

# To Heal the Sickness of a Divided Humanity



# Our Challenge



# Our Charge

“The task of ensuring that His message is engaged by people everywhere, is one that Bahá’u’lláh has laid primarily on the shoulders of those who have recognized him....

“If they are to respond to the need, Bahá’ís must draw on a deep understanding of the process by which humanity’s spiritual life evolves.”

(Universal House of Justice, *One Common Faith*, Foreword)

# Outline

A Framework for Dialogue

Hinduism

Buddhism

# Framework for Dialogue

Understand that religious truth is relative

Understand scriptural metaphor

Seek unity

# Religious Truth is Relative

“The Revelation, of which Bahá’u’lláh is the source and center, abrogates none of the religions that have preceded it, nor does it attempt, in the slightest degree, to distort their features or to belittle their value.... Its teachings revolve around the fundamental principle that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is progressive, not final.”

(Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 57)

# The Blind Men and the Elephant



“Be eyes to the blind”

*(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXXX, p. 285)*

# Understanding Scriptural Metaphor

“In fact, all the Scriptures and the mysteries thereof are condensed into this brief account. So much so, that were a person to ponder it a while in his heart, he would discover from all that hath been said the mysteries of the Words of God, and would apprehend the meaning of whatever hath been manifested by that ideal King.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán* “*The Book of Certitude*”, ¶266, p. 237)

# The Muhkamát and Mutashábihát

‘He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: In it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except God. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: “We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord:” and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding.’

(Qur’án 3:7)

# Twofold Language

‘It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language. One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled; that it may be a guiding lamp and a beaconing light whereby wayfarers may attain the heights of holiness, and seekers may advance into the realm of eternal reunion....

...The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. Thus hath Sádiq, son of Muhammad, spoken: “God verily will test them and sift them.” This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants. None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended.’

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán* “*The Book of Certitude*”, ¶283, p. 255)

# Divine Unity

“Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this truth.”

*(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, XXIV, p. 59)*

# The Essence of the Faith of God

“That the divers communions of the earth, and the manifold systems of religious belief, should never be allowed to foster the feelings of animosity among men, is, in this Day, of the essence of the Faith of God and His Religion.”

*(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXXXII, p. 287)*

# Heal the Sickness of a Divided Humanity

“The Prophets of God should be regarded as physicians whose task is to foster the well-being of the world and its peoples, that, through the spirit of oneness, they may heal the sickness of a divided humanity.”

*(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, XXXIV, p. 80)*

# Fourth Candle of Unity

“The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendor.”

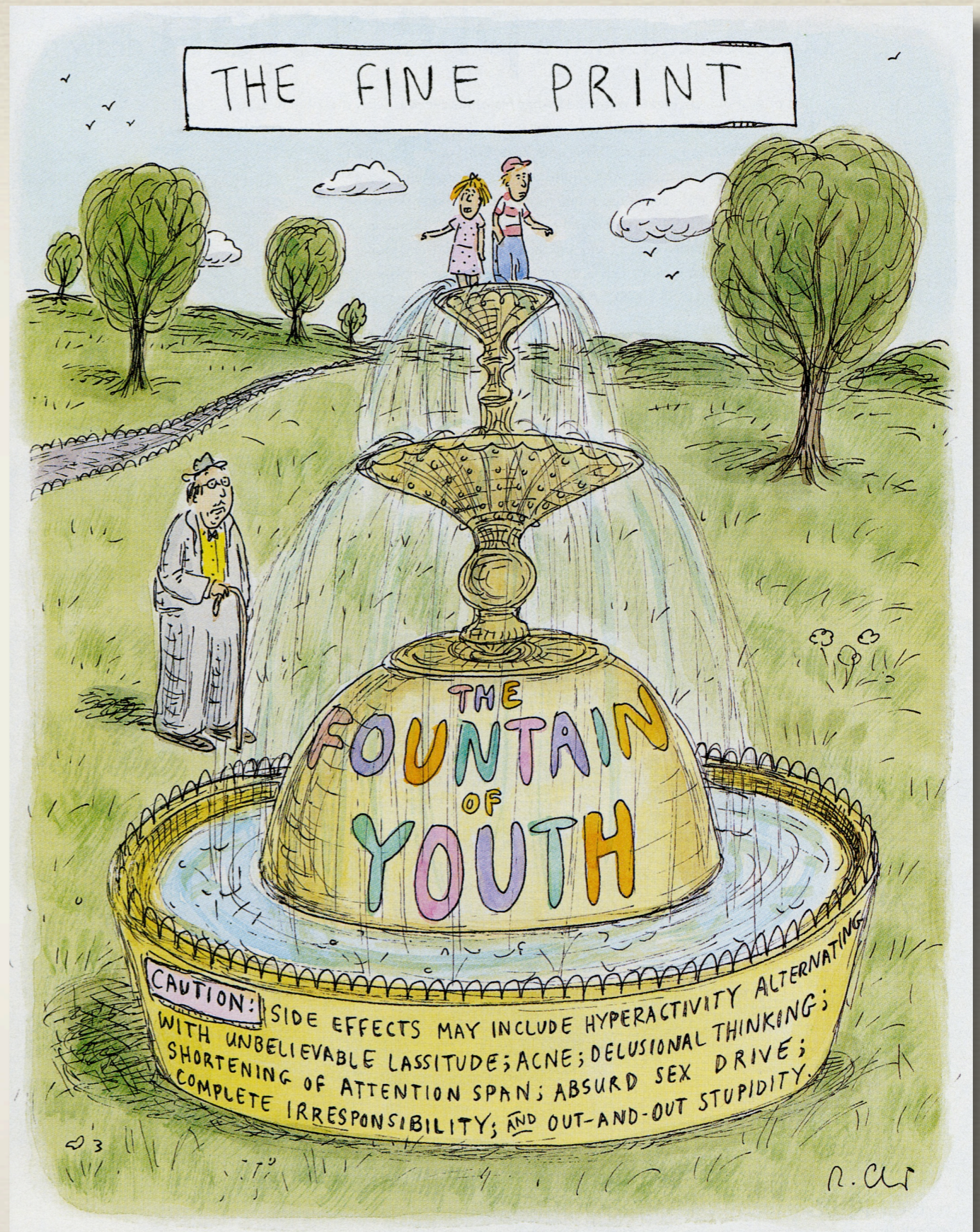
(Abdu'l-Bahá, *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 39)

# Archetypal Stories

**ar·che·type** ('är-ki-"tIp) *n* **1** : the original pattern or model of which all things of the same type are representations or copies : PROTOTYPE

(Merriam-Webster)

# The Fountain of Youth



# The Samaritan Woman

So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" ....

# Jesus on the Fountain of Youth

“Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

(John 4:13-14)

# Bahá'u'lláh on the Fountain of Youth

“Make my prayer, O my Lord, a fountain of living waters whereby I may live as long as Thy sovereignty endureth, and may make mention of Thee in every world of Thy worlds.”

(Long Obligatory Prayer)

# Alchemy

**al·che·my** (al-k&-mE) *n* **1** : a medieval chemical science and speculative philosophy aiming to achieve the transmutation of the base metals into gold, the discovery of a universal cure for disease, and the discovery of a means of indefinitely prolonging life  
**2** : a power or process of transforming something common into something special

(Merriam-Webster)

# Bahá'u'lláh on Alchemy

“Is it within human power, O Hakím, to effect in the constituent elements of any of the minute and indivisible particles of matter so complete a transformation as to transmute it into purest gold? Perplexing and difficult as this may appear, the still greater task of converting satanic strength into heavenly power is one that We have been empowered to accomplish. The Force capable of such a transformation transcendeth the potency of the Elixir itself. The Word of God, alone, can claim the distinction of being endowed with the capacity required for so great and far-reaching a change.”

(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, XCIX)

# Reincarnation



"YOU'RE GOING BACK AS A MAYFLY"  
"HAVE A NICE DAY!"

# Nicodemus

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”...

# Jesus on Reincarnation

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”....

Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I say to you ‘You must be born again.’”

(John 3:1-7)

# Bahá'u'lláh on Reincarnation

“Reflect how this verse also implieth that the people living in the days of Muhammad were the same people who in the days of the Prophets of old contended and fought in order to promote the Faith, and teach the Cause, of God.”

*(Kitáb-i-Íqán “The Book of Certitude”, ¶159, p. 150)*



# Families of Religions

**Dharmic:** Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism

**Abrahamic:** Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Bahá'í Faith

**Toaic:** Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto

# Dharma

*“That which upholds or supports”*

The underlying natural order in nature and life

Divine Will

Truth

Duty

Righteousness

Proper conduct

# Hinduism



*Sanātana Dharma*

“Eternal Truth”

Brahma

Vishnu

Shiva



# Hindu Teachings on the Existence of the Soul

**avidya** – ignorance of true self

**maya** – illusion regarding true nature of the world

**karma** – universal law of “cause and effect”

**samsāra** – cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth

**moksha** – liberation from samsara

**nirvana** – eternal bliss

**yoga** – discipline or practice to attain liberation

**yogi** – one who teaches a yoga

# Bahá'u'lláh on *Dharma*

“The beginning of all things is the knowledge of God, and the end of all things is strict observance of whatsoever hath been sent down from the empyrean of the Divine Will that pervadeth all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth.”

*(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, II, p. 5)*

# The Guardian on *Avidya*

“The Bahá’ís seek to lead people back to a knowledge of their true selves and the purpose for which they were created, and thus to their greatest happiness and highest good.”

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 24, 1943; cited in *Lights of Guidance*, #383)

# Bahá'u'lláh on *Maya*

‘Verily I say, the world is like the vapor in a desert, which the thirsty dreameth to be water and striveth after it with all his might, until when he cometh unto it, he findeth it to be mere illusion. It may, moreover, be likened unto the lifeless image of the beloved whom the lover hath sought and found, in the end, after long search and to his utmost regret, to be such as cannot “fatten nor appease his hunger.” ’

*(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CLIII, pp. 328-9)*

# Bahá'u'lláh on *Karma*

“Ye shall, ere long, discover the consequences of that which ye shall have done in this vain life, and shall be repaid for them. This, verily, is the truth, the undoubted truth.”

*(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, LXV, p. 123)*

# Buddhism



# The Great Departure



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# Enlightenment



# Buddhist Traditions

- **Theravāda** (Southern)
- **Mahayana** (Eastern)
- **Vajrayāna / Tantric** (Northern)
  - **Tibetan**
- **Zen**

# The Four Noble Truths

1. **The Nature of Suffering**

All life is suffering

2. **The Origin of Suffering**

Suffering is caused by desire for, or clinging to, impermanent things

3. **The Cessation of Suffering**

To eliminate suffering, eliminate desire

4. **The Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering**

To eliminate desire, follow the Eightfold Path

# The (Noble) Eightfold Path

## Wisdom

Right view

Right intention

## Ethical conduct

Right speech

Right action

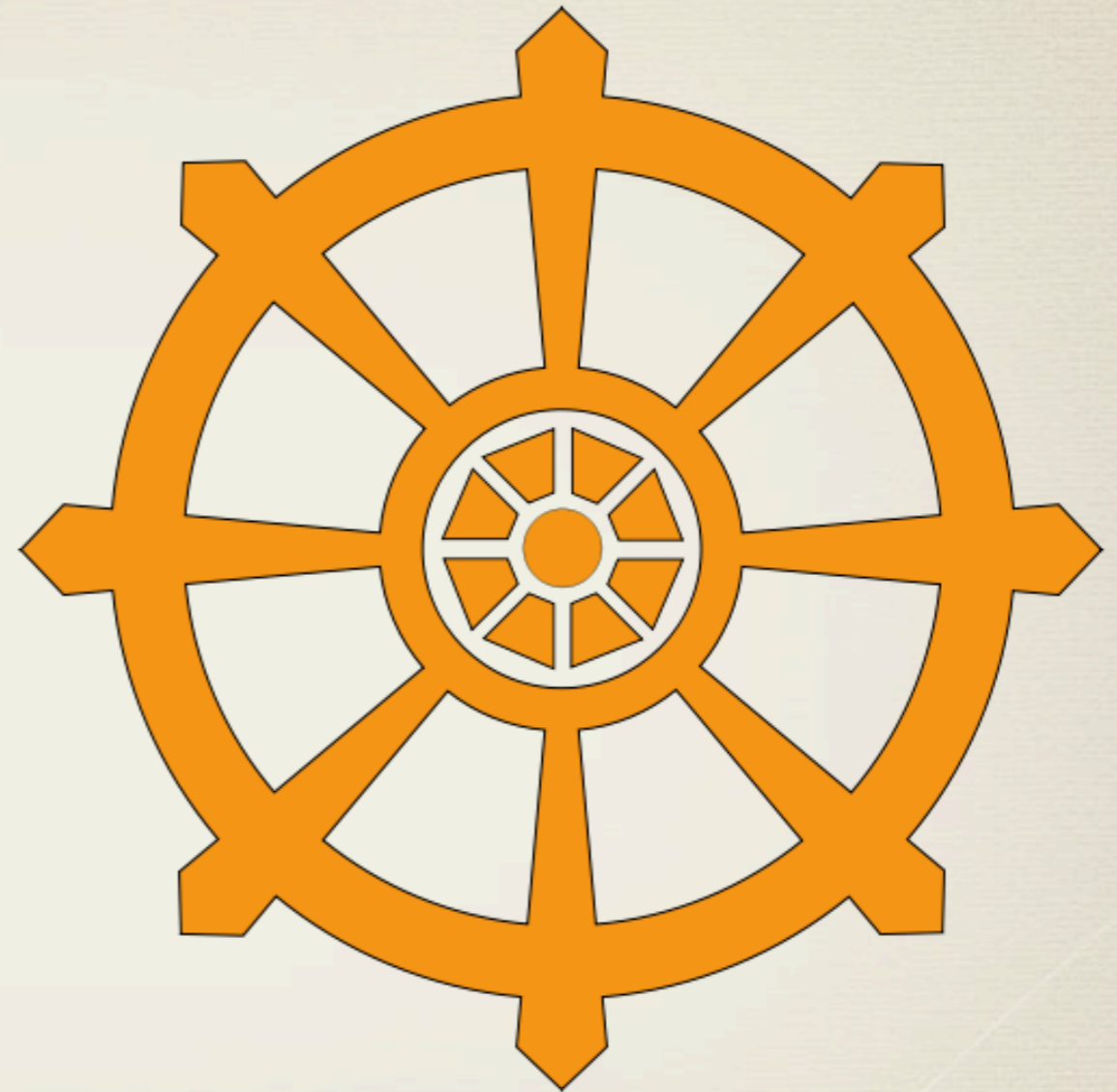
Right livelihood

## Mental discipline

Right effort

Right mindfulness

Right concentration



Dharma Wheel  
Symbol of Eightfold Path

# The Five Aggregates

Form (matter)

Sensation

Perception

Mental formations

Consciousness

# Other Buddhist Beliefs

Dependent Origination

Rebirth

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# The Bahá'í Faith: The Nature of Suffering

“Such is this mortal abode:  
a storehouse of afflictions and suffering.”

*(Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, #170.1)*

# The Four Noble Truths

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# The Bahá'í Faith: The Origin of Suffering

“How sad if any man were, in this Day, to rest his heart on the transitory things of this world!”

*(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXIV, p. 238)*

“If we suffer it is the outcome of material things, and all the trials and troubles come from this world of illusion.”

*(Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, pp. 109)*

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# The Bahá'í Faith: The Cessation of Suffering

“My sole purpose in revealing to thee these words is to sanctify thee from the transitory things of the earth, and aid thee to enter the realm of everlasting glory...”

*(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXIV, p. 238)*

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