

## Handling Conflicting Opinions with Spiritual Insight

### Introduction-

“If people are unaccustomed or unable to listen with empathy to the insights of others, then they are doomed to living in a world where their social perspective is exclusively personal. When we personalize everything, we can develop a seriously incapacitating form of social blindness... Collective insight, then, becomes the key to solving collective problems.” —Joseph Shepheard, *A Wayfarer’s Guide to Bringing the Sacred Home*

### For Discussion-

Understand that knowledge to be in the mode of goodness by which a person sees one undivided imperishable reality within all diverse living beings.— *Bhagavad Gita*, 18.20

Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding. He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.—*Bible, Old Testament, Proverbs 9:6-9*

The Middle Way discovered by the Tathagata avoids both extremes; giving vision, giving knowledge, it leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbana. One should know what it is to extol and what it is to disparage, and knowing both, one should neither extol nor disparage but should teach only the Dhamma. One should know how to define pleasure, and knowing that, one should pursue pleasure within oneself. One should not utter covert speech, and one should not utter overt sharp speech. *Majjhima Nikaya 139, Aranavibhanga Sutta, The Exposition of Non Conflict*

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.— *Bible, New Testament, Ephesians 4:31*

Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend. —*Quran (41: 34)*

Nothing whatsoever can, in this Day, inflict a greater harm upon this Cause than dissension and strife, contention, estrangement and apathy, among the loved ones of God. Flee them, through the power of God and His sovereign aid, and strive ye to knit together the hearts of men, in His Name, the Unifier, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.—*Bahá’u’lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 8*

Attach no importance to self-seeking, rejection, arrogance, oppression and enmity. Heed them not. Deal in the contrary way. Be kind in truth, not only in appearance and outwardly. Every soul of the friends of God must concentrate his mind on this, that he may manifest the mercy of God and the bounty of the Forgiving One. He must do good to every soul whom he encounters, and render benefit to him, becoming the cause of improving the morals and correcting the thoughts so that the light of guidance may shine forth and the bounty of His Holiness the Merciful One may encompass. Love is light in whatsoever house it may shine and enmity is darkness in whatsoever abode it dwell.—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá’í World Faith, p. 217

**Further Discussion-**

1. How can we encourage love and unity in the face of conflicting opinions?
2. What spiritual principles do we have in common that might be used as a focus when discussing conflicting opinions?
3. How do we let go of ego and attachment so that we can listen well to the opinions of others?