

The Consent of Parents to Marriage

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CONTENTS

From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

From letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

From letters written by the Universal House of Justice

From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

It hath been laid down in the Bayán that marriage is dependent upon the consent of both parties. Desiring to establish love, unity and harmony amidst Our servants, We have conditioned it, once the couple's wish is known, upon the permission of their parents, lest enmity and rancour should arise amongst them. And in this We have yet other purposes. Thus hath Our commandment been ordained.

Kitáb-i-Aqdas, page 42

Marriage is conditioned on the consent of both parties and their parents, whether the woman be a maiden or not.

Synopsis and Codification of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book of Bahá'u'lláh, 1st edition. (Haifa, Bahá'í World Center, 1973), page 39.

[ed. note: Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Synopsis and Codification, page 150]

From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

In this glorious Faith marriage arrangements which are made by parents for their children while the latter are young and have not yet attained the age of maturity are not acceptable. This matter is the responsibility of the couple when they attain the age of maturity.

From a Tablet—translated from the Persian

From letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

It is surely a very unfortunate case when the parents and children differ on some grave issues of life such as marriage, but the best way is not to flout each other’s opinion nor to discuss it in a charged atmosphere but rather try to settle it in an amicable way.

29 May 1929 to two believers.

About the consent of parents for marriage: this is required before and also after the man or woman is twenty-one years of age. It is also required in the event of a second marriage, after the dissolution of the first whether through death or through divorce.

The parental consent is also a binding obligation irrespective of whether the parents are Bahá’ís or not, whether they are friendly or opposed to the Cause. In the event of the death of both parents, the consent of a guardian is not required.

10 October 1936 to an individual believer.

... the validity of a Bahá’í marriage is conditioned upon the consent of the two parties and their parents only. So that in case the other members of your family show any dislike or opposition to your sister’s union with, their approval does under no circumstances invalidate it. Your parents’ approval would be sufficient, even through all the rest of your family may violently oppose it.

31 March 1937 to two believers.

The validity of a Bahá’í marriage is dependent upon the free and full consent of all four parents. The freedom of the parents in the exercise of their right is unrestricted and unconditioned. They may refuse their consent on any ground, and they are

responsible for the decision to God alone.

19 March 1938 to an individual believer.

This great law He has laid down to strengthen the social fabric, to knit closer the ties of the home, to place a certain gratitude and respect in the hearts of children for those who have given them life and sent their souls out on the eternal journey towards their Creator. We Bahá'ís must realize that in present-day society the exact opposite process is taking place: young people care less and less for their parents' wishes, divorce is considered a natural right, and obtained on the flimsiest and most unwarrantable and shabby pretexts. People separated from each other, especially if one of them has had full custody of the children, are only too willing to belittle the importance of the partner in marriage also responsible as a parent for bringing those children into this world. The Bahá'ís must, through rigid adherence to the Bahá'í laws and teachings, combat these corrosive forces which are so rapidly destroying home life and the beauty of family relationships, and tearing down the moral structure of society.

25 October 1947 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States.

The "Aqdas" requires permission of the parents for marriage. There is no mention of permission of anybody else being necessary.

31 January 1955 to an individual believer.

If you persevere and make it plain to the mother that you will not marry her daughter without her consent, it is quite possible she will become impressed by your devotion to your Faith, and give her permission. In any case, your Bahá'í duty in the matter is quite clear.

6 March 1955 to an individual believer.

From letters written by the Universal House of Justice

We gain the impression from Mr.'s letter that he looks upon the law requiring consent of parents before marriage as a mere administrative regulation, and does not realize that this is a law of great importance affecting the very foundation of human society. Moreover, he seems not to appreciate that in the Bahá'í Faith the spiritual

and administrative aspects are complementary and that the social laws of the Faith are as binding as the purely spiritual ones.

4 December 1963 to a National Spiritual Assembly.

It is perfectly true that Bahá'u'lláh's statement that the consent of all living parents is required for marriage places a grave responsibility on each parent. When the parents are Bahá'ís they should, of course, act objectively in withholding or granting their approval. They cannot evade this responsibility by merely acquiescing in their child's wish, nor should they be swayed by prejudice; but, whether they be Bahá'ís or non-Bahá'ís, the parents' decision is binding, whatever the reason that may have motivated it. Children must recognize and understand that this act of consenting is the duty of a parent. They must have respect in their hearts for those who have given them life, and whose good pleasure they must at all times strive to win.

1 February 1968 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States.

Bahá'ís who cannot marry because of lack of consent of one or more parents could consult with their Local Spiritual Assembly, to see whether it may suggest a way to change the attitude of any of the parents involved. The believers, when faced with such problems, should put their trust in Bahá'u'lláh, devote more time to the service, the teaching and the promotion of His Faith, be absolutely faithful to His injunctions on the observance of an unsullied, chaste life, and rely upon Him to open the way and remove the obstacle, or make known His will.

9 September 1969 to an individual believer.

While we have the greatest sympathy for the individuals involved in these unfortunate circumstances, we can reach no other conclusion but that consent of parents must be obtained in all cases before marriage can take place. Obedience to the laws of Bahá'u'lláh will necessarily impose hardships in individual cases. No one should expect, upon becoming a Bahá'í, that his faith will not be tested, and to our finite understanding of such matters these tests may occasionally seem unbearable. But we are aware of the assurance which Bahá'u'lláh Himself has given the believers that they will never be called upon to meet a test greater than their capacity to endure.

29 January 1970 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Hawaiian Islands.

Foster parents or relatives who may act in loco parentis are not required by Bahá'í law to give their consent to the marriage of the children they raise although there is no objection to the children obtaining such consent, should they wish to do so.

9 April 1970 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy.

The consent required by the Kitáb-i-Aqdas is the consent of the parents of the parties to the marriage. No one else can give this consent, and the Universal House of Justice is not empowered to change the law in any way nor to waive the requirement.

10 April 1973 to an individual believer.

In the Bahá'í Faith it is the right of each individual to choose without duress his future partner in marriage and the freedom of the parents in exercising their right to give or refuse consent is unconditional...

11 April 1978 to a National Spiritual Assembly.

As to whether you may continue indefinitely to seek your parents' consent, there is nothing in the law of Bahá'u'lláh to prevent this, but no engagement should be announced until consent has been obtained.

24 February 1981 to an individual believer.
