

Metaphors for Bahá'u'lláh: the Sun of Knowledge, the Ocean of Wisdom, the Royal Falcon



Innumerable metaphors

for Bahá'u'lláh appear in his writings. They enrich our understanding of who Bahá'u'lláh is. One of the most striking such metaphors appears in the Lawh-i-Maqsud.

He that hath Me not is bereft of all things. Turn ye away from all that is on earth and seek none else but Me. I am the Sun of Wisdom and the Ocean of Knowledge. I cheer the faint and revive the dead. I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way. I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty. I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight.[1]

In this context, it is quoted from an earlier work by Bahá'u'lláh – the Tabernacle of Unity, [which has been discussed in an earlier article](#).

The purpose of metaphor is, of course, to give us an understanding of a reality that will not be as effectively communicated in literal words.

It is interesting to note that in the metaphor above, Bahá'u'lláh also

associates a specific function with each metaphor. The “Sun of Wisdom” “cheers the faint”. “The Ocean of Knowledge” “revives the dead”. The “Guiding Light” “illumineth the way”. “The royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty” “unfolds the drooping wing of every broken bird”.

It is clear that the passage is particularly addressed to the individual soul and communicates the relationship between the soul and Bahá'u'lláh – or perhaps more specifically Bahá'u'lláh's spiritual reality. The first three functions come readily to mind in our common-place experience of sun, water and light. Who has not felt cheered by the sun on a beautiful day? Or been revived by water? Or seen the way with a guiding light?

The metaphor of the Royal Falcon is outside our common experience. Yet we can appreciate the relationship between God and Bahá'u'lláh and Bahá'u'lláh and the individual soul communicated by it. And the contrasting function of this metaphor has an enhanced impact because of its counter-intuitive nature. The falcon is, of course, a bird of prey. Yet this royal Falcon does not kill its prey – it heals and liberates it.

If we reflect further on the metaphor of the Royal Falcon as a bird of prey, it calls to mind [the night watchman that we find in the story of Majnun and Layli](#). Majnun flees the night watchman – yet it comes apparent in the end that the night watchman is Majnun's angelic deliverer. The metaphor perhaps suggests that something must be given up – perhaps attachment to this external life – if our spiritual qualities – our “drooping wings” – are to unfold. Another reference we find to falcons is in the Seven Valleys. It has such resonances.

O friend, give up thy self that thou mayest find the Peerless One, pass by this mortal earth that thou mayest seek a home in the nest of heaven. Be as naught, if thou wouldst kindle the fire of being and be fit for the pathway of love.

Love seizeth not upon a living soul,

The falcon preyeth not on a dead mouse.[2]

This article is the 181st in a series of what I hope will be 200 articles in 200 days for the 200th anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh. The

anniversary is being celebrated around the world on 21 and 22 October 2017, The articles are simply my personal reflections on Bahá'u'lláh's life and work. Any errors or inadequacies in these articles are solely my responsibility.)

Image Source: The kashkul (alms bowl) Bahá'u'lláh used as He traveled through the mountains of Sulaymaniyyih as a dervish from 1854 to 1856.(Ted Cardell, 1952). <https://www.bahauallah.org/relics/kashkul-of-bahauallah> Copyright © Bahá'í International Community