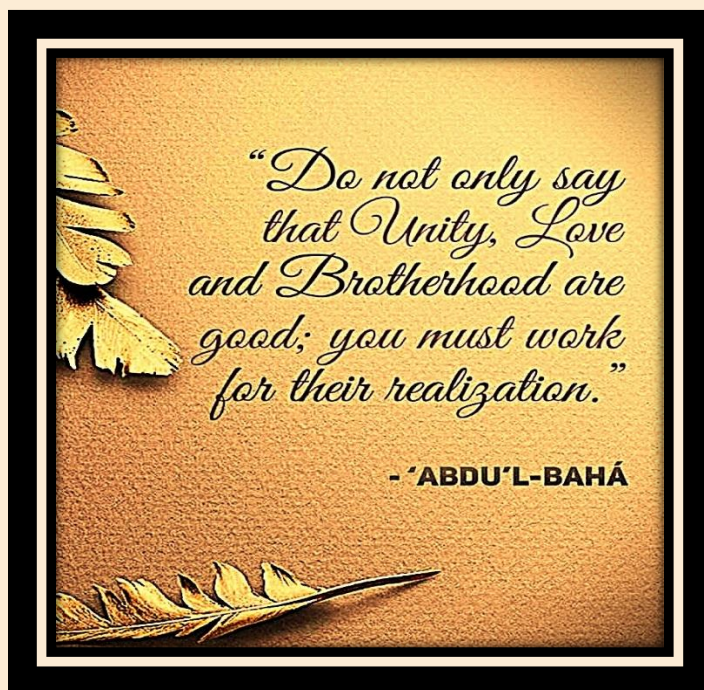




## The Nuggets

Volume 5, Issue No.9



## Baha'i Stories

### Peace

*On the train from Sacramento to Denver, 'a salesman came through the cars selling pennants of various schools.' The Master joked, 'Tell him to bring the banner of universal peace if he has it. We want a flag under which the whole world may find rest and peace.' Other passengers heard 'Abdu'l-Bahá and formed a group in the corridor in order to be able to talk with Him. -Honnold, Annamarie, Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*

## Events and News



## Fostering Hope and Fellowship



**BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE** — Last week, more than 70 guests from Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Druze, and other communities gathered in the vicinity of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh in Bahjí for a special evening of prayers, sacred writings, and music to mark *Ayyám-i-Há*—a period in the Bahá'í calendar dedicated to hospitality, generosity, and service to others. The gathering, which took place on 25 February, brought together local officials, educators, artists, and residents from 'Akká, Haifa, and surrounding towns and villages, offering an occasion for connection and reflection at a time of deep uncertainty in the region.

David Rutstein, Secretary-General of the Bahá'í International Community, welcomed guests with a description of the occasion. “I am delighted to welcome you to our celebration of *Ayyám-i-Há*, which are days in the Bahá'í calendar just before our period of fasting, dedicated to generosity, hospitality and service to humanity,” he said. “Looking around the room, we are even more delighted to see all of you, a sample of the diversity of the people of this land, and we are honoured to be able to call you our friends.”

In addition to bringing people together in an uplifting atmosphere, this year's event highlighted the capacity within each person to contribute to the common good and to render service to humanity. Each guest received a card bearing a passage from the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: “We must now highly resolve to arise and lay hold of all those instrumentalities that promote the peace and well-being and happiness, the knowledge, culture and industry, the dignity, value and station, of the entire human race.”

The evening followed on from a series of gatherings that began in late 2023, which have cultivated bonds of friendship and spiritual fellowship among the diverse people of the 'Akká-Haifa area during particularly challenging times in the region.

## Reflections from participants

*The evening drew heartfelt reflections from participants of different backgrounds, whose words spoke to shared longings for hope and unity.*

*One of the participants, an architect, described the experience of visiting the Shrine and gardens: “The physical environment speaks to me, especially when we visited the Shrine. There’s an amazing energy in that place. I am an architect by profession, so the way the buildings communicate is very significant. That was something special.”*

*His wife, an artist, shared a perspective on hope that resonated with the evening’s spirit: “It’s so easy to fall into despair in the world today. There’s fear in all corners. And someone once said to me something that really touched me: hope is a verb. It’s not a thing. It’s something we do and something we create.” She added: “And of course we need people around us to do that with.”*

*Sheikh Isan Ali Halabi, a Druze participant, spoke of the deep historical connection between the Druze and Bahá’í communities, recalling that a prominent Druze figure had a direct relationship with Bahá’u’lláh during His time in the Holy Land. That bond, he said, has endured across the generations and continues today through close friendships between the Druze and the Bahá’ís. “This bond and these gatherings remove separation and bring hearts closer together,” he said.*

*Sheikh Antaar Maadi, a participant from Yarka, reflected on the spirit of the evening: “We pray that peace, safety, and security spread throughout this land and the entire world.”*

*“Through these gatherings, we affirm that all people—regardless of their identities, religions, or backgrounds—are part of one human family,” said Sheikh Samir Assi, a participant from ‘Akká. Mr. Assi added: “Lands cannot be built, nor civilizations established, except through love, cooperation, and relationships.”*

*A local resident from Misgave, reflected on how the beauty of the setting spoke to deeper realities: “Today I felt joy in my heart, because the beauty outside reminds me of the beauty within, which exists in every person.” She described her hope as rooted in faith in human goodness: “The great aspiration really, the hope is for peace: peace between human beings.”*

*Two participants who regularly attend the monthly gatherings said these occasions have become part of their experience of home. “[Hope is] faith that there will be a peaceful time. We always believe in that,” one said. “Happiness is family, the feeling of home.”*

*She added: “When I come to gatherings like these, I always feel peace, harmony, and smiles. It’s a place where you truly connect with your soul.”*

*Nadav Kashtan, another participant, captured a sentiment shared by many at the gathering: “There are always forces pulling in different directions, and we want to be among those moving toward hope.”*

*Ofer Amar, a local media practitioner who has attended these gatherings since they began, reflected on what draws him back: “An environment where we all feel as one family.”*

*Yam, a participant from Tel Aviv, expressed hope in terms of the small and the immediate: “What gives me hope are small successes, because in my view it is the small things that bring change. Even seeing a person smile... means that at least in that moment, they are doing well.”*

*Among the youngest voices of the evening, Yasminah, a child, offered a simple observation: “There are people who have hope. And more and more people are coming together and caring.”*

## News from the Twin Community of Jaipur, India

*Junior youth groups, Ruhi study groups, children's classes, home visits, and devotional and prayer meetings continued in different parts of Jaipur and Rajasthan. The Ayyam-i-Ha, Naw-Ruz and Ridvan were celebrated with dance and food. The newly elected National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India was introduced.*



*Food for the Mind, Heart and Soul*



## Walk for Peace



An abandoned dog has joined a mission of peace across the world and, despite some mishaps, has stayed with it every *paw* of the way.

During their opening 112-day peace walk in India, a group of Buddhist monks found an abandoned dog—or perhaps the dog found them.

The canine, believed to be an Indian Pariah breed, was given the name Aloka, and soon became a loyal companion, following the group of monks as they marched across India to spread messages of peace and unity.

Their four-legged friend encountered his own hardships along that arduous journey. Aloka was hit by a car, and he also fell ill for an extended period of time. The monks loaded him up in a truck, offering him an escape from all the walking. But Aloka didn't want to be away from his new companions. He jumped out and rejoined the mission.

“He followed us the whole time. He’s a true hero,” one of the monks said in a Tik Tok video, remembering all the obstacles Aloka overcame. “He wanted to walk. That inspires a lot.”

Now, Aloka and the monks who live in the Huong Dao Vipassana Bhavana in Fort Worth, Texas have a new mission. In October, nineteen of the Buddhist monks and their loyal companion set out from Fort Worth on a 2,300-mile walk toward Washington, D.C. with a goal of promoting unity and compassion.

“When I heard about this 2,300-mile walk, I was amazed,” Texas Representative Nicole Collier told the Star-Telegram. “It really touches the hearts and minds of people. We live in a time when the noise often drowns out understanding, where division can feel louder than unity—but this is what the community and interfaith solidarity looks like.”

The journey is expected to cover 10 states in 110 days before ending in the nation’s capital in February. By late December, the group had reached Atlanta. A live tracker on Facebook provides updates on their

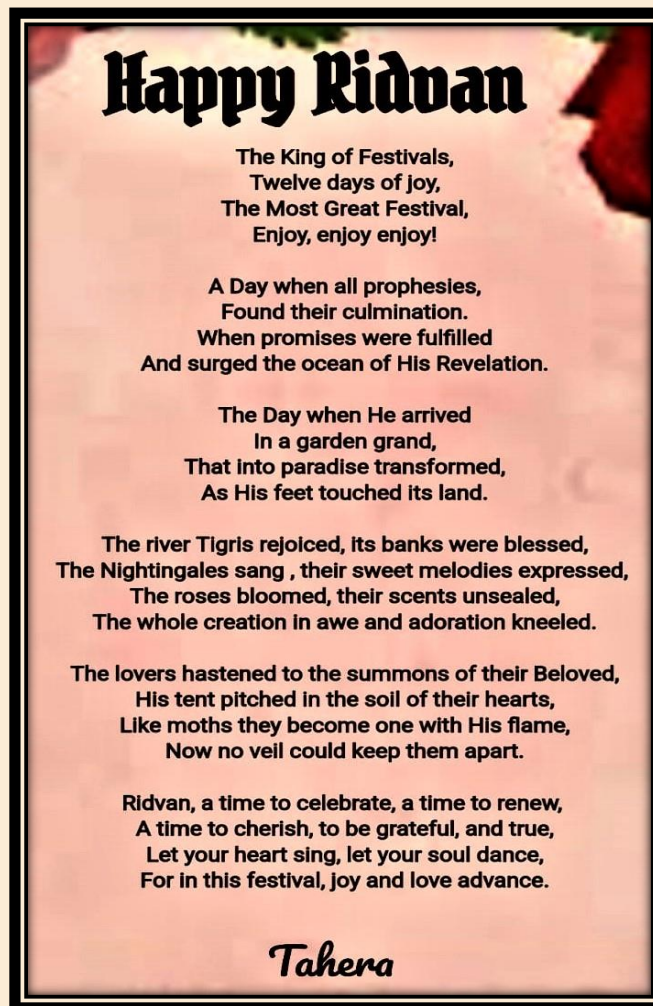
progress and the group has also been posting frequently to social media. (Don't worry, Aloka the Peace Dog has his own Instagram as well).

Strangers have provided a warm welcome all along the way. A Dairy Queen store in Texas gave the monks ice cream and made sure Aloka got some too. Doctors in Alabama provided free checkups. Crowds have gathered across the Sun Belt to meet the monks and share meals and well wishes as the convoy moves north toward the capital.

"It's a journey filled with both known and unforeseen challenges." says the official Walk for Peace Instagram page. "Yet, with hearts anchored in calmness and minds set firmly on their purpose, the monks move forward—step by step—embodying peace, resilience, and unwavering determination on their sacred path toward the White House."

## Poetry

by Tahera:



## Social Action

## Helping the Needy Orphan Children

This event was the result of collaboration among the representatives of the institutions (LSA, Board member, and Council) and Nazz Rest Home. Orphans and needy children were provided with clothing, and later there was a celebration with sweets and drinks. The children showed their skills in dance, making the young and old very happy. It was a privilege to witness it.



## From the Pages of History

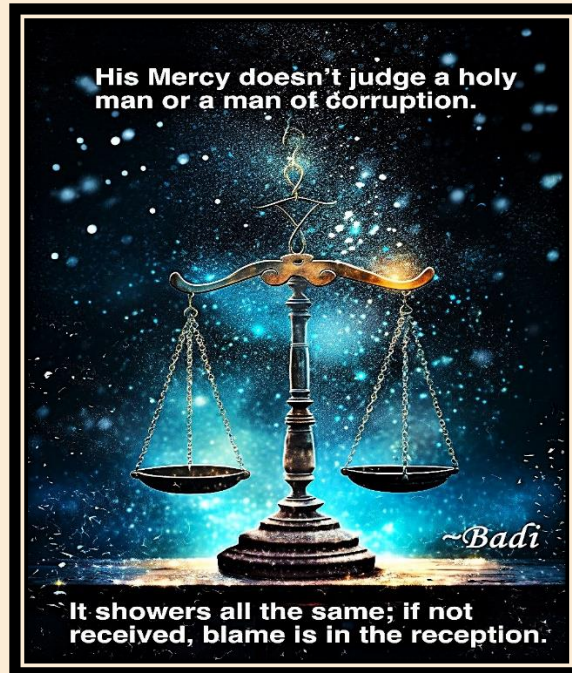
### Attachment of inhabitants of Mah-Ku to the Bab

*Haji Mirza Aqasi had deliberately contrived to relegate the Bab to so remote, so inhospitable and dangerously situated a corner of the territory of the Shah, with the sole purpose of stemming the tide of His rising influence and of severing every tie that bound Him to the body of His disciples throughout the country. Confident that few, if any, would venture to penetrate that wild and turbulent region, occupied by so rebellious a people, he fondly imagined that this forced seclusion of his Captive from the pursuits and interests of His followers would gradually tend to stifle the Movement at its very birth and would lead to its final extinction. He was soon made to realise, however, that he had gravely mistaken the nature of the Revelation of the Bab and had underrated the force of its influence.*

*The turbulent spirits of this unruly people were soon subdued by the gentle manners of the Bab, and their hearts were softened by the ennobling influence of His love. Their pride was humbled by His unexampled modesty, and their unreasoning arrogance mellowed by the wisdom of His words. Such was the fervour which the Bab had kindled in those hearts that their first act, every morning, was to seek a place whence they could catch a glimpse of His face, where they could commune with Him and beseech His blessings upon their daily work. In cases of dispute, they would instinctively hasten to that spot and, with their gaze fixed upon His prison, would invoke His name and adjure one another to declare the truth. Ali Khan several times attempted to induce them to desist from this practice but found himself powerless to restrain their enthusiasm. He discharged his functions with the utmost severity and refused to allow any of the avowed disciples of the Bab to reside, even for one night, in the town of Mah-Ku.*

## Sharing

**Douglas Wilson's artwork:**



## History, News and Nuggets from Other Religions and Communities

### Hinduism



*Hinduism, also known as Sanatana Dharma, is the world's oldest living religion. It is a natural religion, meaning its philosophies and practices are considered universally accessible through sincere study, reason, and experience apart from special revelation. Hinduism is also an indigenous religion made up of a diverse family of philosophies and traditions that have been practiced primarily throughout Asia for thousands of years. Today, Hinduism is a global religion with adherents*

*representing virtually every racial, ethnic, and national background and living on every continent, and comprising majorities in three countries: India, Nepal, and Mauritius.*

*Most traditions, sects, or schools within Hinduism share certain distinctive, foundational concepts despite the absence of an identifiable beginning in history, single founder, central religious establishment, or sole authoritative scripture. Two of these foundational concepts are that of the oneness of existence and pluralism.*

*All beings, from the smallest organism to man, are considered manifestations of the Divine (existence, pure being, light of consciousness) or reflections of the Divine's qualities, depending upon the school of thought. Because of this shared divinity, Hinduism views the universe as a family or, in Sanskrit, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.*

*Hinduism also advances the concept of the equal worth of all mankind, as expressed in the ancient hymn:*

*Ajyesthaso akanishthaso ete sambhrataro vahaduhu saubhagaya.*

*"No one is superior, none inferior. All are brothers marching forward to prosperity."*

*Mankind, because it is believed to be the most spiritually evolved, thus carries a special responsibility to honor the equal worth of all people and the underlying unity of existence through one's relationship with oneself and others. Ensuring that one's thoughts, words, and actions uphold and promote values such as truth, kindness, equanimity, empathy, generosity, and equal regard is how this responsibility is met.*

*The popularly recited Hindu invocation demonstrates this concern for universal kinship and well-being: Om sarve bhavantu sukhinah. Sarve santu niraamayaah. Sarve bhadraani pashyantu. Maa kaschid dukhbhaag bhavet.*

*"May all beings be happy. May all beings be healthy. May all beings experience prosperity. May none in the world suffer."*

*Against the backdrop of this understanding of equality and unity, the Hindu world has been able to embrace the reality of diversity through its philosophy of pluralism. Every being, with their varying likes and dislikes, their unique personalities, and their different cultures, not only connect with one another in their own unique ways, but connect with the Divine in their own individual ways.*

*As such, Hindus understand the Divine (existence, pure being, light of consciousness) to : 1) Manifest in different forms; 2) Be understood and worshipped by various means; 3) Speak to each individual in different ways to enable them to not only believe in the Divine, but experience and know the Divine.*

*This embrace of pluralism has contributed to the incredible spiritual and religious freedom one witnesses within Hinduism — in its many deity traditions, paths or yogas, schools of thoughts, saint traditions, ways of worship, etc.*

*The worldview of pluralism is not just applicable to Hindus, but to all members of this universal family. Accordingly, Hinduism acknowledges not just the possibility, but also the existence of more than one path (religion) or way of relating to Truth (God).*

*This true, unadulterated pluralism is captured in the ancient Sanskrit hymn:*

*Ekam sat vipraha bahudha vadanti.*

*“Truth is one, the wise call it by many names.”*

*In relating to other religions, Hinduism asserts that it is not only harmful, but inherently flawed to insist that one’s own path towards God is the only true and meaningful path. Based on this firm pluralistic belief, Hinduism has never sanctioned proselytization. Further, over their vast history, Hindus have never invaded another land in the name of religion. It is also clear that, for centuries in Southeast Asia, it has been this Hindu brand of absolute pluralism, which has provided the ideal environment for peaceful coexistence and prosperity for at least eight major religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Jainism and Zoroastrian.*

## *From the Editor’s Desk*

### **Hummingbirds Teach a Lesson on Thankfulness**

*Today, the world is experiencing great confusion that has made humanity forget some fundamental values that could save us from great misery – one of these forgotten values is thankfulness.*

*A sense of entitlement pervades many cultures, preventing them from appreciating the gifts they are given. Sadly, for many, that sense of entitlement has replaced gratefulness.*

*Some people spend more time pointing to the things they demand than enough time appreciating the blessings of the things they have. Regrettably, gratefulness and thankfulness have become scarce commodities.*

*God wants nothing from us but our love, and in return, He provides us with the vast universe and everything in it as our playground to enjoy.*

**“Consider what a kind Father He is. He bestows His gift before you ask. We were not in the world of existence, but as soon as we were born, we found everything prepared for our needs and comfort without question on our part. He has given us a kind father and compassionate mother, provided for us two springs of salubrious milk, pure atmosphere, refreshing water, gentle breezes and the sun shining above our heads”. -Abdu’l-Baha**

*I am incredibly grateful for the gifts of the Baha’i writings that guide me throughout my life.*

*All religious guidance sent for our benefit can help us. In return, we must try to know God and show our gratitude. Understanding God and our relationship to Him is complex, and we will never fully know Him because of our limited ability to comprehend Him. But luckily, a recent personal experience helped me see what my relationship with my Creator could be and reinforced my gratefulness for His gift of life.*

*I have a beautiful garden, my prized material possession, with a wide variety of flowers and fruit trees. Flowers attract birds and insects, and among them are a few hummingbird families who enjoy the flowers I have planted and the feeders I have put out for them. I felt happy to see that they enjoyed the feeders, but the fact that they fought over them saddened me. I wished they would stop fighting, start sharing and live peacefully together in this beautiful garden.*

*The hummingbirds liked the feeders so much that they decided not to migrate. Instead, they have stayed with me for the past few winters. I kept the feeders full for the whole winter since there were no flowers or other food sources. One winter was extremely cold, and the temperature went below zero. The feeders would freeze at night, so I had to defrost them every morning and put them out again. One day, as I was putting out a feeder for these tiny birds and watching their happiness, I realized they would die if I did not feed them.*

*How I wished that they knew how much I loved them. They didn't realize that their life was in my hands — or that I made sure they were provided for — because of my love for them. Nobody asked me to do that. At that moment, it dawned on me that this is what God wishes for us: recognition and gratitude in return for His gifts.*

*Unlike the hummingbirds, who have no idea of the gifts given to them, I hope we recognize the Creator's gift of life and His love for us. He has made provisions for all our needs. All we have to do is to acknowledge them and be grateful for them.*



## *Writings to Ponder and Practice*

**“Know thou that hardship and privation shall increase day by day, and the people shall thereby be afflicted. The doors of joy and happiness shall be closed on all sides, and terrible wars shall occur. Frustration and despair shall encompass the people until they are forced to turn to the One True God. Then will the light of most joyful tidings so illumine the horizons that the cry of ‘Yá Bahá’u’l Bahá’ will be raised from every direction. This shall come to pass.” ~Abdu’l-Bahá**

For sharing materials and questions, write to [bshams@telus.net](mailto:bshams@telus.net)