**Summer School BE180**

**Theme 1, session 1: Bahá’u’lláh’s Vision for Humanity**

1. **The purpose of religion**

**“Is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions?”**

**Bahá'u'lláh**

**“This Youth hath come to quicken the world and unite all its peoples. The day is approaching when that which God hath purposed will have prevailed and thou shalt behold the earth transformed into the all-glorious paradise.  
 Bahá'u'lláh**

Possible questions for consideration:

* Share personal experiences and observations that connect the current activities of the Plan to the essential purpose of effecting “**a transformation** **that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external condition”.**
* Shoghi Effendi: **“All we can reasonably venture to attempt is to strive to obtain a glimpse of the first streaks of the promised Dawn that must, in the fullness of time, chase away the gloom that has encircled humanity. All we can do is to point out, in their broadest outlines, what appear to us to be the guiding principles underlying the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh, as amplified and enunciated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.”** 
  + What “glimpse of the first streaks of the promised Dawn” might be discerned from the engagement of children, youth and adults in the Plan’s framework for action and the capacities they are developing.
  + What statements of ‘Abdul’Baha provide illumination on this subject? (You could prepare a few related extracts to share with participants and / or have them spend time researching via Baha’i Reference Library and drawing on their own knowledge.)
* Discuss the imperative for an acceleration and expansion in the work of the Plan to release the society-building powers of the Faith, in light of the conditions of your society and global conditions.

1. **Notions of Self**

**If the wayfarers be among them that seek after the sanctuary of the desired one,   this plane pertaineth to the self—but the self which is intended is “the Self of God that pervadeth all His laws”. In this station the self is not rejected but beloved; it is regarded with favour and is not to be shunned. Although at the beginning this plane is the realm of conflict, yet it endeth in the ascent to the throne of glory. As it hath been said:**

**O Abraham of the Spirit and God’s Friend in this day!**

**Slay! Slay these four thieving birds of prey!**

**that after death the mystery of life may be unravelled.**

**Bahá'u'lláh**

**Verily, We created man in the goodliest of forms—and caused His mercy which rises out of the dawn of oneness to shine down upon him, until he became the wellspring of the words of God and the place where the mysteries of heaven alighted, and on the morning of creation he was covered with the rays of the qualities of perfection and the graces of holiness. How can he stain this immaculate garment with the filth of selfish desires, or exchange this everlasting honor for infamy? “Dost thou think thyself only a puny form, , when the universe is folded up within thee?”**

**Bahá'u'lláh**

**He seeth in himself neither name nor fame nor rank, but findeth his own praise in the praise of God, and in the name of God beholdeth his own.**

**Bahá'u'lláh**

**Lord! Give me to drink from the chalice of selflessness; with its robe clothe me, and in its ocean immerse me. Make me as dust in the pathway of Thy loved ones, and grant that I may offer up my soul for the earth ennobled by the footsteps of Thy chosen ones in Thy path, O Lord of Glory in the Highest.**

**‘Abdu’l-Bahá**

How in your experience does striving to be a protagonist of the Plan’s framework for action illuminate your understanding of the following challenge and assurance of the Blessed Beauty.

**Only when the lamp of search, of earnest striving, of longing desire, of passionate devotion, of fervid love, of rapture, and ecstasy, is kindled within the seeker’s heart, and the breeze of His loving-kindness is wafted upon his soul, will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop his being. At that hour will the Mystic Herald, bearing the joyful tidings of the Spirit, shine forth from the City of God resplendent as the morn, and, through the trumpet-blast of knowledge, will awaken the heart, the soul, and the spirit from the slumber of heedlessness. Then will the manifold favors and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind. He will contemplate the manifest signs of the universe, and will penetrate the hidden mysteries of the soul. Gazing with the eye of God, he will perceive within every atom a door that leadeth him to the stations of absolute certitude. He will discover in all things the mysteries of Divine Revelation, and the evidences of an everlasting Manifestation.**

**Bahá'u'lláh**

1. **Relationships are all there is!**

Reflecting on the following quotations, including statements drawn from great scientific thinkers, discuss the potentiality

**. . . the community of the Greatest Name becomes that spiritually charged arena in which powers are multiplied in unified action. It is of this community that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes: “When any souls grow to be true believers, they will attain a spiritual relationship with one another, and show forth a tenderness which is not of this world. They will, all of them,  become elated from a draught of divine love, and that union of theirs, that connection, will also abide forever. Souls, that is, who will consign their own selves to oblivion, strip from themselves the defects of humankind, and unchain themselves from human bondage, will beyond any doubt be illumined with the heavenly splendours of oneness, and will all attain unto real union in the world that dieth not.”**

**Universal House of Justice**

**It hath therefore been made evident and proved that interaction, cooperation and interrelation amongst beings are under the direction and will of a motive Power which is the origin, the motive force and the pivot of all interactions in the universe.**

**‘Abdu’l-Bahá**

**... physical things are signs and imprints of spiritual things; every lower reality is an image and pattern of a higher one. Nay, inferior and superior, material and spiritual, accidental and essential, particular and universal, foundation and structure, form and meaning, and the outward and inward realities of all things. All of these are connected one with another, and are interrelated in such wise that thou findest drops to be patterned after seas and atoms to be fashioned after suns, in accordance with their capacities and potentialities. For particulars, in relation to that which is below them, are universals, while what are great universals in the eyes of those that are veiled are in fact particulars in relation to higher beings and realities. Universal and particular are in reality incidental and relative considerations. “Doth not the mercy of thy Lord extend unto all things?” [Quran]**

**‘Abdu’l-Bahá** (provisional translation)

**The scientific search for the basic building blocks of life has revealed a startling fact: there are none.  The deeper that physicists peer into the nature of reality, the only thing they find is relationships.  Even sub-atomic particles do not exist alone. One physicist described neutrons, electrons, etc. as “. . .a set of relationships that reach outward to other things.”  Although physicists still name them as separate, these particles aren’t ever visible until they’re in relationship with other particles.  Everything in the Universe is composed of these “bundles of potentiality” that only manifest their potential in relationship.**

**Margaret Wheatley, *Relationships: The Basic Building Blocks of Lif*e (2006)**

**Strange is our situation here on Earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know: that man is here for the sake of other men . . .**

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**A human being is a part of the whole, called by us “Universe,” a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest — a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.**

**Albert Einstein**

**Intellectually the Self is no more than a psychological concept, a construct that serves to** **express an unknowable essence which we cannot grasp as such, since by definition it transcends our powers of comprehension.**

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**(**Commentator**) In Jung's conception, the self-realized Individual's very existence presupposes a positive relationship with the collective. The Individual lends himself to express the subconscious aspirations of the collective of his time, giving conscious expression to the needs and aspirations of the society through his actions.**

**Carl Jung**