

Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár

The Dawning-place of the Praise of God

1 The Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár is a unique concept in the annals of religion and symbolizes the teachings of the new Day of God.

The Universal House of Justice 18 December 2014 to the Bahá'ís in Iran

2 In the Bahá'í writings, the term “Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár” has variously been used to designate the gathering of the believers for prayers at dawn; a structure where the divine verses are recited; the entire institution of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár and its dependencies; and the central edifice itself, often also referred to as a “Temple” or a “House of Worship”. All these can be regarded as aspects of the gradual implementation of the law set out for humankind by Bahá'u'lláh in His Most Holy Book.

The Universal House of Justice 18 December 2014 to the Bahá'ís in Iran

3 We have called upon the Bahá'ís to see in their endeavours of community building the **creation of a new pattern of how society can be**. Taken in its entirety, that pattern fosters capacity for service—for the education of young generations, for the empowerment of the youth, for the spiritual education of children, for the enhancement of the capacity to draw upon the influence of the Word of God in accompanying others into the field of service, and for the social and economic advancement of a people in the light of the divine teachings for the age. Essential to that pattern is the devotional meeting—a communal aspect of the godly life and a dimension of the concept of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár—which represents a marvellous opportunity for your community not only to worship the Almighty and seek His benedictions in your own lives, but to extend to your fellow citizens the spiritual energies of prayer, to restore for them the purity of worship, to kindle in their hearts faith in the confirmations of God, and to strengthen in them, no less than in yourselves, eagerness to serve the nation and humanity and to show constructive resilience in the path of justice.

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4 **First mention of devotional meetings:**

“...the flourishing of the community, especially at the local level, demands a significant enhancement in patterns of behaviour: those patterns by which the collective expression of the virtues of the individual members and the functioning of the Spiritual Assembly are manifest in the unity and fellowship of the community and the dynamism of its activity and growth. This calls for the integration of the component elements - adults, youth and children - in spiritual, social, educational and administrative activities; and their engagement in local plans of teaching and development. It implies a collective will and sense of purpose to perpetuate the Spiritual Assembly through annual elections. It involves the practice of collective worship of God. **Hence, it is essential to the spiritual life of the community that the friends hold regular devotional meetings in local Bahá'í centres, where available, or elsewhere, including the homes of believers.**”

Universal House of Justice Riḍván 1996, to the Bahá'ís of the World

5 **Relates to the law of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár**

“The spiritual growth generated by individual devotions is reinforced by loving association among the friends in every locality, **by worship as a community and by service to the Faith and to one's fellow human beings**. These communal aspects of the godly life relate to the law of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár which appears in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Although the time has not come for the building of local Mashriq'u'l-Adhkárs, **the holding of regular meetings for worship open to all** and the involvement of Bahá'í communities in projects of humanitarian service are expressions of this element of Bahá'í life and a further step in the implementation of the Law of God.”

Universal House of Justice 28 December 1999, to the Bahá'ís of the World (the above two quotes are also from: The Universal House of Justice, 2001 Sep 19, *Definition and Scope of 'Devotional Meetings'*)

6 **Devotional Gatherings kindle the stirrings of the spirit and ignite the flames of service**

Devotional gatherings, the embryo of the local Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár, kindle the stirrings of the spirit and ignite the flame of service.

Universal House of Justice, 5 January 2015 to the US National Spiritual Assembly

7 These undertakings, **inextricably linked to the development of community life now being fostered everywhere through acts of devotion and service**, are further steps in the sublime task entrusted to humanity by Baha'u'llah to build Houses of Worship "throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions"--centres in which souls may gather "harmoniously attuned one to another" to hear the divine verses and to offer supplications, and from which "the voices of praise may rise to the Kingdom" and the "fragrance of God" be diffused.

Universal House of Justice, 1 August 2014 to the Bahá'ís of the World

8 In every case, these dawning places of His remembrance **represent the rising influence of the Faith of God** in society.

The Universal House of Justice 18 December 2014 to the Bahá'ís in Írán

9 ...under the guiding hand of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, **a pattern of communal worship—the unity it engenders and the desire to be of service that it inspires**—became an integral part of many a local Bahá'í community in Iran.

The Universal House of Justice 18 December 2014 to the Bahá'ís in Írán

10 **Insights from the exertions made to raise up the first two Houses of Worship**

As the friends worldwide rejoice in these heartening advances, their energies remain focused on the processes gaining strength in cluster after cluster. In this, **they have not failed to appreciate the dynamic interaction between worship and endeavours to uplift the spiritual, social, and material conditions of society**. May all those who are thus labouring in towns and cities, neighbourhoods and villages, derive insights from the exertions made to raise up the first two Houses of Worship at the turn of the twentieth century, in the East and then in the West.

In the city of 'Ishqábád, a devoted band of believers who settled from Persia, and who, for a time, found peace and tranquility in Turkistan, bent their energies towards the creation of a pattern of life that would reflect the exalted spiritual and social principles enshrined in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. In a span of a few decades, this group, originally consisting of a handful of families, was joined there by others and grew to a few thousand believers. This community, fortified by ties of camaraderie and animated by unity of purpose and a spirit of faithfulness, was enabled to reach a high degree of cohesiveness and development, for which it gained renown throughout the Bahá'í world. These friends, guided by their understanding of the divine Teachings, and within the bounds of the religious freedom they were accorded, toiled to create the conditions that would lead to the founding of a *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, that "*crowning institution in every Bahá'í community*". On a befitting tract of land in the centre of the city that had been obtained some years before with the consent of the Blessed Beauty Himself, facilities were built for communal well-being—a meeting hall, schools for children, a hostel for visitors, and a small clinic, among others. A sign of the notable achievements of the Bahá'ís in 'Ishqábád, who in those productive years became distinguished for their prosperity, magnanimity, and intellectual and cultural attainments, was their attention to ensuring that all Bahá'í children and youth were literate in a society with rampant illiteracy, especially among girls. Within such an environment of unified endeavour and progress, and fostered at every stage of development by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a magnificent House of Worship emerged--the most prominent edifice in the area. For over twenty years, the friends experienced the heavenly joy of having realized their lofty aim: the establishment of a focal point of worship, a nerve centre of community life, a place where souls gathered at daybreak for humble invocation and communion before flowing out of its doors to engage in their daily pursuits. While the forces of irreligion eventually swept through the region and thwarted hopes, the brief appearance of a *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* in 'Ishqábád is an enduring testament to the volition and effort of a body of believers who established a rich pattern of life deriving its impetus from the power of the Creative Word.

In the Western Hemisphere, shortly after work commenced on the House of Worship in 'Ishqábád, the members of the nascent Bahá'í community in North America were galvanized to demonstrate their faith and devotion by constructing a Temple of their own, and they wrote in 1903 to seek the Master's consent. From that moment, the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* became inseparably intertwined with the fate of those dedicated servants of Bahá'u'lláh. While progress on this complex project was

obstructed over decades by the effects of two world wars and a widespread economic depression, each stage in its development was intimately tied to the expansion of the community and the unfoldment of its administration. On the same day as the interment of the sacred remains of the Báb on Mount Carmel in March 1909, delegates gathered to establish the Bahá'í Temple Unity, a national organization whose elected Board became the nucleus of the far-flung local communities of the continent. This development soon gave rise to the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada. 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself laid the cornerstone of the building during His travels to North America, endowing the Mother Temple of the West with tremendous spiritual potentialities. And contributions for this historic enterprise flowed from Bahá'í centres in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific--a demonstration of the solidarity and sacrifice of the Bahá'ís of the East and West.

Universal House of Justice, 1 August 2014 to the Bahá'ís of the World

11 **Dependencies**

The House of Worship forms the central edifice of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* (the Dawning-place of the Praise of God), a complex which, as it unfolds in the future, **will comprise in addition to the House of Worship a number of dependencies dedicated to social, humanitarian, educational, and scientific pursuits**. 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* as "*one of the most vital institutions in the world*", and Shoghi Effendi indicates that it exemplifies in tangible form the integration of "*Bahá'í worship and service*". Anticipating the future development of this institution, Shoghi Effendi envisages that the House of Worship and its dependencies "*shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant.*" In the future, Bahá'í Houses of Worship will be constructed in every town and village.

Notes section of *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 190

- 12 As the place from which spiritual forces are to radiate, **the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* is the focal point for dependencies to be raised up for the well-being of humanity and is the expression of a common will and eagerness to serve**. These dependencies—centres of education and scientific learning as well as cultural and humanitarian endeavour—embody the ideals of social and spiritual progress to be achieved through the application of knowledge, and demonstrate how, when religion and science are in harmony, they elevate the station of the human being and lead to the flourishing of civilization. As your lives amply demonstrate, worship, though essential to the inner life of the human being and vital to spiritual development, must also lead to deeds that give outward expression to that inner transformation. This concept of worship—inseparable from service—is promulgated by the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. In this connection Shoghi Effendi states:

Divorced from the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific pursuits centring around the Dependencies of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, Bahá'í worship, however exalted in its conception, however passionate in fervour, can never hope to achieve beyond the meagre and often transitory results produced by the contemplations of the ascetic or the communion of the passive worshiper. It cannot afford lasting satisfaction and benefit to the worshiper himself, much less to humanity in general, unless and until **translated and transfused into that dynamic and disinterested service to the cause of humanity** which it is the supreme privilege of the Dependencies of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* to facilitate and promote.

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References about the history of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* online:

http://bahai-library.com/whitmore_city_love

http://www.bahai-encyclopedia-project.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=70:mashriqul-adhkar&catid=36:administrationinstitutions