



International Environment Forum

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[Home](#)

Compilation on Soil and Earth

[Soil](#)

COMPILATION ON SOIL AND EARTH

This compilation gathers a selection of references to soil, earth and minerals in the Bahá'í Writings, including the ways these are referred to both symbolically and literally.

CONTENTS

[Mineral Kingdom](#)

[Agriculture](#)

METAPHORICAL USES

[Humility](#)

[Earth as Tomb](#)

[Rain on Soil](#)

[Fertile versus Barren](#)

Cultivation - Divine Education

MINERAL KINGDOM

When we ponder over the conditions of phenomena, we observe that all phenomena are composed of single elements. This singular cell-element travels and has its courings through all the grades of existence. I wish you to ponder carefully over this. This cellular element has at some time been in the mineral kingdom. While staying in the mineral kingdom it has had its courings and transformations through myriads of images and forms. Having perfected its journey in the mineral kingdom, it has ascended to the vegetable kingdom; and in the vegetable kingdom it has again had journeys and transformations through myriads of conditions. Having accomplished its functions in the vegetable kingdom, the cellular element ascends to the animal kingdom.

In the animal kingdom again it goes through the composition of myriads of images, and then we have it in the human kingdom. In the human kingdom likewise it has its transformations and courings through multitudes of forms. In short, this single primordial atom has had its great journeys through every stage of life, and in every stage it was endowed with a special and particular virtue or characteristic.

Consequently, the great divine philosophers have had the following epigram: All things are involved in all things. For every single phenomenon has enjoyed the postulates of God, and in every form of these infinite electrons it has had its characteristics of perfection.

Thus this flower once upon a time was of the soil. The animal eats the flower or its fruit, and it thereby ascends to the animal kingdom. Man eats the meat of the animal, and there you have its ascent into the human kingdom, because all phenomena are divided into that which eats and that which is eaten. Therefore, every primordial atom of these atoms, singly and indivisible, has had its courings throughout all the sentient creation, going constantly into the aggregation of the various elements. Hence do you have the conservation of energy and the infinity of phenomena, the indestructibility of phenomena, changeless and immutable, because life cannot suffer annihilation but only change.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Foundations of World Unity*, pages 51-52)

The rational proof of this is that the atoms of the material elements are transferable from one form of existence to another, from one degree and kingdom to another, lower or higher. For example, an atom of the soil or dust of earth may traverse the kingdoms from mineral to man by successive incorporations into the bodies of the organisms of those kingdoms. At one time it enters into the formation of the mineral or rock; it is then absorbed by the vegetable kingdom and becomes a constituent of the body and fibre of a tree; again it is appropriated by the animal, and at a still later period is found in the body of man.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 87-88)

The excellency, the adornment and the perfection of the earth is to be verdant and fertile through the bounty of the clouds of springtime. Plants grow; flowers and fragrant herbs spring up; fruit-bearing trees become full of blossoms and bring forth fresh and new fruit. Gardens become beautiful, and meadows adorned; mountains and plains are clad in a green robe, and gardens, fields, villages and cities are decorated. This is the prosperity of the mineral world.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Some Answered Questions*, page 78)

AGRICULTURE

The fundamental basis of the community is agriculture, tillage of the soil.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 217)

Each one shall have the utmost welfare and well-being. To solve this problem we must begin with the farmer; there will we lay a foundation for system and order because the peasant class and the agricultural class exceed other classes in the importance of their service. In every village there must be established a general storehouse which will have a number of revenues.

The first revenue will be that of the tenth or tithes.

The second revenue (will be derived) from the animals.

The third revenue, from the minerals, that is to say, every mine prospected or discovered, a third thereof will go to this vast storehouse.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Foundations of World Unity*, Page 39)

METAPHORICAL USES

Wherefore sow the seeds of wisdom and knowledge in the pure soil of the heart, and keep them hidden, till the hyacinths of divine wisdom spring from the heart and not from mire and clay.

(Baha'u'llah: *The Hidden Words (Persian)*, page 36)

Just now the soil of human hearts seems like black earth, but in the innermost substance of this dark soil there are thousands of fragrant flowers latent. We must endeavor to cultivate and awaken these potentialities, discover the secret treasure in this very mine and depository of God, bring forth these resplendent powers long hidden in human hearts. Then will the glories of both worlds be blended and increased and the quintessence of human existence be made manifest.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 294)

It is an essential condition of the soil of earth that thorns, weeds and fruitless trees may grow from it. Relatively speaking, this is evil; it is simply the lower state and baser product of nature.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 295)

HUMILITY

They who are the beloved of God, in whatever place they gather and whomsoever they may meet, must evince, in their attitude towards God, and in the manner of their celebration of His praise and glory, such humility and submissiveness that every atom of the dust beneath their feet may attest the depth of their devotion. The conversation carried by these holy souls should be informed with such power that these same atoms of dust will be thrilled by its influence. They should conduct themselves in such manner that the earth upon which they tread may never be allowed to address to them such words as these: "I am to be preferred above you. For witness, how patient I am in bearing the burden which the husbandman layeth upon me. I am the instrument that continually imparteth unto all beings the blessings with which He Who is the Source of all grace hath entrusted me. Notwithstanding the honor conferred upon me, and the unnumbered evidences of my wealth - a wealth that supplieth the needs of all creation - behold the measure of my humility, witness with what absolute submissiveness I allow myself to be trodden beneath the feet of men...."

(Baha'u'llah: *Gleanings*, pages 7-8)

What is it of which ye can rightly boast? Is it on your food and your drink that ye pride yourselves, on the riches ye lay up in your treasuries, on the diversity and the cost of the ornaments with which ye deck yourselves? If true glory were to consist in the possession of such perishable things, then the earth on which ye walk must needs vaunt itself over you, because it supplieth you, and bestoweth upon you, these very things, by the decree of the Almighty. In its bowels are contained, according to what God hath ordained, all that ye possess. From it, as a sign of His mercy, ye derive your riches. Behold then your state, the thing in which ye glory! Would that ye could perceive it!

(Baha'u'llah: *Gleanings*, pages 252-253)

Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory.

(Baha'u'llah: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, page 44)

O My servants! Be as resigned and submissive as the earth, that from the soil of your being there may blossom the fragrant, the holy and multicolored hyacinths of My knowledge.

(Baha'u'llah: *Gleanings*, page 322)

Thankful, the birds of the spirit seek only to fly in the high heavens and to sing out their songs with wondrous art. But the pitiable earthworms love only to tunnel into the ground, and what a mighty struggle they make to get themselves down into its depths! Even so are the sons of earth. Their highest aim is to augment their means of continuing on, in this vanishing world, this death in life; and this despite the fact that they are bound hand and foot by a thousand cares and sorrows, and never safe from danger, not even for the twinkling of an eye; never at any time secure, even from sudden death. Wherefore, after a brief span, are they utterly effaced, and no sign remaineth to tell of them, and no word of them is ever heard again.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha*, pages 175-176)

EARTH AS TOMB

In short, for a few days we live on this earth and eventually we are buried in it, it is our eternal tomb. Is it worth while that we should engage in bloodshed and tear one another to pieces for this eternal tomb? Nay, far from it, neither is God pleased with such conduct nor would any sane man approve of it.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha*, pages 300-301)

Rememberest thou not God's warning uttered in times past, that thou mayest be of them that heed His warning? He said, and He, verily, speaketh the truth: "From it (earth) have We created you, and unto it will We return you, and out of it will We bring you forth a second time." This is what God ordained unto all them that dwell on earth, be they high or low. It behoveth not, therefore, him who was created from dust, who will return unto it, and will again be brought forth out of it, to swell with pride before God, and before His loved ones, to proudly scorn them, and be filled with disdainful arrogance. Nay, rather it behoveth thee and those like thee to submit yourselves to them Who are the Manifestations of the unity of God, and to defer humbly to the faithful, who have forsaken their all for the sake of God, and have detached themselves from the things which engross men's attention, and lead them astray from the path of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised. Thus do We send down upon you that which shall profit you and profit them that have placed their whole trust and confidence in their Lord.

(Baha'u'llah: *Gleanings*, pages 231-232)

RAIN ON SOIL

There can be no doubt whatever that if for one moment the tide of His mercy and grace were to be withheld from the world, it would completely perish. For this reason, from the beginning that hath no beginning the portals of Divine mercy have been flung open to the face of all created things, and the clouds of Truth will continue to the end that hath no end to rain on the soil of human capacity, reality and personality their favors and bounties. Such hath been God's method continued from everlasting to everlasting.

(Baha'u'llah: *Gleanings*, pages 68-69)

Ye are the saplings which the hand of Loving-kindness hath planted in the soil of mercy, and which the showers of bounty have made to flourish.

(Baha'u'llah: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, page 25)

In like manner, endeavour to comprehend the meaning of the "changing of the earth." Know thou, that upon whatever hearts the bountiful showers of mercy, raining from the "heaven" of divine Revelation, have fallen, the earth of those hearts hath verily been changed into the earth of divine knowledge and wisdom. What myrtles of unity hath the soil of their hearts produced! What blossoms of true knowledge and wisdom hath their illumined bosoms yielded! Were the earth of their hearts to remain unchanged, how could such souls who have not been taught one letter, have seen no teacher, and entered no school, utter such words and display such knowledge as none can apprehend? Methinks they have been moulded from the clay of infinite knowledge, and kneaded with the water of divine wisdom. Therefore, hath it been said: "Knowledge is a light which God casteth into the heart of whomsoever He willeth."

(Baha'u'llah: *The Kitab-i-Iqan*, page 46)

Success or failure, gain or loss, must, therefore, depend upon man's own exertions. The more he striveth, the greater will be his progress. We fain would hope that the vernal showers of the bounty of God may cause the flowers of true understanding to spring from the soil of men's hearts, and may wash them from all earthly defilements.

(Baha'u'llah: *Gleanings*, pages 81-82)

Unless the Holy Spirit become intermediary, one cannot attain directly to the bounties of God. Do not overlook the obvious truths, for it is a self-evident fact that a child cannot be instructed without a teacher, and knowledge is a bounty from the bounties of God. The soil is not covered with grass and green without the rain of the cloud; therefore the cloud is the intermediary between the divine bounties and the soil. A body doth not develop and grow without the soul; therefore the soul is the medium of the spiritual life.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Baha'i World Faith*, page 370)

...the human reality is like the soil. If no bounty of rain descends from heaven upon the soil, if no heat of the sun penetrates, it will remain black, forbidding, unproductive; but when the moistening shower and the effulgent glow of the sun's rays fall upon it, beautiful and redolent flowers grow from its bosom.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 330)

God says in the glorious Qur'an: "The soil was black and dried. Then we caused the rain to descend upon it and immediately it became green, verdant, and every kind of plant sprouted

up luxuriantly."(Qur'an 22:5) In other words, He says the earth is black, but when the spring showers descend upon it that black soil is quickened, and variegated flowers are pushed forth. This means the souls of humanity belonging to the world of nature are black like unto the soil. But when the heavenly outpourings descend and the radiant effulgences appear, the hearts are resuscitated, are liberated from the darkness of nature and the flowers of divine mysteries grow and become luxuriant.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pages 5-6)

Then fragrant flowers of inner significances appear from the soil of human souls, and the whole being of man awakens to a new and divine activity.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 271)

FERTILE VERSUS BARREN

In the soil of whose heart will these holy seeds germinate?

(Baha'u'llah: *The Kitab-i-Iqan*, page 61)

O my brother! A divine Mine only can yield the gems of divine knowledge, and the fragrance of the mystic Flower can be inhaled only in the ideal Garden, and the lilies of ancient wisdom can blossom nowhere except in the city of a stainless heart. "In a rich soil, its plants spring forth abundantly by permission of its Lord, and in that soil which is bad, they spring forth but scantily."(Qur'an 7:57)

(Baha'u'llah: *The Kitab-i-Iqan*, page 191)

Should he discover a pure soil, let him sow the seed of the Word of God, otherwise it would be preferable to observe silence.

(Baha'u'llah: *Tablets of Baha'u'llah*, page 242)

Know verily that the purpose underlying all these symbolic terms and abstruse allusions, which emanate from the Revealers of God's holy Cause, hath been to test and prove the peoples of the world; that thereby the earth of the pure and illuminated hearts may be known from the perishable and barren soil. From time immemorial such hath been the way of God amidst His creatures, and to this testify the records of the sacred books.

(Baha'u'llah: *The Kitab-i-Iqan*, page 49)

Should rain fall upon salty, stony earth, it will never have effect; but when it falls upon good pure soil, green and verdant growth follows, and fruits are produced.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 92)

Sterile soil will produce nothing, even if the cloud of mercy pours rain upon it a thousand years. We must make the soil of our hearts receptive and fertile by tilling in order that the

rain of divine mercy may refresh them and bring forth roses and hyacinths of heavenly planting.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 148)

Christ spoke a parable in which He said His words were like the seeds of the sower; some fall upon stony ground, some upon sterile soil, some are choked by thorns and thistles, but some fall upon the ready, receptive and fertile ground of human hearts. When seeds are cast upon sterile soil, no growth follows. Those cast upon stony ground will grow a short time, but lacking deep roots will wither away. Thorns and thistles destroy others completely, but the seed cast in good ground brings forth harvest and fruitage.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 149)

No matter how much the cloud may rain, the sun may shine and the breezes blow, the soil that is sterile will give no growth. The ground that is pure and free from thorns and thistles receives and produces through the rain of the cloud of mercy. No matter how much the sun shines, it will have no effect upon the black rock, but in a pure and polished mirror its lights become resplendent. Therefore, we must develop capacity in order that the signs of the mercy of the Lord may be revealed in us. We must endeavor to free the soil of the hearts from useless weeds and sanctify it from the thorns of worthless thoughts in order that the cloud of mercy may bestow its power upon us. The doors of God are open, but we must be ready and fitted to enter.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 195)

CULTIVATION-DIVINE EDUCATION

When we consider existence, we see that the mineral, vegetable, animal and human worlds are all in need of an educator.

If the earth is not cultivated, it becomes a jungle where useless weeds grow; but if a cultivator comes and tills the ground, it produces crops which nourish living creatures. It is evident, therefore, that the soil needs the cultivation of the farmer. Consider the trees: if they remain without a cultivator, they will be fruitless, and without fruit they are useless; but if they receive the care of a gardener, these same barren trees become fruitful, and through cultivation, fertilization and engrafting the trees which had bitter fruits yield sweet fruits. These are rational proofs; in this age the peoples of the world need the arguments of reason.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Some Answered Questions*, page 7)

For instance, the function of a gardener is to till the soil of the mineral kingdom and plant a tree which under his training and cultivation will attain perfection of growth.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 77)

If we should relegate this plot of ground to its natural state, allow it to return to its original condition, it would become a field of thorns and useless weeds, but by cultivation it will become fertile soil, yielding a harvest. Deprived of cultivation, the mountain slopes would be jungles and forests without fruitful trees. The gardens bring forth fruits and flowers in proportion to the care and tillage bestowed upon them by the gardener. Therefore, it is not intended that the world of humanity should be left to its natural state. It is in need of the education divinely provided for it. The holy, heavenly Manifestations of God have been the Teachers. They are the divine Gardeners Who transform the jungles of human nature into fruitful orchards and make the thorny places blossom as the rose.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 353)

Holy souls are like soil which has been plowed and tilled with much earnest labor, the thorns and thistles cast aside and all weeds uprooted. Such soil is most fruitful, and the harvest from it will prove full and plenteous. In this same way man must free himself from the weeds of ignorance, thorns of superstitions and thistles of imitations that he may discover reality in the harvests of true knowledge.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 293-294)

The labourer cuts up the earth with his plough, and from that earth comes the rich and plentiful harvest. The more a man is chastened, the greater is the harvest of spiritual virtues shown forth by him.

(`Abdu'l-Baha: *Paris Talks*, page 51)

The fact of the matter is that service in the Cause is like the plough which ploughs the physical soil when seeds are sown. It is necessary that the soil be ploughed up, so that it can be enriched, and thus cause a stronger growth of the seed. In exactly the same way the evolution of the spirit takes place through ploughing up the soil of the heart so that it is a constant reflection of the Holy Spirit. In this way the human spirit grows and develops by leaps and bounds.

(Shoghi Effendi: *Living the Life* (Compilation), pages 24-25)

We are like ploughmen each of whom has his team to manage and his plough to direct, and in order to keep his furrow straight he must keep his eye on his goal and concentrate on his own task. If he looks to this side and that to see how Tom and Harry are getting on and to criticize their ploughing, then his own furrow will assuredly become crooked.

(Shoghi Effendi: *Living the Life* (Compilation), pages 3-4)



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