

What Is Biological Prejudice?

Prejudice lies at the root of all evils. Eliminating it is one of Bahá'u'lláh's prime principles. Perhaps the lowest and worst of all prejudices is biological: the illusion that physical differences give us good reasons for feeling superior. If someone is proud of his or her humility, perhaps we can forgive that! But to be proud of one's gender or race, or of any other genetic feature, is to descend to a level lower than that of an insect. For various species of animals—whether hunters, like wolf, lion, and tiger; or peaceful, like panda, dove, and butterfly—never use color as a sign of supremacy and superiority.

Anyone who uses anything physical—race, gender, age, height, weight, beauty, or disability—as a means of establishing superiority or inferiority shows a lack of understanding of the true essence of being human. Most likely such an individual is seeking, however unconsciously, to conceal deficiencies of his or her own soul with veils and clouds of illusion.

Biological prejudice is the lowest and cheapest means of separation, superi-

ority, and self-satisfaction. At the heart of it lies the very denial of God's justice. It implies that in creating His masterpiece—human beings—God either deliberately discriminated against some of them or suffered from lapses of judgment.

At the heart of it lies also the denial of the very essence of human beings: their souls. For it implies that the worth of a person lies not in spiritual splendors but in physical features. Finding one's superiority in one's color, gender, or any other physical feature communicates this message: My essence, my true honor, worth, and value lie not in my love and the light in my heart, but in my looks and the lightness of my skin; not in my soul and service to humankind, but in my gender; not in my character, but in my color.

Then what is prejudice? It is the descent of human beings from the highest and noblest plane of perfection to the lowest and cheapest. It is ignoring the light and adoring the lamp. It is demeaning the immortal gift, and glorifying and clinging to the disposable cover. It is degrading the station of the soul to the state of a cell. It is reducing the rank of an angel to the role of an ant. It is diminishing the splendors of the soul to the lowliness of the soil. It is debasing the lofty bird of heaven to the lowly bug of the earth. It is exchanging the glories and grandeur

of God's image for the worth of a worm. For that is what our bodies will at last become!

In a letter sent to a pompous, worldly, and cruel king, Bahá'u'lláh asks this question: Can anyone tell the difference between the skeleton of a beggar and that of a prince? Let us ask a similar question: Can anyone tell the difference between the worms that have thrived on white skin or black skin? Fed on men's flesh or women's flesh?

An epitaph on a burial marker:

Here I lie by the chancel door,
Here I lie because I'm poor,
The farther in, the more you pay,
Here I lie as warm as they.

In *The Hidden Words*, Bahá'u'lláh uses the word *dust* nine times as a heading to show the worth of our physical form. He uses expressions such as: O Son of Dust, O Moving Form of Dust, O Offspring of Dust.

Know ye not why We created you all from the same *dust*? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul...that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest.¹ Bahá'u'lláh

All will I gather beneath the one-colored covering of the *dust* and efface all these diverse colors save them that choose My own, and that is purging from every color.²

Bahá'u'lláh

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1. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Arabic), no. 68.
 2. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Persian), no. 74.



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