life in pursuing his own selfish interests and personal advantages. Supreme happiness is man's, and he beholds the signs of God in the world and in the human soul, if he urges on the steed of high endeavor in the arena of civilisation and justice."-Abdu'l-Bahá



The Training Institute



The betterment of the world can be accomplished through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct

"Without exception, having witnessed the transformative effects of the institute process first hand, the friends in such clusters are striving to gain a fuller appreciation of the dynamics that underlie it--the spirit of fellowship it creates, the participatory approach it adopts, the depth of understanding it fosters, the acts of service it recommends, and, above all, its reliance on the Word of God." -

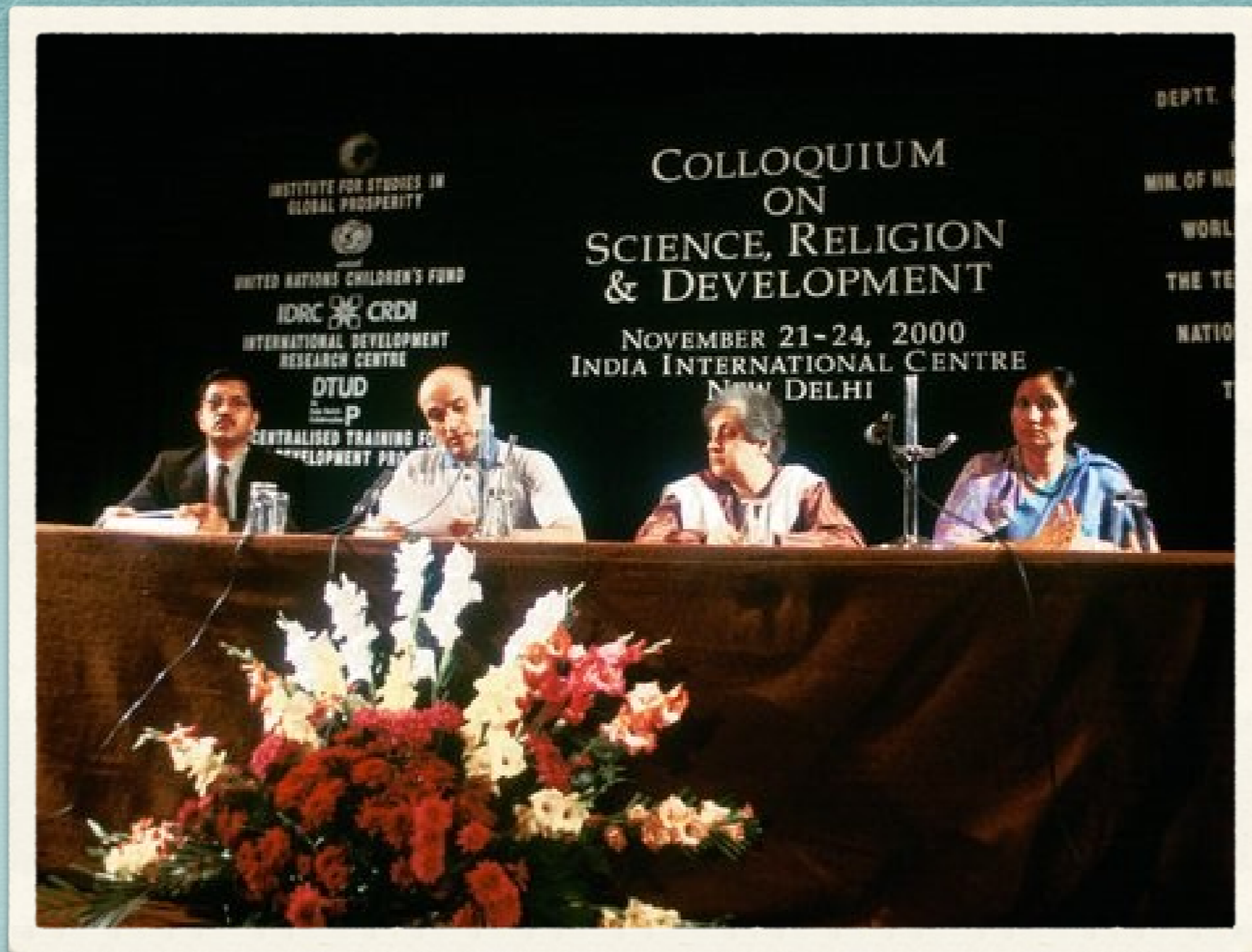
Universal House of Justice



Social Action.

"Most appropriately conceived in terms of a spectrum, social action can range from fairly informal efforts of limited duration undertaken by individuals or small groups of friends to programs of social and economic development with a high level of complexity and sophistication implemented by Bahá'í-inspired organisations. Irrespective of its scope and scale, all social action seeks to apply the teachings and principles of the Faith to improve some aspect of the social or economic life of a population, however modestly. Such endeavors are distinguished, then, by their stated purpose to promote the material well-being of the population, in addition to its spiritual welfare.

While social action may involve the provision of goods and services in some form, its primary concern must be to build capacity within a given population to participate in creating a better world. Social change is not a project that one group of people carries out for the benefit of another. ...Capacity rises to new levels, of course, as the protagonists of social change learn to apply with increasing effectiveness elements of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, together with the contents and methods of science, to their social reality.seeing in their fellow human beings gems of inestimable value and recognizing the effects of the dual process of integration and disintegration on both hearts and minds, as well as on social structures." - Universal House of Justice



Participation in the Discourses of Society

Involvement in the life of society will flourish as the capacity of the community to promote its own growth and to maintain its vitality is gradually raised. It will achieve coherence with efforts to expand and consolidate the community to the extent that it draws on elements of the conceptual framework which governs the current series of global Plans. And it will contribute to the movement of populations towards Bahá'u'lláh's vision of a prosperous and peaceful world civilization to the degree that it employs these elements creatively in new areas of learning." - Universal House of Justice



A Learning Community

... It signals the significant strengthening of a culture in which learning is the mode of operation, a mode that fosters the informed participation of more and more people in a united effort to apply Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to the construction of a divine civilization

... Such an approach offers a striking contrast to the spiritually bankrupt and moribund ways of an old social order that so often seeks to harness human energy through domination, through greed, through guilt or through manipulation.

In relationships among the friends, then, this development in culture finds expression in the quality of their interactions. Learning as a mode of operation requires that all assume a posture of humility, a condition in which one becomes forgetful of self, placing complete trust in God, reliant on His all-sustaining power and confident in His unfailing assistance, knowing that He, and He alone, can change the gnat into an eagle, the drop into a boundless sea.

What is important to acknowledge in this respect is that only if the Councils themselves are engaged in a process of learning will such mechanisms prove to be effective. Otherwise, while ostensibly created to support learning in action by an increasing number of participants in neighbourhoods and villages, systems being developed may well work against it in subtle ways, stifling, unintentionally, rising aspirations at the grassroots.



Individual, Institutions and Community

“At a fundamental level these relationships are characterized by cooperation and reciprocity, manifestations of the interconnectedness that governs the universe.”

"May a bewildered humanity see in the relationships being forged among these three protagonists by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh a pattern of collective life that will propel it towards its high destiny."



Growing the Community

What should be apparent is that, if the Administrative Order is to serve as a pattern for future society, then the community within which it is developing must not only acquire capacity to address increasingly complex material and spiritual requirements but also become larger and larger in size. How could it be otherwise. A small community, whose members are united by their shared beliefs, characterized by their high ideals, proficient in managing their affairs and tending to their needs, and perhaps engaged in several humanitarian projects--a community such as this, prospering but at a comfortable distance from the reality experienced by the masses of humanity, can never hope to serve as a pattern for restructuring the whole of society.

