

## Letters Addressed to Individual Baha'is in India

Shoghi Effendi

Original English



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#### Letter of June 20, 1923

Our dear Shoghi Effendi owing to the shock he received at the sudden news of the Ascension of our Master and owing to the great fatigue occasioned to him through the excess of work has become susceptible to malaria of which Haifa is a great centre. This summer is very hot too. He was troubled with malaria two days or three in every week. So the members of the Holy Family conjointly with the Haifa Spiritual Assembly repeatedly begged him to change his residence during these hot summer months to some cooler climate. At last he affectionately accepted our humble entreaty and left this morning for Egypt whence he'll proceed to some summer resort as he considers suitable. He wishes all the friends to be more active in his absence.

June 20,

#### Letter of November 5, 1924

[From the Guardian:]

I trust that the National Assembly of which you are the honoured and esteemed President will distinguish itself by its unremitting labours, its profound wisdom, its distinct contribution to the deepening of the spirit of love, service, unity, understanding and confidence amongst the friends. It is the vital and urgent duty of the Secretary to keep in close and constant touch with Burma and the various other Baha'i localities and distribute with efficiency and promptitude all the glad tidings it receives from the Holy Land and elsewhere.

November 5, 1924

#### Letter of May 17, 1926

Shoghi Effendi trusts that your elections are over and that they were conducted in the proper manner. He earnestly hopes that the new N.S.A. will be able to accelerate the progress of the Cause in India and Burma and will bring in the dawning of a new day for the Baha'i movement in India. Both Shoghi Effendi and the friends have had to satisfy their eagerness with insufficient



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progress in the past, and although there are many difficulties to meet and overcome and in spite of the fact that no one is more alive to them than Shoghi Effendi himself, we hope and pray that the future may have great accomplishments in store for us.

May 17, 1926

### Letter of March 2, 1929

[From the Guardian:]

I trust that by now a better understanding and more substantial cooperation has been attained by the friends of India and Burma. It is for the delegates who are to be chosen by them this year, to elect those whom they think are best qualified for membership of the National Spiritual Assembly, and once elected, the unity and efficiency of this body must at any cost be maintained. I cannot but pray that they may be guided in their choice, and discharge honourably their functions.

March 2, 1929

### Letter of December 17, 1929

He was very glad that your N.S.A. meeting in Bombay was such a success and he is extremely happy of your decision to hold your next meeting in Burma, for he shares your hope that by meeting the friends in Burma and ventilating in a spirit of goodwill all past misunderstandings and problems, a new and enduring unity of purpose and effort may prevail and the Cause may make a fresh start.

[From the Guardian:]

I trust and pray that your gathering in Rangoon may prove a landmark in the history of the Cause in India and Burma and may lend a fresh and unprecedented impetus to the onward march of the Cause in those lands. May the Beloved strengthen you and guide you and enable you to consolidate the foundations of His Faith.

December 17, 1929

### Letter of January 14, 1931

He is pleased to hear of the receipt of his cablegram addressed to the Asian Women's Conference through Prof. Pritam Singh and he sincerely hopes that the Baha'i members attending will take an active share in its proceedings and will thereby be putting to actual effect the teachings of Baha'u'llah. Various and innumerable contacts will naturally be made and the effort should be to take advantage of this unique opportunity.

January 14, 1931

### Letter of July 10, 1931

Shoghi Effendi is as usual extremely busy. But his health is in a very good condition and he is anxiously awaiting the news of further achievements for the spreading of the Cause. The conditions in India are now quite favourable but what the Baha'is need is a group of well-educated and seriously-minded people who would spend a good deal of their time in lecturing before large audiences and in writing and distributing books and pamphlets. We are in need of such people. They are, as you know very well, very few in number and the Guardian hopes that you will do your utmost to organize or to encourage and assist the formation of such a group.

July 10, 1931

### Letter of October 27, 1933

[From the Guardian:]

Your previous letter of Aug. 25 has reached me and I rejoice to learn that the Burmese version of the "New Era" is being circulated. I long to hear of the completion and publication of the Hindi and Urdu versions. The utmost effort should be exerted in order to expedite this most important and urgent work.

October 27, 1933

### Letter of November 3, 1934

[From the Guardian:]

I am so glad to note a decided improvement in the administrative conduct of Baha'i affairs in India, and I trust and pray that the teaching work will as a result receive a fresh and unprecedented impetus. To teach the Cause is the ultimate purpose and the supreme objective of all Baha'i institutions. These are but means to an end. May the Beloved grant you strength to enhance the splendid work you have already achieved. I am eagerly awaiting the news of the publication of the Urdu and the Sindhi editions of the "New Era".

November 3, 1934

### Letter of October 15, 1940

The report of your teaching work in Mysore and Bangalore, and of your meeting with Prof. Shastri and His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore, who had been gracious enough to accord you an audience, has been noted with feelings of highest satisfaction and gratitude by the Guardian. He wishes me to express to you his heart's warmest congratulations upon the success of your efforts in contacting such eminent personalities who, if closely drawn and attracted to the Faith, can lend invaluable support to its spread and wider recognition throughout India.

Shoghi Effendi would indeed urge that you follow up these important contacts by every means you can, so that you may obtain some more tangible results in the way of confirming some important personalities in these high social and intellectual Indian circles.

October 15, 1940

### Letter of October 12, 1932

The Guardian wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated September 14th 1932 expressing your words of sympathy for the passing away of the Greatest Holy Leaf.

She was such a source of joy, hope and inspiration to those who met her that not only Shoghi Effendi but every single Baha'i pilgrim will miss her terribly. To the lady pilgrims it was a real treat to go and have tea with her in the afternoons. She was always so radiantly hopeful and tried to persuade others that sorrows are passing and have to be disregarded. The only consolation of Shoghi Effendi is that she has been freed from the physical weakness that during these last years was confining her to her room for most of the time. He is sure that in the realm in which she now is she is thinking of her friends and asking for them divine guidance and help.

October 12, 1932

### Letter of May 2, 1947

The Indian believers, in spite of the troubled condition of their country, its vastness, and the relative fewness of their numbers, are really demonstrating a remarkable tenacity of purpose in carrying out their pioneer teaching plan and in organizing and supporting their Baha'i activities. He is therefore very pleased with them, and wishes the young people to take part more and more in the work of the Cause in India.

May 2, 1947

### Letter of May 8, 1942

There is no refuge in the world today except the Cause of Baha'u'llah. The believers must rest assured that, having the Faith, they have everything. They must place their lives in the Hand of God, and, confident of His mercy and protection, go on teaching the Cause and serving it, no matter what happens.

May 8, 1942

### Letter of February 2, 1957

He considers that the most important thing, as he has often pointed out to the friends, is to maintain the Spiritual Assemblies already in existence throughout India, to create Spiritual Assemblies out of Groups, and to establish new Centres. He therefore does not feel that, if the

Cause is precarious in Surat and this goal of the Assembly has not been successfully achieved, the Baha'is who are working there should leave and go elsewhere.

The principle he has laid down has invariably been that the friends must establish a Spiritual Assembly on a firm and enduring basis with a nucleus of about fifteen Baha'is in the Community, so that the Assembly would be maintained, and then the other believers are free above the number fifteen to disperse and teach elsewhere; in fact they should consider it their duty to do so. This instruction of our beloved Guardian applies to Surat as well as to other Centres.

February 2, 1957

### Letter of September 19, 1929

Your frank expression of the situation in India and your energetic desire to see things moving after years of practical stagnation, is gladly welcomed by the Guardian, and he is refreshed to see a feeling of dissatisfaction with present conditions and a desire for fresh endeavours along enlightened lines, evident among a good many of our friends in India and Burma.

It is especially gratifying to see you realize the fact that when the world has developed and been enlightened enough through the unseen powers of the Almighty, to be led to the teachings and spirit of the Cause, it will be our shameful task to go round proclaiming such principles as we were taught so many years before and none of which we had lived up to.

Concerning Huquq, the Guardian wishes me to inform you that at present it is not obligatory for the friends to pay, but that they should be urged to contribute to the local and national funds.

September 19, 1929

### Letter of December 1, 1944

Concerning the Esslemont book in languages read by Hindus: The text of the book can in no way be changed, but two things can be done to make it more suitable for teaching Hindus: a footnote can be added informing the reader that the book was written by a Scotsman who was anxious to present to the Christians the Baha'i Faith in relation to their own religion, and hence he used many Biblical quotations with Baha'i interpretations given; secondly an appendix may be added which will include quotations from the Baha'i writings suitable to the Hindu mind and interests.

Regarding Baha'i women using facial make-up: individuals are entirely free to do as they please in such purely personal matters. As Baha'is are enjoined to use moderation in all things, and to seek the Golden mean, the N.S.A. can, if it deems it necessary or advisable, counsel the believers to use moderation in this respect also.

Concerning your question as to whether a person may sign a registration card and then request his declaration to not be made public: all such administrative details must be referred to the N.S.A. for decision and their instructions followed.

The Guardian counsels you to refrain by all means from criticizing and attacking the National Assembly and its members or any local assemblies. The good that you think can be done by such criticism is far out-weighed by the harm it does. The new assemblies and believers will cease to have confidence in the administration, cease to love and respect their representatives and the pioneer work you have done will suffer in general.

December 1, 1944

### Letter of July 29, 1942

The Guardian has been very pleased to note the progress the Bombay friends have been making in their various activities. He would, however, urge the Bombay Assembly and community to redouble their efforts in the field of teaching; to send forth new souls into the pioneer field; and to devote as much time as possible to fostering the spread of the Cause in nearby centres.

He hopes that the contemplated celebration of the anniversary of the Birthday of Baha'u'llah will prove to be a great success, and he sees no objection to the friends helping nearby centres to hold a similar public meeting to attract new souls and teach the Faith.

In all matters of national importance, or which in any way transcend the purely local jurisdiction of the assembly, the Guardian would urge your Assembly to consult with, and seek the advice of, the N.S.A., as only in this way can administrative authority be upheld, and the work of the Cause progress swiftly and smoothly just as the individual believers are bound to support and sustain their local assembly, for the preservation of the unity of the Faith and the strengthening of its as yet embryonic World Order, so must the local assemblies obey and sustain their national representatives. The closer the cooperation between local and national assemblies, the greater will be the power and radiance which can and must stream forth from these institutions to the suffering ranks of humanity.

[From the Guardian:]

The activities of the Indian believers in the teaching field, in these days of uncertainty and peril, deserve the highest praise. I will specially pray at the holy Shrines for the expansion of these activities to which I attach the utmost importance in these concluding years of the First Baha'i Century. What the Bombay believers have accomplished in this respect is noteworthy, and I trust and pray that the Beloved may aid, sustain and guide them to achieve great victories in the pioneer field in the days to come.

July 29, 1942

### Letter of March 28, 1945

Regarding your question concerning Baha'is printing and circulating matter on the Faith: Whether the person writes it openly, as a Baha'i, or gives the impression he is not a Baha'i, (in order to make his statements seem those of a dispassionate observer and thus carry more weight with some minds), if he is a voting member of our Faith he should submit the material to

the N.S.A., or its appointed Committee, to be passed upon as to its accuracy and acceptability. Naturally non-Baha'i material the individual is free to do as he likes about. The National Assembly should deal efficiently with such matters and thus encourage the friends to follow the correct procedure. The whole object in Baha'i administration is not only to manage the affairs of the Cause, but to stimulate the believers to work for it and to teach it to the masses. When the N.S.A. provides competent and quick service, in its own work and that of its Committees, it will see a far greater manifestation of enthusiasm and enterprise on the part of the believers.

[From the Guardian:]

The steady extension of the activities of the Indian Baha'i Community, in accordance with the fundamental administrative principles of the Faith, constitutes a landmark in the early history of the Formative Age of the Baha'i Dispensation, and augurs well for the ultimate triumph and official recognition of the Cause of Baha'u'llah in the course of the second Baha'i Century. The concerted endeavours of the Indian believers during the closing years of the first century have been crowned with signal success. A solid foundation has been laid. The machinery for the systematic and efficient development of the institutions of the Faith in the capital and in the provinces is now functioning. Its literature is being widely disseminated. Its pioneers are labouring in distant fields. What is now required is an intensification of effort to establish direct contact with the masses, proclaim audaciously the verities of the Faith, to consolidate the work already achieved and to lend further impetus to the settlement of pioneers in areas where the light of the Faith has not as yet penetrated. A greater measure of self-sacrifice, closer cooperation, and a higher degree of consecration to the task facing them are required of the believers of India in the course of the second year of the second Baha'i Century. May the Beloved sustain, aid and bless their concerted and meritorious endeavours.

March 28, 1945

### Letter of December 19, 1949

He admires very much the devoted manner in which the Kolhapur Baha'is have built up the Spiritual Assembly there and caused that community to be one of the most active in Southern India. You must not now become discouraged because some of your teachers have left and gone to serve the Cause elsewhere. This gives you the opportunity of learning to do more of the work yourselves, and of also putting your reliance on Baha'u'llah and realizing that He will assist all those who arise to serve Him.

The Guardian assures you he will pray in the Holy Shrines for your protection and that God may assist you in your work, aid you to be united and show the greatest love, one for another, and bless your work.

[From the Guardian:]

May the Almighty guide every step you take in the path of service, and enable you to proclaim the verities of His Faith, and contribute effectively to the consolidation of its newly-born institutions.

December 19, 1949

### Letter of May 14, 1932

He was surely very sorry to hear of the passing away of your father who was such an old and devoted servant of the Cause. Such persons, at their passing, proceed to the presence of Baha'u'llah and partake of His infinite blessings and divine bounties. They enter into a state which, should we only have the eye to see, we would envy and earnestly desire. It is only because we ignore the beautiful and glorious life of the world beyond that we seem attached to our earthly abode and often forget the goal of our very existence here.

May 14, 1932

### Letter of June 6, 1933

It is to the youth that the Guardian is today eagerly looking, and it is upon their shoulders that he is laying all the responsibility for the promotion of the Faith. Theirs is the opportunity to arise and serve to their utmost this great Cause of God.

June 6, 1933

### Letter of December 27, 1933

Concerning the use of alcoholic drinks and drugs the Guardian wishes you to know that they have been explicitly forbidden in the "Kitab-i-Aqdas". Opium is, undoubtedly, prohibited. But smoking, though allowed, is discouraged. Various other points which may be raised in this connection and which have not been explained in the Holy Writings have to be carefully considered and acted upon by the future International House of Justice which is the body empowered by Baha'u'llah to legislate in all matters which have not been explicitly revealed in the Sacred Writings of the Faith.

December 27, 1933

### Letter of January 7, 1934

What, in the last resort, is most essential to every believer is a conscious and an unwavering faith in the mission which the Cause has been called upon to fulfill. Through the light of faith the darkness which envelops our thoughts and feelings gives way to a radiance and a splendour before which every gloom vanishes.

January 7, 1934

### Letter of September 25, 1934

While secrecy in matters of religious faith should be deprecated as being against the spirit of the Cause yet, it is always recommendable to exercise full tact and wisdom whenever, by too frank



and open a declaration of our beliefs, we run the risk of exciting the animosity and opposition of those around us.

September 25, 1934

### Letter of September 4, 1935

With regard to your question relative to the advisability of having Baha'is join film companies. Although on principle there is no objection if any believer wishes to become a cinema actor, yet in view of the excessive corruption that now prevails along such a line of occupation, the Guardian would not advise any believer to choose this kind of profession, unless he finds this to be the only means of earning his livelihood.

Concerning the passage in the Old Testament in which Abraham is reported to have addressed his wife as his sister, the interpretation given it by some Christians cannot hold, as it implies that the Messengers of God are all sinners. A much more plausible explanation would be, that in doing so Abraham wished to emphasize the superiority of the spiritual relationship binding him with his wife to the purely physical and material one.

September 4, 1935

### Letter of April 17, 1936

As regards your study of the Hindu religion. The origins of this and many other religions that abound in India are not quite known to us, and even the Orientalists and the students of religion are not in complete accord about the results of their investigations in that field. The Baha'i Writings also do not refer specifically to any of these forms of religion current in India. So, the Guardian feels it impossible to give you any definite and detailed information on that subject. He would urge you, however, to carry on your studies in that field, although its immensity is well-nigh bewildering, with the view of bringing the Message to the Hindus. The task of converting this section of the Indian population is a most vital obligation, although the Guardian is fully aware of the many difficulties that it presents. Nevertheless the friends should do their best to make as many converts among the Hindus as they possibly can.

Also with regard to the problem of inter-marriage between the Zoroastrian and Hindu Baha'is, this is a highly delicate and vital question, as important as the problem of the black and white in America. The friends should all realize that racial considerations do not, in the light of the Baha'i Teachings, constitute any hindrance to any kind of intercourse between the believers. The Hindu and Zoroastrian Baha'is should forget their former and traditional prejudices whether religious, racial or social, and commune together on a common basis of equality, love and devotion to the Cause. While the goal is quite clear yet, wisdom and caution are needed in order to carry this ideal into full practice.

April 17, 1936

### Letter of May 7, 1941

In these days when the forces of inharmony and disunity are rampant throughout the world, the Baha'is must cling to their Faith and to each other, and, in spite of every difficulty and suffering, protect the unity of the Cause. Often the first efforts at getting the administration of the Faith to mark harmoniously, are painful because the individual must learn to subject his will to the whole — but these are all minor details, and the friends must all concentrate on constructive work for the Cause.

Of course no one is debarred from becoming a Baha'i; rich or poor, learned or ignorant, all have a sacred and equal right to accept the Supreme Manifestation for this age.

The question of residence and taking part in administrative affairs hangs together: wherever a Baha'i has his legal residence, he belongs to the community that is established in that same civil area as his residence, and he cannot vote or be elected to any Baha'i body outside of that area except, of course, National Assembly and Committees. This, of course, does not prevent his teaching in nearby towns or anywhere else. But he cannot live in one city and be a voting Baha'i in another.

May 7, 1941

### Letter of April 7, 1952

He urges you to redouble your efforts during the coming year, to teach the youth this great Message of Baha'u'llah. It is indeed the one hope for the spiritual and material security of the world; and although the response may be slow at first, through your perseverance and devotion, you will gradually succeed in attracting a very large group to the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

April 7, 1952

### Letter of January 27, 1957

He was also delighted to hear that the Message was given to such large crowds of people in a spot associated with the enlightenment of the Manifestation of God, Buddha. The Guardian attaches great importance to the conversion of Buddhists to the Faith as well as Hindus, and he urges your Assembly to do everything in your power to attract the members of these Faiths and convert them.

January 27, 1957

### Letter of February 7, 1937

The Guardian is confident that the ceremony of your marriage will be conducted along strictly Baha'i lines and feels certain that your example will create a deep impression upon the non-believers, and will also serve to greatly encourage the believers in their efforts for the

emancipation of the Cause from the doctrines and traditions of the past, and for its wide and effective recognition as an independent religion.

February 7, 1937

### Letter of March 31, 1937

In this connection, the Guardian feels the necessity of bringing to your attention the fact that the validity of a Baha'i marriage is conditioned upon the consent of the two parties and their parents only. So that in case the other members of your family show any dislike or opposition to your sister's union ... their objection does under no circumstances invalidate it. Your parents' approval would be sufficient, even though all the rest of your family may violently oppose it.

March 31, 1937

### Letter of March 27, 1938

1. In the passage "eschew all fellowship with the ungodly", Baha'u'llah means that we should shun the company of those who disbelieve in God and are wayward. The word "ungodly" is a reference to such perverse people. The words "Be thou as a flame of fire to My enemies and a river of life eternal to My loved ones" should not be taken in their literal sense. Baha'u'llah's advice is that again we should flee from the enemies of God, and instead seek the fellowship of His lovers.
1. A believer has the right to vote for himself during the election time, if he conscientiously feels the urge to do so. This does not necessarily imply that he is ambitious or selfish. For he might conscientiously believe that his qualifications entitle him to membership in a Baha'i administrative body, and he might be right. The essential, however, is that he should be sincere in his belief, and should act according to the dictates of his conscience. Moreover, membership in an assembly or committee is a form of service, and should not be looked upon as a mark of inherent superiority or a means for self-praise.
1. The Baha'i view of "reincarnation" is essentially different from the Hindu conception. The Baha'is believe in the return of the attributes and qualities, but maintain that the essence or the reality of things cannot be made to return. Every being keeps its own individuality, but some of his qualities can be transmitted. The doctrine of metempsychosis upheld by the Hindus is fallacious.
1. The eating of pork is not forbidden in the Baha'i Teachings.
1. Genesis XIX, 29-38 — the text makes it quite clear that Lot was not responsible for the action committed by his two daughters, as they gave him wine and made him drunk.
1. Electioneering and all forms of propaganda are against the spirit of Baha'i elections. The chief opportunity which the friends have for discussion on administrative questions is during the Nineteen Day Feasts, at which time the members of the assembly can meet with the body of the believers and discuss in common the affairs of the Cause, and

suggest new policies and methods. But even then no reference to individuals should be made.

1. Baha'is are permitted to marry non-believers but they should insist on observing the Baha'i marriage ceremony and should also not object if their non-Baha'i partner wishes to observe the marriage ceremony of his or her particular religion. Civil marriage is generally practised amongst the Western believers, but in most of the East it is unknown.

March 27, 1938

### Letter of October 29, 1938

...as to the meaning of the passage in the "Iqan" in which Baha'u'llah refers to the renewal of the "City of God" once in about a thousand years; this, as the word about implies, is simply an approximate date, and should not therefore be taken literally.

The Administrative Order of the Cause, though first established in America, copied as a model by other national Baha'i communities, is not an American production, but is a universal system based on the teachings of Baha'u'llah. It is not simply by coincidence however that it was first initiated and perfected by the American believers.

October 29, 1938

### Letter of November 16, 1939

The task of bringing up a Baha'i child, as emphasized time and again in Baha'i Writings, is the chief responsibility of the mother, whose unique privilege is indeed to create in her home such conditions as would be most conducive to both his material and spiritual welfare and advancement. The training which the child first receives through his mother constitutes the strongest foundation for his future development...

November 16, 1939

### Letter of April 27, 1946

The Baha'is all over the world are subject sometimes to suffering, along with their fellow-men. Whatever vicissitudes befall their country, they will be protected though, and watched over by Baha'u'llah, and should not fear the future but rather fear any failure on their part to carry out the work of His Cause. This applies to the Indian Baha'is.

April 27, 1946

