



## *Port Alberni Nuggets*

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### *Baha'i Quote of the Month*



**The wrong in the world continues to exist just because people talk only of their ideals, and do not strive to put them into practice. If actions took the place of words, the world's misery would very soon be changed into comfort."**

**Abdu'l-Baha**

**bahai.org**

Abdu'l-Baha

bahai.org

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### *Baha'i Stories:*

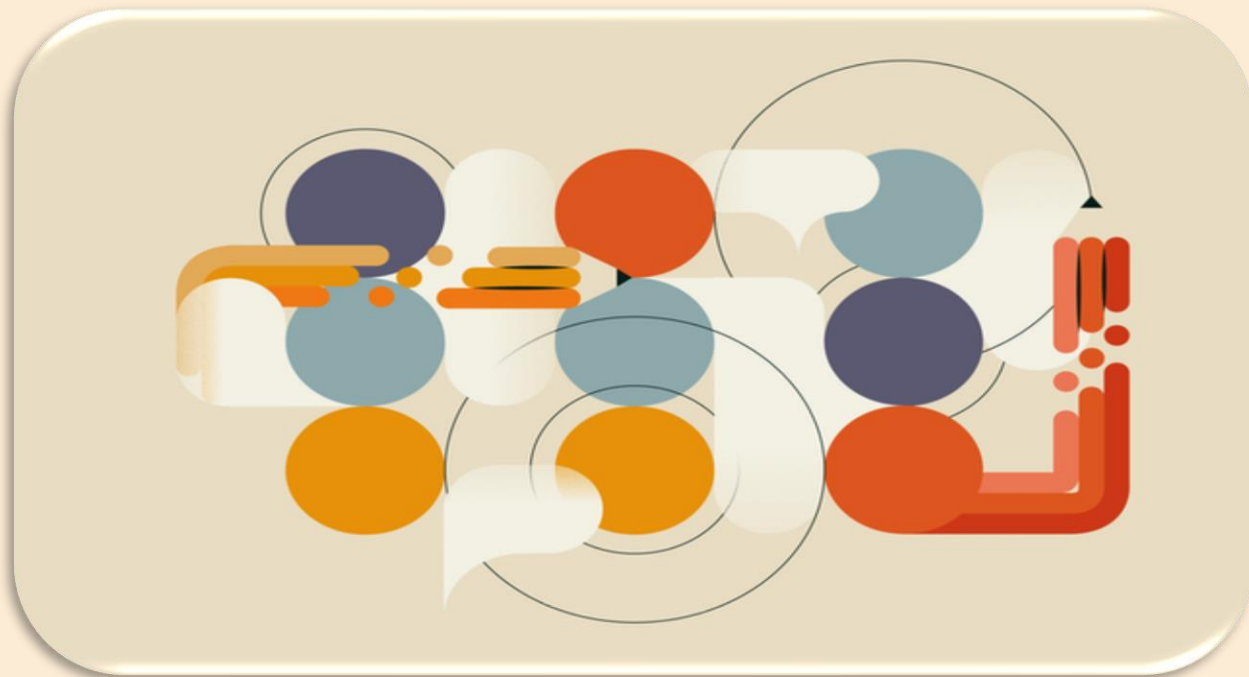
**Agriculture**

*There was a large agricultural convention and State Fair in town when they arrived which interested the Master. 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited the agricultural exhibition and spent some time exploring it. He visited a display of agricultural machines, asking about their cost and use, then went to the area where fruits and vegetables were displayed. As He examined the grapes, apples, pears, pomegranates, cabbages and very large pumpkins, He praised American agricultural progress. When the section manager saw his exotic visitor he rushed over to be introduced, then accompanied 'Abdu'l-Bahá through the area, offering him samples of fruit (though sale and consumption were prohibited). Afterwards, 'Abdu'l-Bahá directed his attendants to buy seeds of some of the fruits and flowers to be sent to the Holy Land to be planted at the shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. -Earl Redman, 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Their Midst, p. 208-209*

## **News and events:**

*Bahá'í World News Service*

### **Examining interplay of culture and gender equality in Turkey**



The Bahá'ís of Turkey are bringing together a cross-section of society to examine the spiritual principle of gender equality as a basis for social transformation.

*ISTANBUL, Turkey — How does culture shape perceptions of women? Which elements of culture contribute to achieving gender equality and which ones act as obstacles?*

*“We have been getting together to look at these questions for the last several months with many different people—officials, academics, organizations of civil society, artists, writers, young people, women and men,” says a novelist from Istanbul and one of the participants of a series of roundtable discussions organized by Turkey’s Bahá’í Office of External Affairs.*

*In the discourse on gender equality in Turkey, there are few discussion spaces offering an opportunity to explore the question of culture. On the basis of this observation, the Office initiated this series of roundtables that touch on relevant themes, including education, the arts, and family life.*

*“The vital principle of equality between women and men as the basis for social transformation is at the heart of these conversations,” says Suzan Karaman of the Office of External Affairs.*

*Ms. Karaman explains that the roundtables have offered a rare opportunity for a cross-section of people concerned with the issue to come together to examine the reality of their society and analyze the operation of social forces.*

*At a recent gathering on the theme of education, a representative of an organization focused on the empowerment of women commented on the need to examine every aspect of education. Citing textbooks as an example of how people’s views on gender roles can be formed, she stated: “Even illustrations in a math textbook can influence patterns of thought when they reinforce stereotypes, depicting women only in certain roles.”*

*Another attendee, the head of the Sociology of Religion Department at a major university in the country, expanded further stating: “Transformation in culture does not mean disrupting cultural diversity or the positive aspects of culture, but rather changing the patriarchal traditions, stereotypes and gender roles that have been passed down through generations that can be obstacles to achieving equality.”*

*Participants observed that although education is often seen as means for economic mobility and greater job opportunities, there is a need for a kind of education that spiritually and morally empowers people to seek greater degrees of unity and to work toward social change.*

*“Equality is one of the most important issues of our society,” said a local official and participant of the roundtables.*

*She continues: “It is also one of the most neglected and violated values of the human family throughout history. Although there is a long way to go, every effort which contributes on the journey towards equality is like an act of worship and therefore praiseworthy. The key is promoting a deeper understanding of this value in society and to reaching people from all walks of life by working together.”*

*In comments shared with the News Service, an author describes the unifying atmosphere of the gatherings: “We rush to our to computers from different parts of Turkey to learn from each other—we talk, we listen, we ask, and we understand. Though we are all different in some ways, we have come to love and trust one another. This opportunity has created greater understanding and unity. It has brought joy to our souls and hearts in this difficult world.”*

## Youth Corner:

I am delighted to share a painting in our youth corner. Would you please meet the painter Asmi Anand? She is 3 years old from the Baha'i Community of Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. There are many children's classes and junior youth activities in her Baha'i center.



The Baha'i community of Port Alberni requests all the friends to encourage the young people to send their stories, artworks, and news to Port Alberni Nuggets. We do not have children or youth in our community, but we would love to be of service to them and provide a platform for encouraging their efforts.

### Sharing: *Lesley's sharing:*

*I've been reflecting for some time on a sentence from the message from the Universal House of Justice's message of 25 November 2020:*

*... the merit of your every contribution to social well-being lies, first, in your resolute commitment to discover that precious point of unity where contrasting perspectives overlap and around which contending peoples can coalesce.*

*I know that I have a limited understanding of this commitment to find a precious point of unity, but we all have to start somewhere. It seemed at first after studying the message, that with many acquaintances in my neighbourhood I could not find that “precious point of unity”, but reflecting on this further and, through a few choice experiences, I am beginning to feel like I can find a commonality which can then lead to a meaningful conversation. Or at least a beginning point to be followed by a meaningful conversation. Besides the obvious commonality related to our concerns about the pandemic, I discovered many topics that, on the surface, I didn’t consider initially. For example, both individuals being women. That can spur on a deeper conversation about issues of concern to women. Or interest in children’s education and a sentiment that something is missing in the educational system. And there are always concerns springing from happenings in our community that raise the question of justice, concern for the welfare of others or environmental concerns. Of course, preparation before leaving the house is an essential step. Prayers and an earnest plea to meet others and to see the love of God in every soul guarantees an experience that perhaps you haven’t had yet with a particularly “difficult” neighbor.*

*I have had that experience and, if it can happen to me, it can happen to all of us. And it is such a gratifying, blessed experience that it spurs me on to continue and see what happens next, in these small steps to bring precious souls into the circle of this Revelation.*

## **From the editor’s desk:**

### **The Baha’i concept of a “Good Loan”**

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*I often get this question: What’s a fair rate of interest?*

*The rate of interest is an important concept in the economic field. Still, sadly it has become more of a method of exploitation rather than a means of help—particularly to those who struggle to survive in a materialistic world.*

*Student loans are a good example. Some student loans charge outrageous rates of interest, putting poor students in tremendous debt. Average student loan debt in the United States, for example, is \$20,000 per student. Paying those debts off can mean returning more than twice that amount to predatory lending companies.*

*But the world’s whole economic and banking system relies on interest to operate, so the question is: what is its origin, and why has it become such a dominant factor in the economic system?*

*Governments, banks, pawnshops and money marts all charge a rate of interest. Some of those rates are so high that not only are they immoral, but they should be illegal. Interest has become one of the means of enslaving people. In some rural areas of our planet, it is still being used to control the lives of others and force work out of them instead of paying wages. Even though we live in industrialized countries, those of us who have had to deal with student loans or personal loans often feel a sense of entrapment. Interest can be a weapon with amazingly destructive powers in terms of control. But it can also be an angel of mercy to help the poor.*

Governments use interest in their loans to other countries—generally the underdeveloped countries—to help them build infrastructure, support their military and feed their people. History is full of examples of how poor countries were exploited with these loans and how the governments of wealthy debtor nations took advantage of the situation to force decisions in their favour and for their own benefit. These loans were used as a means of extortion, and rather than freeing developing nations economically, and their high-interest loans kept them in bondage. If you think this was only done in the past, you may be surprised to know how prevalent this practise still is today.

In most developed countries, the rate of interest is regulated by law—but in places where there is no regulation or supervision, private banks have charged huge, usurious rates of interest.

Unregulated money lenders have had no mercy on people and often prey on the poor. In the absence of any regulation, they have charged as high a rate of interest as benefited them. Lenders like pawnshops and so-called “payday lenders” often make their money from society's most impoverished, most honorable, and most uneducated segments. They are fully aware of the vulnerability of the people who come to them in times of great need when there is no other option for help—and some pawnshops see their misfortune as an opportunity to make a great amount of money from the poorest of the poor.

All of these predatory practices produce a profit at any cost, without any other consideration. The bottom line is making money, and it does not matter who is being hurt or destroyed in the process. There is no consideration or room for morality in these actions.

What has religion done about these practices? It should come as no surprise that the Jewish Faith, Islam and Christianity did not encourage the practice of charging interest. Christ famously drove the moneylenders from the temple. Sadly, though, the followers of each of these religions eventually ignored the moral and spiritual principles involved and began to charge interest to their fellow believers.

The Baha’i teachings allow the practice of charging interest—but apply certain conditions that must be considered. The most important condition is that it should be a “good loan:”

**“One can seldom find a person who would manifest such consideration towards his fellow-man, his countryman or towards his own brother and would show such tender solicitude for him as to be well-disposed to grant him a loan on benevolent terms ...” [Such loans as bear no interest and are repayable whenever the borrower pleases]. – Baha’u’llah, Tablets of Baha’u’llah, pp. 132-133.**

Baha’u’llah wrote that charging interest was lawful, but said:

**“However, this is a matter that should be practiced with moderation and fairness ... We exhort the loved ones of God to observe justice and fairness, and to do that which would prompt the friends of God to evince tender mercy and compassion towards each other. “ – Baha’u’llah, Tablets of Baha’u’llah p. 133.**

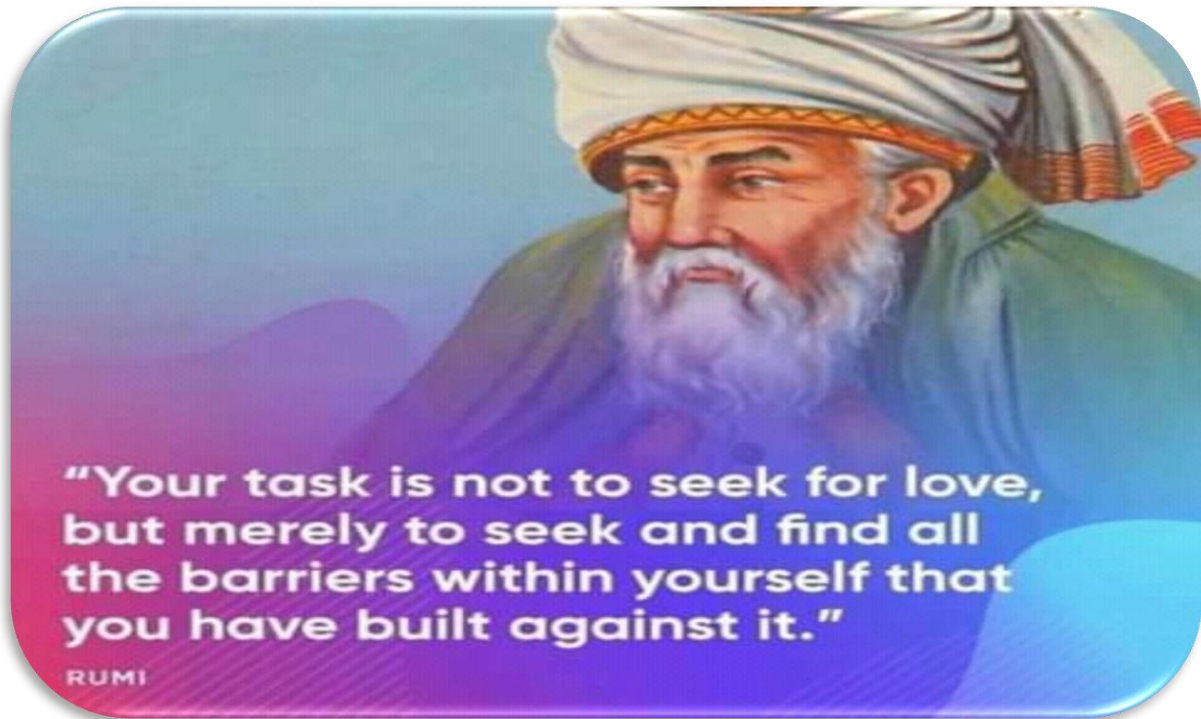
The Baha’i teachings recognize that a high interest rate on any loan is unfair because it puts a heavy burden on the economic life of the individual or the nation, which, in turn, diminishes the quality of life.

Baha’u’llah emphasized the concept of a good loan, meaning that the interest rate had to be such that it did not unduly burden the borrower and that it benefited everyone. With a good loan, the person or firm

*lending the money gets an adequate amount of interest, and the person borrowing is happy because he can afford to pay it.*

*A good loan basically charges a fair, moderate and reasonable rate of interest, using the Baha'i principles of kindness and moderation to help our fellow human beings prosper materially and enjoy the necessities of life—and to put an end to extreme financial hardship for individuals and countries. We should decide the rate of interest by sympathy for others and not greed.*

### **Famous quotes:**



### **Upcoming Events:**

**Coming feast: Asma, Names, August 19, 2021, 7 PM**

**Next feast: Izzat, Might, August 7, 2021, 7 PM**

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