

The Oneness of All People

INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the sacred valley...*

Facilitator

The following is an introduction. Please read it out loud without comment, and then proceed with the study of the quotations.

One modern spiritual principle proposed in the Bahá'í Writings to aid us in creating peace and unity on the planet is the application of the spiritual principle of the oneness of all people. It was only five hundred years ago that most human beings thought the world was flat. And just over one hundred years ago, most inhabitants of the planet never traveled farther than five miles from their place of birth. Most people didn't know there were so many humans who were different than themselves. People didn't know where humanity was, let alone any need to find themselves united with it. Most people didn't have to deal with differences in race, culture, religion, nation and other differences on such a large scale as we do today. But, if we look seriously at the problems that currently face humankind, it is clear that these perceived differences are at the root of most conflict. Perhaps all could benefit from a reshaping of our perspective to see others as part of ourselves, to recognize people of faith as belonging to the same faith, people of different nations as citizens of one homeland, and people of different economic classes as contributors and recipients of one source of abundance.

Shoghi Effendi, designated Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, wrote: "The principle of the Oneness of Mankind – the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve – is no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and pious hope. Its appeal is not to be merely identified with a reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and good-will among men, nor does it aim solely at the fostering of harmonious cooperation among individual peoples and nations. Its implications are deeper, its claims greater than any which the Prophets of old were allowed to advance. Its message is applicable not only to the individual, but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family. ... It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced. ... It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world – a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units."¹

Let us explore together the profound implications offered to our spiritual and material well-being by the conscious application in our lives of this one spiritual principle.



*"Ye are the fruits of one tree,
and the leaves of one branch."*

– Bahá'u'lláh

¹ Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 42-43

OBJECTIVE: *A look to the horizon...*

Facilitator

Review the following objective with the participants:

The purpose of this group experience is to *explore* the concept of “the oneness of all people”, through a study of selected Bahá’í Writings.

THE STUDY PROCESS: *Attaining the pure water...*

Facilitator

Review the following study process with the participants. Then study the numbered quotations on the following pages, one at a time as described below.

1. **READING:** *A drink from the sacred stream...*
Have two participants take turns reading the quotation out loud so that it is read twice.
2. **CONFIRMING MEANING:** *A spray from the fountain of light...*
 - A. If anyone would like to have better understanding of a word used in the quotation, now is the time to refer to its substitute phrase, definition or synonym, which can be found in the boxes below each quotation. Read the substitute phrase, definition or synonym out loud so everyone can hear.
 - B. Read the sentence again that contains the word you selected, while **substituting for that word**, its given phrase, definition or synonym from the box below the quotation.
 - C. If anyone would like a better understanding of another word, repeat the process above until everyone is satisfied with their understanding of the words in the quotation.
 - D. Have the quotation read one more time by one of the participants.
3. **FINDING VALUE:** *Gem-like discoveries...*
In the tradition of the “talking circle” ask the participants to take turns sharing, one at a time, in a round, **WHAT WAS PERSONALLY MOST MEANINGFUL FROM THE QUOTATION AND WHY.** (Remember show and tell?) Remind the participants that *whatever* is shared should be considered as a valid perspective, and that in this *exploratory study* there are no right or wrong perceptions and no lesser or greater understandings. All are therefore asked to avoid comments, corrections, or judgments on the perceived insights of others. This is not a time for questions and answers, it is an exercise for the purpose of bonding hearts by sharing and receiving personal heartfelt perspectives without discussion.

1. “The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: *Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Day Star of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.*”

(*Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 288)

Day Star: symbolically means, “the spiritual source of light that breaks the night of ignorance and hastens the dawn of truth”
deal ye: concern yourself
fellowship: companionship, friendly association, and mutual sharing
friendliness: kindly interest and goodwill
harmony: agreement in facts, opinions, manners, and interests
illuminate: give intellectual and spiritual enlightenment, insight, and knowledge to
lamp: symbolically means, “source of spiritual knowledge and goodness”

light: symbolically means, “clear and understandable knowledge” or “emanating spiritual knowledge and goodness”
unity: a state of harmony, agreement, peace and accord in human relations, free of conflict, dissension, contention and strife
utmost: greatest or highest degree of
utterance: oral or written expression
Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch: A metaphor, which is a figure of speech that expresses a concept by comparing two unlike things without using “as” or “like”.

2. “A fundamental teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the oneness of the world of humanity. Addressing mankind, He says, “*Ye are all leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch.*” By this it is meant that the world of humanity is like a tree, the nations or peoples are the different limbs or branches of that tree, and the individual human creatures are as the fruits and blossoms thereof. In this way Bahá'u'lláh expressed the oneness of humankind, whereas in all religious teachings of the past the human world has been represented as divided into two parts: one known as the people of the Book of God, or the pure tree, and the other the people of infidelity and error, or the evil tree. The former were considered as belonging to the faithful, and the others to the hosts of the irreligious and infidel—one part of humanity the recipients of divine mercy, and the other the object of the wrath of their Creator. Bahá'u'lláh removed this by proclaiming the oneness of the world of humanity, and this principle is specialized in His teachings....”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 454)

divine: God’s
faithful: ones who have belief and faith in God
former: the people of the book of God, or the pure tree
fundamental: basic and essential
hosts: great number or multitude
humanity: the human beings
infidel: non-believers in religion
infidelity: non-belief in religion
mercy: kindness and compassion
object: intended receiver

oneness: singleness and indivisibility, the unity and harmony
principle: governing truth or standard
proclaiming: formally and publicly declaring
recipients: receivers
removed: put aside and dismissed
specialized: specifically and specially distinguished
teachings: beliefs, ideals, and truths taught [in the Bahá’í Faith]
wrath: strong vengeful anger or punishment

3. “The second teaching of Bahá’u’lláh is the oneness of the world of humanity. Every human creature is the servant of God. All have been created and reared by the power and favor of God; all have been blessed with the bounties of the same Sun of divine truth; all have quaffed from the fountain of the infinite mercy of God; and all in His estimation and love are equal as servants. He is beneficent and kind to all. Therefore, no one should glorify himself over another; no one should manifest pride or superiority toward another; no one should look upon another with scorn and contempt; and no one should deprive or oppress a fellow creature. All must be considered as submerged in the ocean of God’s mercy. We must associate with all humanity in gentleness and kindness. We must love all with love of the heart. Some are ignorant; they must be trained and educated. One is sick; he must be healed. Another is as a child; we must assist him to attain maturity. We must not detest him who is ailing, neither shun him, scorn nor curse him, but care for him with the utmost kindness and tenderness. An infant must not be treated with disdain simply because it is an infant. Our responsibility is to train, educate and develop it in order that it may advance toward maturity.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 63)

ailing: suffering emotional or physical pain
beneficent: doing what is good and beneficial
blessed: highly favored with special gifts
bounties: generous gifts
care: give painstaking and watchful attention
contempt: a feeling or attitude of strong despite
curse: invoke harm or injury on
deprive: take away or withhold that which is good
detest: intensely hate
disdain: an arrogance or aversion to one regarded as unworthy
favor: help, assistance, and support
fellow: like or equal
fountain: source from which something proceeds or is supplied
glorify: cause to seem better than, elevate, or praise
healed: restored to original purity and integrity
humanity: the human beings
infant: immature one

infinite: limitless amounts and an endless duration of
manifest: show or display
maturity: full development
mercy: kindness and compassion
oneness: singleness and indivisibility, the unity and harmony
oppress: spiritually or mentally burden
pride: an assumed self-importance above others
quaffed: drank deeply
reared: brought up
scorn: open dislike or disrespect
scorn: openly dislike or disrespect
servant: one that lives at the call and command
shun: deliberately avoid
sick: spiritually or morally weakened
submerged: covered and enveloped
Sun: symbolically means “God”
superiority: an attitude of being higher in position or rank
utmost: greatest or highest degree of

4. “...humanity is one kind, one race and progeny, inhabiting the same globe. In the creative plan there is no racial distinction and separation such as Frenchman, Englishman, American, German, Italian or Spaniard; all belong to one household. These boundaries and distinctions are human and artificial, not natural and original. All mankind are the fruits of one tree, flowers of the same garden, waves of one sea.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 118)

artificial: man-made differences
creative: that which has been brought into existence
distinction: special qualities that set apart
globe: earth
household: dwelling
inhabiting: living on
kind: family or lineage

original: as it was initially or in the beginning
plan: design and action to an end purpose
progeny: group of descendants
race: people of a common ancestry
racial: of people based on common characteristics
separation: means for division

5. “O people! Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.”
 (Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 2)

consort: harmoniously associate or keep company
fellowship: companionship, friendly association, and mutual sharing

friendliness: kindly interest and goodwill
spirit: disposition, outlook, or attitude

6. “O ye discerning ones! Verily, the words which have descended from the heaven of the Will of God are the source of unity and harmony for the world. Close your eyes to racial differences, and welcome all with the light of oneness. Be the cause of comfort and the promotion of humanity. This handful of dust, the world, is one home: let it be in unity.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, Bahá’i Scriptures, p. 157)

close your eyes to: take no consideration or notice of
comfort: joy, consolation, and hope
descended: passed or come down
differences: distinguishes one from another
discerning: showing the ability to perceive, recognize, or make out clearly
harmony: calm and tranquility
heaven: “By ‘heaven’ is meant the heaven of divine Revelation...” Bahá’u’lláh, KI, p. 44.
humanity: the prominent qualities and attributes that set humans apart from other creatures
light: knowledge and truth

oneness: being a single and indivisible [humanity]; unity, harmony, and agreement of mind, feeling, and purpose
promotion: furtherance or advancement
racial: traits or characteristics of races
source: origin or cause
unity: a state of harmony, agreement, peace and accord in human relations, free of conflict, dissension, contention and strife
verily: in very truth
welcome: receive gladly and affectionately into one’s presence
words: this refers to the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh

APPLICATION: *Showing forth divine light...*

Facilitator

Read the first paragraph and ask the participants to state their ideas out loud. Then, read through the last paragraph and allow time for the participants to write out their plans for action. These plans are not shared.

IMAGINING POSSIBILITIES: *Visions of radiant lights...*

How **could** the concepts in this study on *The Oneness of all People* be applied a person’s life in these modern times? Begin your answers with: “**One could....**” Suggest as many ideas as you want.

DECIDING ACTION: *Mirroring a beam of light...*

Bahá’u’lláh wrote: “It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action....” From your experience in this study on *The Oneness of all People*, describe what **you** are inspired to put into reality and action. **I will make conscious efforts to...** _____

CLOSING MEDITATION: *A heart song...*

Facilitator

Read the following out loud.

“O Thou Provider! Thou hast breathed over the friends in the West the sweet fragrance of the Holy Spirit, and with the light of divine guidance Thou hast lit up the western sky. Thou hast made those who were once remote to draw near unto Thyself; Thou hast turned strangers into loving friends; Thou hast awakened those who slept; Thou hast made the heedless mindful.

“O Thou Provider! Assist Thou these noble friends to win Thy good pleasure, and make them well wishers of stranger and friend alike. Bring them into the world that abideth forever; grant them a portion of heavenly grace; cause them to be true Bahá’ís, sincerely of God; save them from outward semblances, and establish them firmly in the truth. Make them signs and tokens of the Kingdom, luminous stars above the horizons of this nether life. Make them to be a comfort and a solace to humankind and servants to the peace of the world. Exhilarate them with the wine of Thy counsel, and grant that all of them may tread the path of Thy commandments.

“O Thou Provider! The dearest wish of this servant of Thy Threshold is to behold the friends of East and West in close embrace; to see all the members of human society gathered with love in a single great assemblage, even as individual drops of water collected in one mighty sea; to behold them all as birds in one garden of roses, as pearls of one ocean, as leaves of one tree, as rays of one sun.

“Thou art the Mighty, the Powerful, and Thou art the God of strength, the Omnipotent, the All-Seeing.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers*, pp. 158-59)

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