



Social and Economic Dimensions of the Law of Huqúqu'lláh

HUQÚQU'LLÁH helps us learn about detachment. Detachment from excessive attraction to the material world, along with the counter balance of involvement in the spiritual realm, is the key to an ideal way of life. When we talk about detachment, most people, especially non-Bahá'ís, may believe that it refers to total isolation from earthly things. But our Faith tells us that as we are part of the material world, on which our life depends, we cannot separate ourselves entirely from material elements. We therefore have to try not to be deceived by their appearance, which tends to take man away from the path of God, and to realise that the material world has been designed for our advancement and progress. We can and should use our material belongings to advance our spiritual aims and growth. Through detachment we can free ourselves from the web of materialism and have a clear vision of the real value of things. Once we reach such a stage, we will sacrifice a part of our material wealth for a higher spiritual purpose.

Observance of the law of Huqúqu'lláh provides us with a practical opportunity to develop the quality of detachment. The attainment of the virtue of true detachment by individual members of the community is bound to bring about major social transformations needed as the basis of a more just society.

The beloved Master, in one of His Tablets, clearly explains a very important point in relation to the Creation. He says:

“Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly.” (1)

These words of the beloved Master, uttered at the beginning of the century, have now been scientifically confirmed through progress in such fields of science as biology, ecology, and the environment, and through increasing insights into the mysteries of our physical nature.

Think of a tree. Where do its leaves, flowers and fruit come from? The tree takes its food from the soil for its growth. The tree brings out its hidden potentials when it grows, but it is the soil that feeds the tree and is the source of food for the growth of all its organs. So, in reality the leaves, branches, flowers and fruit all originate from the soil. And each year, as a matter of course, the tree sheds its leaves, thus giving part of its wealth back to its source of growth, the soil. The fallen leaves don't benefit the soil. They act as fertiliser and their benefit goes to the tree itself. This physical process is similar to the law of Huqúqu'lláh, and, as Bahá'u'lláh has stated, the benefit of such deeds (payment of Huqúqu'lláh) “*reverteth unto the individuals themselves*”. (2)

The implementation of the law of Huqúqu'lláh can also be seen as the inception of an evolutionary process which, in the course of ages and centuries to come, will assist man to

become an effective element of moderation in an ever flowing source of prosperity and well-being in human society. Through this law, man can contribute his share to the great system of mutual aid and interdependence which, according to our beloved Master, binds all created things together.

A dramatic change of attitude towards material wealth, when worldly belongings are seen as part of our whole being aimed at our spiritual growth and payment of Huqúq becomes the desire of every heart, will gradually bring about a fundamental change in all human behaviour affecting the work ethic, productivity, and wealth distribution. As a result, the whole economy will be revolutionised.

The following personal experience from Africa shows how the impact of Huqúq on the world's economy has already begun, no matter how small the scale at this stage:

Shortly after the loving invitation of the Universal House of Justice for universal observance of the law of Huqúqu'lláh, there was a family that was eager to pay its Huqúq. Upon calculation, they found that they were not eligible. Not wanting to be deprived of this great bounty, they decided to pay a sum as their Huqúq. The husband went to see the Huqúqu'lláh representative and offered his payment. The representative, acting on his own understanding and knowing well the difficult financial situation of the family, refused the payment and encouraged the man not to pay as the family was not eligible. The man went away heartbroken and sad because the family was deprived of the bounties of paying Huqúq, but he returned several months later. With happiness and joy, he again offered to pay his Huqúq, explaining that the family, eager to partake from the bounties of paying Huqúq, decided to review its whole financial situation and change some of its spending behaviours in the hope that it would become eligible to pay its Huqúq. He explained how more members of the family began to work and their spending habits were modified. "Now," he said, "six months later, we are better off financially, have enough savings, and are truly eligible to pay our Huqúq. We are delighted to make our first payment."

Another Huqúqu'lláh representative received a payment with a letter from the donor saying how the desire to pay Huqúqu'lláh had been the motivation for his change of attitude towards work and earning. The donor wrote: "The enclosed cheque fulfils my heart's desire for the last 10 years to pay Dr Firaydoun Javaheri Huqúqu'lláh and have the bounty of purifying my possessions and receiving this wonderful gift. For me this is a great turning point in my spiritual life and practice. It culminates three years of concerted work to reform my spending habits and to bring my life more in conformity to the spirit and principles of the Faith. I cannot begin to describe the great joy that I feel at being able to write this letter and send to you this cheque." (3)

Beloved friends, this is just the beginning. Under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh, and when the majority of the people of the world look upon "work" performed in the spirit of "worship" and as a way to partake of the bounties of Huqúq, the whole world economy will be propelled by spiritual forces and will truly be a divine economy.

Going back again to the social impacts of the law, let us think for a moment of the spiritual qualities we need to develop in order to observe the law of Huqúq befittingly: honesty, trustworthiness, sincerity, detachment, eagerness, joy and many others. The law of Huqúqu'lláh is an opportunity – a laboratory in which everyone can, in the privacy of his or her conscience, develop these qualities. It provides an evolutionary process for our spiritual growth. Its observance provides us with the unique opportunity to develop such qualities and virtues that are lamentably scarce in today's world and are the bedrock of a just and peaceful society.

The payment of Huqúqu'lláh is a sign of our love for our Lord...

The payment of Huqúqu'lláh is a sign of our love for our Lord and obedience to Him, a proof of our steadfastness in the Covenant and a symbol of our trustworthiness in the Faith of God. It develops our spiritual qualities, leading us towards perfection. Its observance strengthens, more than any other law of God, the virtue of trustworthiness, which is, as attested by Bahá'u'lláh Himself, the foundation of justice and tranquillity amongst humankind:

“We ask God, exalted be His glory, to confirm each one of the friends in that land in the acquisition of such praiseworthy characteristics as shall conduce to the spread of justice and equity among the peoples of the world. The first, the fundamental purpose underlying creation hath ever been, and will continue to be, none other than the appearance of trust-worthiness and godliness, of sincerity and goodwill amongst mankind, for these qualities are the cause of peace, security and tranquillity. Blessed are those who possess such virtues.” (4)

Payment of Huqúq organises and balances our material efforts and protects us from excessive desires that are born in our human nature and, when unleashed, can turn into obstacles to our spiritual growth. When man realises that by observing this law he becomes one of the trustees of God, and that a part of his income could be honoured by being accepted by his Lord, God’s presence is felt in all his endeavours, and he will live his life in a just and legitimate manner in order that his offering may deserve to be spent in the path of God.

Payment of Huqúqu’lláh sets in motion a process of spiritual transformation that paves the way for the establishment of a just and peaceful society.

Our limited insight and understanding fail to discover the wisdom hidden in the application of this sacred law, about which the Pen of Glory has stated in His Most Holy Book:

“in it there are benefits and wisdom’s beyond the ken of anyone but God, the Omniscient, the All-Informed.” (5)

It is too soon to anticipate the revolutionary and transmuting effects of such an injunction which, once implemented, will transform the present world economy, with all its complexities based on ego and self-interest, into a divine economic system founded on fellowship, love and sacrifice. This unique law, which has no exact parallel in past religions, is a bond connecting the spiritual realm of God with the material world of man, and confers on each believer the right to the material belongings with which providence has endowed him, save that portion which God reserves as His own Right, destined to serve as the material means for the promulgation of His Cause. In turn, each believer is called upon to commit himself to care devotedly for what God has entrusted to him, returning it with radiance and joy as a token of his faithfulness, trustworthiness and love.

In its 1991 Ridván message, the Universal House of Justice refers to the law of Huqúqu’lláh as “*a profoundly private act of conscience that promotes the common good*”. Huqúqu’lláh not only provides the base for solving complex socio-economic problems, but it helps to bind the body of humanity together in a fair and equitable way. The law can be seen as a testimony to the maturity of the human race, the beginning of a process that will transform human life individually and collectively, and will hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth. Implementation of the law of Huqúqu’lláh can be seen as the dawn of a new phase of the spiritual evolution of the human race, a spiritual evolution that aims at the transformation of both human nature and human society.

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References

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