

Lights of 'Irfán

Studies in the Principal Bahá'í Beliefs

*Papers Presented at the
'Irfán Colloquia and Seminars*



Book Nineteen



'Asr-i-Jadíd Publisher
Darmstadt, Germany

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Sponsored by the Haj Mehdi Arjmand Memorial Fund
and the Nadia Saadat Memorial Scholarship Grant

175 B.E. 2018 C.E.
ISBN 978-3-942426-34-3

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O My brother! Sanctify thy heart, illumine thy soul, and sharpen thy sight, that thou mayest perceive the sweet accents of the Birds of Heaven and the melodies of the Doves of Holiness warbling in the Kingdom of eternity, and perchance apprehend the inner meaning of these utterances and their hidden mysteries. For otherwise, wert thou to interpret these words according to their outward meaning, thou couldst never prove the truth of the Cause of Him Who came after Jesus, nor silence the opponents, nor prevail over the contending disbelievers.

– Bahá'u'lláh, *Gems of Divine Mysteries*, ¶23

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Preface

The year 2017 was the start of three years designated for the bicentennial celebration of the twin birthdays of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. 'Irfán Colloquium is participating in this celebratory affairs by inviting scholarly research and presentations on topics related to the appearance, mission and revealed words of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. This volume of the *Lights of Irfan* contains some of those studies such as “The Countenance of Bahá'u'lláh in the Mirror of Mawlúd Tablets”, “Bahá'u'lláh's Life and Mission: This is the One Who Hath Glorified the Son,” and “A new Jewish Document on the Mission of Baha'u'llah.”

The concept of freedom, as presented and defined in the Bahá'í Writings, is extensively explored in the article on “Freedom and the Bahá'í Writings” and some of the aspects of freedom are dealt with in the article on “Power and the Bahá'í community.”

“Power and the Bahá'í community” is an attempt at exploring the dynamic nature of the New World Order of Bahá'u'lláh in recreating society. It examines two inter-related problems facing society: first the fact that a large proportion of people are practically excluded from, or are unable to fully participate in, society, and second, the balance between individual freedom and central authority has not been satisfactorily resolved.

Study of *Kitáb-i-Íqán* (The Book of Certitude), is emphatically recommended by Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi. Some important concepts elucidated in that blessed text are dealt with in the article on “The Kitáb-i-Íqán Revolutionizing the Concepts of Religion, Eschatology and Theology.”

The unity of humankind is the pivotal mission of the Bahá'í Faith. The economic consequences of unity are discussed in the article “An Analytical Perspective of Economic Consequences of Unity.”

“Laozi, a Lost Prophet? The Challenge of the Dao De Jing for the Bahá'í Universe of Discourse” opens a new field in the Bahá'í studies, i.e. comparative studies of Bahá'í teachings and belief systems and various religious traditions prevalent in the eastern Asian countries, particularly Daoism. Articles on such studies will be welcome for publication in the *Lights of 'Irfán*.

“The End of Days” presents a brief review of the question of expectation in religions prior to the advent of Bahá’u’lláh, namely the end of current history and the start of messianic times, when a divinely inspired, and guided holy leader will come to the world to initiate an eternal era of bliss, has occupied humanity to this very day. It finally deals with the content of an antique manuscript in Hebrew, Judeo Arabic and Aramaic written by a Jewish Bahá’í dedicated to proving the divinity of Bahá’u’lláh.

The section on translation contains a provisional translation of a Tablet revealed by Bahá’u’lláh that includes some ancient Persian poems. It examines the importance of poetry in the history of Bahá’í Faith and in the Bahá’í Writings.

This section also includes provisional translation of some of the poems composed by Rúḥu’lláh Varqá, a very young Bahá’í poet who was martyred together with his father, a well-known Bahá’í poet and Hand of the Cause of God, ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá, as well as a very brief biographical sketch of Rúḥu’lláh Varqá.

The section on Elucidations includes a compilation of the Writings related to the law of fasting in the form of classified topical summaries. It facilitates having a complete view of various aspects of fasting. This section also contains the recent guidance of the Universal House of Justice on the translation of Arabic verses.

During the recent months, ‘Irfán Colloquium and ‘Irfán publications lost two valuable colleagues, Dr. Muhammad Afnan and Dr. Heshmat Shariary, whose research and studies greatly enriched the quality of ‘Irfán publications. Their short biographies are published in the section on In Memoriam.

Provisional translations of the Bahá’í Writings in English by the authors are for the documentation of the contents of the articles and should not be separately published and distributed as authorized translations. Articles are published in this volume according to the alphabetical order of the authors’ surnames.

‘Irfán publications are sponsored by the generous support of Haj Mehdi Arjmand Memorial Fund and voluntary contributions of the friends of the ‘Irfán Colloquium. It is hoped that such supports and also the collaboration of scholars would make it possible to continue ‘Irfán project and services.