

# Requirements for Bahá'í Marriage



## 1. Requirements:

The requirements of the Bahá'í marriage law are:

- Mutual consent between the two parties to the marriage
- Consent of all living, biological parents
- The holding of a Bahá'í marriage ceremony authorized by a Spiritual Assembly
- Approval of two witnesses by a Spiritual Assembly

## 2. The Meaning Bahá'í Marriage:

Baha'u'llah decreed the law of marriage as

*"a fortress of well-being and salvation"*. He defined the true purpose of marriage is to bring forth children and raise children in the religion of God so that they might know and praise him.

Abdu'l-Bahá has stated the following in this regard:

*Bahá'í marriage is the commitment of the two parties one to the other, and their mutual attachment of mind and heart. Each must, however, exercise the utmost care to become thoroughly acquainted with the character of the other, that the binding covenant between them may be a tie that will endure forever. Their purpose must be this: to become loving companions and comrades and at one with each other for time and eternity...*

*The true marriage of Bahá'ís is this, that husband and wife should be united both physically and spiritually, that they may ever improve the spiritual life of each other, and may enjoy everlasting unity throughout all the worlds of God. This is Bahá'í marriage.*

Abdu'l-Bahá has also written:

*O ye two believers in God! The Lord, peerless is He, hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other.*

*If they live thus, they will pass through this world with perfect contentment, bliss, and peace of heart, and become the object of divine grace and favor in the Kingdom of heaven. But if they do other than this, they will live out their lives in great bitterness, longing at every moment for death, and will be shamefaced in the heavenly realm.*

*Strive, then, to abide, heart and soul, with each other as two doves in the nest, for this is to be blessed in both worlds.*

## 3. Bahá'í Engagement and Responsibilities of Parents:

- For the two partners to become engaged, they must obtain the free and full consent of all living biological parents. The freedom of the parents in the exercise of this right is unrestricted and unconditioned.
- Before getting married, the parents cannot interfere with the selection of the person their child wishes to marry, but to be considered "engaged", all living parents must give approval of the marriage.
- Bahá'í law places the responsibility for ascertaining knowledge of the character of those entering into the marriage contract on the two parties involved, and on the parents, who must give consent to the marriage.

- The purpose of this law is to foster unity between the two families since the Bahá'í teachings see marriage and the family as the foundation of the structure and society, and having disunity between two families is not conducive to that. The consent of all parents is needed even if one of the partners is not a Bahá'í.

#### 4. Authorization for Marriage from a Local Spiritual Assembly:

- A Bahá'í wedding cannot take place until the Local Spiritual Assembly in whose jurisdiction the wedding will be held has verified that all the requirements of both the Bahá'í and civil law have been met.
- In terms of the Bahá'í law, the Local Assembly must, for example, verify that the consent of all biological living parents has been given, and it must also approve those who will witness that the Bahá'í marriage ceremony has taken place.
- People are urged to consult with the Local Spiritual Assembly as far in advance of the wedding date as possible as it can be difficult to make last-minute arrangements.
- A member of the Local Spiritual Assembly doesn't need to be present at the wedding as the witnesses verify that it has been conducted as required.
- A Bahá'í wedding can be carried out for anyone; neither party need be a Bahá'í.
- A Local Spiritual Assembly (or National Assembly) has the responsibility for verifying that all living parents have given consent for the marriage. There are various ways the Assembly can verify consent has been given. The Assembly can verify consent has been given by all parents by speaking with the parents or by receiving approval in writing from the parents, or a combination. The Local Spiritual Assembly may also ask the assistance of an Auxiliary Board Member to help verify the parents have given approval by speaking with them or by obtaining consent in writing.
- The written approval is perhaps the easiest way for a Local Spiritual Assembly to verify that permission has been given. Although there is no formal way to provide written consent, it can be as simple as a note that says: *"I give permission for my son (add name) to marry (add name)—signed (add name) On this date: (add date)"*.
- If there is no Local Spiritual Assembly in the couple's area, they may contact the National Spiritual Assembly for guidance.

#### 5. Registration of the Bahá'í Marriage:

- As Bahai marriage is not yet recognized by the Government in Thailand, the couple must also perform a civil wedding and register their marriage with the district office, on the same day as the Baha'i marriage. While the civil marriage normally takes place at district office, in some cases, the couple may ask the Government Officer come to perform the civil registration at the Bahai marriage ceremony for a small fee. The couple must provide a copy of the civil marriage certificate to the responsible Assembly for their record.

#### 6. Witnesses:

- The Local Spiritual Assembly approves two trustworthy witnesses. These two witnesses may be chosen by the couple or by the Spiritual Assembly, but must, in any case, be acceptable to the Assembly; they may be members of the Assembly, or two other people, Bahá'í or non-Bahá'í, or any combination of these. The witnesses can be any two trustworthy people whose testimony is acceptable to the Spiritual Assembly under whose jurisdiction the marriage is performed. The couple should submit the names of proposed witnesses to the Local Spiritual Assembly for consideration and approval.

## 7. Wedding Ceremony:

- When a Bahá'í marriage ceremony takes place, there is no individual, strictly speaking, who 'performs or 'conducts' it. There is no Bahá'í equivalent to a religious leader. The couple themselves perform the ceremony by each saying, in the presence of at least two witnesses, the prescribed verse specifically revealed by Bahá'u'lláh: *'We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God.'* A wedding can therefore take place with only four people present: the bride, the groom, and the two witnesses.
- "There is no ritual and ...Shoghi Effendi... believes the ceremony should be as simple as possible..."
- The couple are free to add anything else to their marriage ceremony as they wish, such as music, prayers, or reading of Holy Writing. If the couple wishes, they may ask one person to serve as an MC to help coordinate the wedding program, or to explain the meaning of Baha'í marriage for example.
- The Thai tradition ceremony, like pouring the water on the hands of the couple (*Pitee Rod Num*), is not considered a religious ceremony.
- This ceremony is performed under the authority of a which has the responsibility for ensuring that the various requirements of Bahá'í Law, such as obtaining the consent of the parents, are met, to whom the witnesses must be acceptable.
- The Local Spiritual Assembly can issue a Baha'í Marriage Certificate which is signed by the couple, the two witnesses, and the two representatives of the Local Spiritual Assembly.
- It's possible for the marriage to take place in a church or temple as long as the Baha'í ceremony is independently held and not melded with say the ceremony of another religion and takes place on the same day.
- The Universal House of Justice has given the following guidance with regard to the wedding receptions: "No Bahá'í should serve alcohol at any function or reception given by him, such as a wedding reception or a party to which a number of people are invited." (Guidance to an individual believer 31 January 1982)

## 8. Holding a Ceremony of Another Religion:

- When a Bahá'í is marrying a non-Bahá'í, and the non-Bahá'í wishes to have the ceremony of his (or her) own religion, the Bahá'í party may take part in it under the following conditions:
- That all concerned, including the officiating religious leader, know that he is a Bahá'í.
- That he does not, by having the ceremony, renounce his faith.
- That he does not undertake any vow to act contrary to Bahá'í principles (such as to bring up the children in another Faith).
- That the ceremony be held on the same day as the Bahá'í ceremony, either before or after it.

