

Importance and Purpose:

Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi

Original English



Centres of Bahá'í Learning

Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi
Effendi



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ORIGINAL



AUDIO

Bahá'í Summer Schools

Importance and Purpose:

— 1 —

He was very happy to hear of the success of the school, especially that it has been the means of bringing to light hitherto unsuspected capacities among the friends.... The Summer School has been carrying on the divine work of bringing forth jewels from the mine of humanity and it is the hope of Shoghi Effendi and the friend here that those who have been trained in the Summer School will carry on the work in the various localities from which they come...

From a letter 21 October 1925 written on behalf of
Shoghi Effendi to the Green Acre Summer School,
'Bahá'í News' 10 February 1926, p. 3

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Such gatherings will give a chance to friends from different localities to come together and exchange views on the different problems of the Cause and also attract new souls to the spirit and teachings of the Faith. Not only will their knowledge of the writings deepen but also the unity of the Cause will be strengthened and the work of teaching enhanced....

Shoghi Effendi was very glad to hear that so many new souls were confirmed there. As we see the suffering around us, caused by the prevailing financial crises, we should redouble our energy in bringing the message of comfort and peace to those desperate souls, and add to our labours that the golden age promised by Bahá'u'lláh may dawn sooner....

From a letter 18 November 1931 written on behalf
of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,
'Bahá'í News' 63, June 1932, p. 4

Shoghi Effendi feels that the real purpose of these Summer Schools is to deepen the knowledge of the friends. Lectures are very essential for they give a wonderful picture of the subject-matter. But it is not sufficient to have a picture; the friends should deepen their knowledge and this can be achieved if together with the lectures there are study classes and seminar work carried on by the same lecturer.

The world is undoubtedly facing a great crisis and the social, economic and political conditions are becoming daily more complex. Should the friends desire to take the lead in reforming the world, they should start by educating themselves and understand what the troubles[pg 27] and problems really are which baffle the mind of man. It is in these Summer Schools that this training should be provided for the friends.

From a letter 27 January 1932 written on behalf
of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,
'Bahá'í News' 63, June 1932, p. 3

The Guardian fully agrees with your idea that the permanent welfare of the Faith demands the steady development of local Bahá'í community life. This is the bedrock of Bahá'í national growth and development. Great emphasis, he feels, should be placed upon Bahá'í Summer Schools. A greater number of believers and visitors should be encouraged to attend them, their scope should, if not too expensive, be systematically widened, the atmosphere pervading them must be given a distinctive Bahá'í character, and the level of their discussions and the standard of their studies must be raised.

From a letter 10 September 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi
to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada

How wonderful it would be if all the friends could arrange to spend at least a few days in one of these summer schools and take an active part in their development. These centers could attract many souls if properly arranged and made interesting; those non-Bahá'ís who visit them will then have some time to get into the spirit of the place and make a study of the Cause... We constantly receive letters from people who become Bahá'ís by visiting one of these centers and obtaining the Message there.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, received about 1 May 1932, quoted in 'Bahá'í News' 67, October 1932, p. 4

Regarding your Summer School: he is indeed grateful to your assembly for the great success that has attended your efforts for the formation of this institution, the teaching value of which for England cannot be overestimated.... The Guardian would, therefore, urge all the believers to persevere in their efforts for raising the standard, both intellectual and spiritual, of their Summer School and to heighten its prestige in the eyes of the friends, and of the general non-Bahá'í public outside. The institution of the Summer School constitutes a vital and inseparable part of any teaching campaign, and as such ought to be given the full importance it deserves in the teaching plans and activities of the [pg 28] believers. It should be organized in such a way as to attract the attention of the non-believers to the Cause and thus become an effective medium for teaching. Also it should afford the believers themselves an opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the Teachings, through lectures and discussions and by means of close and intense community life.

From a letter 17 October 1936 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles

He has noted with deepest satisfaction indeed that your meetings have been well attended this year, and that the programme had been made as varied and interesting as possible, and combined, as every Bahá'í Summer School should, the threefold features of devotion, study and recreation. Only through such a harmonious combination of these three elements can the institution of the Summer School yield the maximum of beneficent results, and fulfil its true function of deepening the knowledge, stimulating the zeal, and fostering the spirit of fellowship among the believers in every Bahá'í community.

The Guardian cherishes the hope that at the termination of your school this summer every one of the attendants will have derived such mental and spiritual benefits, and acquired such a fresh enthusiasm to serve as will enable him, upon his return to his local community, to labour with a determination and vigour that will excite the envy and admiration of his fellow-believers, and stimulate them to greater heights of consecration to the service of our beloved Cause.

From a letter 15 August 1938 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Central States Summer School

He is truly delighted to know that the attendance at the school has been satisfactory, and that the young believers, in particular, have been most enthusiastic about it. What he feels now is most essential is for the National Spiritual Assembly to make arrangements to have this school held regularly every year, so that it may develop into an effective, and increasingly vital, instrument for the propagation of the Faith, and also for the education and training of Bahá'í teachers.

It is the Guardian's fervent hope that as this Institution expands, and fulfils the high hopes you all set upon it, it will be felt advisable by the National Spiritual Assembly to consider the possibilities of establishing, [pg 29] in due time, one or two more of such schools, thus permitting those

friends, who in view of their limited means are not in a position to travel over large distances, to avail themselves of the benefits derived from these nascent Bahá'í institutions of learning.

From a letter 1 December 1938 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi
to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma

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What other community has shown the foresight, the organizing ability, the enthusiastic eagerness, that have been responsible for the establishment and multiplication, throughout its territory, of those initial schools which, as time goes by, will, on the one hand, evolve into powerful centers of Bahá'í learning, and, on the other, provide a fertile recruiting ground for the enrichment and consolidation of its teaching force?...

Shoghi Effendi, 'The Advent of Divine Justice', p. 9

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He ... hopes that from now on you will become a regular attendant at all future sessions at Louhelen, or at either one of the two remaining Summer Schools now operating in the States. Faithful attendance at any of these institutions of Bahá'í learning would be indeed the best preparation for all prospective Bahá'í teachers, and should as such be welcomed most heartily by all the believers.

From a letter 22 August 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

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He is indeed immeasurably delighted to know that thanks to your earnest and wise efforts, and to the loving assistance and co-operation of the friends, Louhelen Ranch is steadily progressing and is increasingly fulfilling those ideal conditions which it should be the aim of every Bahá'í summer school to create, maintain and enforce, namely: close association and fellowship, both social and spiritual, among the attendants, intellectual training in the history, principles and

teachings of the Cause, and the application to one's life of the principles of moral conduct as explained and clarified by the Guardian himself in his "Advent of Divine Justice".

From a letter 24 August 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers

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Equally important as a factor in the evolution of the Administrative Order has been the remarkable progress achieved, particularly in the United States of America, by the institution of the summer schools designed to foster the spirit of fellowship in a distinctly Bahá'í atmosphere, to afford the necessary training for Bahá'í teachers, and to provide facilities for the study of the history and teachings of the Faith, and for a better understanding of its relation to other religions and to human society in general.

Shoghi Effendi, 'God Passes By', p. 340

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It is not enough to bring people into the Faith, one must educate them and deepen their love for it and their knowledge of its teachings, after they declare themselves. As the Bahá'ís are few in number, especially the active teachers, and there is a great deal of work to be done, the education of these new believers is often sadly neglected, and then results are seen such as the resignations you have had recently. In this respect, the summer schools can be of the greatest help to the friends, new and old Bahá'ís alike, for in them they can study, and enjoy the feeling of Bahá'í companionship which is, alas, usually lacking in their home communities, owing to the smallness of their numbers.

From a letter 18 July 1957 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada

