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To the beloved participants in the national Bahá'í festival
held in the Yorkshire seaside resort of Scarborough, United Kingdom

Dearly loved Friends,

While you are gathered together to celebrate this wonderful festival sponsored by your esteemed National Spiritual Assembly, I am greatly honoured to convey to you this message of love and fellowship, supplicating that the Blessed Beauty may pour His confirmations and limitless bounties upon you and assist you to harvest excellent fruits from this historic gathering.

The involvement of the Bahá'í friends in various Bahá'í activities is an unparalleled bounty bestowed on them, attracting divine confirmations and illuminating the path of servitude to the Cause of God.

Surely through your participation in this memorable festival and through your commitment to engage actively in discharging your sacred responsibilities as a Bahá'í, you will perceive the sensitivity of this crucial period of our time, pregnant with disorder and perplexity throughout the planet, threatening the crumbling of the existing order worldwide, which according to our Holy Writings has to be replaced by the emergence of a new world civilization based on harmony, fellowship, and love.

When we look at the prevailing circumstances of the world, we can easily discern that the dark clouds of chaos and confusion have covered most parts of the world. The horrific spectre of the world's agitation and turmoil whistles and swells and approaches with giant steps. Now is the time for us to recall once again the Words of the Blessed Beauty reflected in a Tablet revealed in honour of a prominent Bahá'í of that time, **Haji** Muhammad Ibráhim Yazdí, translated into English by the Beloved Guardian. In this momentous Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh stated:

The world is in travail, and its agitation waxeth day by day. Its face is turned towards waywardness and unbelief. Such shall be its plight, that to disclose it now would not be meet and seemly. Its perversity will long continue. And when the appointed hour is come, there shall suddenly appear that which shall cause the limbs of mankind to quake. Then, and only then, will the Divine Standard be unfurled, and the Nightingale of Paradise warble its melody.

A brief analysis of these words indicates:

1. The world is in turmoil and agitation and like a sick, infected body struggles for its cure and recovery. The great historical occurrences from the time of the Blessed Beauty until now, such as the upheaval of different nations; the bloody conflict between Russia and Japan in 1905; the two world wars followed by economic and social crises; the rise and fall of governments; the birth and death of philosophical and political doctrines, such as capitalism, socialism, communism, etc., bear witness to what Bahá'u'lláh has prophesied for this evolutionary process propelled by God.

2. This period of decline and perplexity will continue for some time, during which human society will experience the worst bewilderment and confusion, leading to the total collapse of the existing order. The general tendency of the world will incline towards materialism, disbelief, and anarchy to such an extent that the Blessed Beauty refrained from disclosing its full scale. But, the Beloved Guardian in his message of April 1957 has illustrated a tragic picture of this period that our generation has experienced in the course of the twentieth century and singled out some of its salient points:

The violent derangement of the world's equilibrium; the trembling that will seize the limbs of mankind; the radical transformation of human society; the rolling up of the present-day Order; the fundamental changes affecting the structure of government; the weakening of the pillars of religion; the rise of dictatorships; the spread of tyranny; the fall of monarchies; the decline of the ecclesiastical institutions; the increase of anarchy and chaos; the extension and consolidation of the Movement of the Left; the fanning into flame of the smouldering fire of racial strife; the development of infernal engines of war; the burning of cities; the contamination of the atmosphere of the earth...

And he emphasizes:

.. these stand out as the signs and portents that must either herald or accompany the retributive calamity which, as decreed by Him Who is the Judge and Redeemer of mankind, must, sooner or later, afflict a society which... has turned a deaf ear to the Voice of God's Messenger in this day...

3. After this period of hardship and suffering which the Centre of the Covenant has qualified as "unbearable for man," society will awaken gradually from its age-long heedlessness and apathy and take refuge under the tabernacle of unity and fellowship raised through the new world order presented by Bahá'u'lláh.

The shivering foundation of human society indicates that the last chance bestowed on man to change his way of life and free himself from the spider's web of materialism is fast running out. The time to fulfil our obligation to serve humanity has shortened and the process of decline and disintegration grows faster than we can imagine. The world is compelled to meet the calamities and disasters assailing it from every direction, threatening its existence.

Therefore, in reviewing the actual circumstances of the world and the occurrence of daily events seen in the mass media and remembering the warnings given on various occasions by the Holy Figures of our Faith, we have to appreciate the paramount importance of this destiny-making time in the history of mankind.

While the well-wishers, philosophers, leaders of thought, and governments fail to present effective guidelines for humanity, Bahá'u'lláh gave the privilege to His followers to rise and guide human society With His vivifying teachings and principles.

Under the guidance of our Supreme Body, the Universal House of Justice, tremendous opportunities to serve have been created. The sacrifice of the devoted martyrs, teachers, and servants of the Faith has paved the way to bring the curative Message of Bahá'u'lláh to every single soul. We have to arise with devotion and determination and step forward in the arena of teaching. We have to remember the extreme austerity of this time and ponder the words of the Beloved Guardian reflected in "The Advent of Divine Justice":

The field is indeed so immense, the period so critical, the Cause so great, the workers so few, the time so short, the privilege so priceless, that no follower of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, worthy to bear His name, can afford a moment's hesitation.

God bless you all.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
A.M. Varqá