

1939

Shoghi Effendi

Original English



1939



— 187 —

January 25, 1939

Dear Mr. Vakíl,[pg 174]

The Guardian was most pleased to receive your letter of the 3rd instant and has noted with genuine satisfaction the farewell meeting which the National Spiritual Assembly had arranged in Bombay in honour of our indefatigable and distinguished Bahá'í sister Miss Martha L. Root on the occasion of her departure to Australia.

The feelings of unbounded joy with which you all unanimously acclaimed her arrival in India, and the expressions of deep and sorrowful regret which your National Assembly, as the official mouthpiece of all the Indian and Burmese believers, had been moved to convey to her upon her leaving your shores, all attest the high value which the friends have attached to her presence in India and the splendid work accomplished by her throughout her travels in that country. The cooperation she had received from the Assemblies and individual believers in every centre she visited, and the effective support, both moral and material, so lovingly and continually extended to her by the National Spiritual Assembly in the execution of her teaching plans, have contributed to a marked degree to the success of[pg 175] her journey, which has been indeed the longest and most fruitful she had ever undertaken to your shores.

The Guardian hopes that the friends, and in particular the National Spiritual Assembly, will now endeavour to follow up, with united and unflinching resolve, the splendid work accomplished by Miss Root. The contacts she has formed with leading personalities in social, religious and university circles should be maintained, nay extended and consolidated, and every effort exerted in order to speed up the progress of the teaching work which has received such a fresh impetus as a result of her uninterrupted teaching activity during this past year.

Before closing, I wish to assure you once more of his prayers on your behalf and on behalf of Mrs. Vakíl and children, and all of you, he hopes, will continue to be protected under the sheltering shadow of Bahá'u'lláh's love and guidance.



ORIGINAL

Dear and valued co-worker:

It is indeed a very long time since I have received from you any direct news about your well-being and activities. I am glad to hear that you are well and I wish to express my keen sense of appreciation of all that you have done for our beloved Martha in the course of her journeys in India. She is deeply grateful to you and proud of your work. I too feel equally proud of the spirit that animates you, as well as of the services you render. I will specially pray for your health and for your dear family.

Your
Shoghi

true

brother,



— 188 —

February 13, 1939

[To the National Spiritual Assembly]

The principle involved in this particular case seems to be that of non membership in religious organizations other than the Cause, which obviously implies the total absconding of such religious ceremonies and customs as are strictly associated with, and form a necessary part of any of the ecclesiastical organizations of the past.

It is for your Assembly to carefully ascertain whether the ceremony of “Sadra and Kusti” falls under this category, and after thorough and dispassionate investigation of all the facts involved, to[pg 176] pronounce and inform the parties concerned of your final and considered judgement...



— 189 —

February 17, 1939

[To the National Spiritual Assembly]

Dear Bahá'í Brother,

On behalf of our beloved Guardian I acknowledge with grateful thanks the receipt of your welcome communication of January 27th with enclosures, written at the direction of the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma, the contents of which he has read with very keen interest, and with feelings of utmost satisfaction.

He has noted with profound appreciation, in particular, the account of the farewell meeting held in Bombay under the auspices of your Assembly on the occasion of the departure of our indefatigable and highly esteemed Bahá'í sister Miss Martha Root from India. No more eloquent tribute could have been paid indeed to the historic work accomplished by that well beloved star servant of the Cause during her stay of one full year in that country than that beautiful and impressive gathering which had met to bid her a last farewell upon her leaving your shores. The warmth and spontaneity of your love must have profoundly impressed and moved her heart, and given her an added proof of the unbounded gratitude which you all surely cherish for her, after these many months of ceaseless teaching activity she has spent in your midst.

The Guardian wishes to express his own gratitude to the members of the National Spiritual Assembly, and through them to the community of believers throughout India and Burma for the hospitality and loving assistance you have all, individually as well as collectively, continually extended to Miss Root all through her stay in your country. The essential now, he feels, is for each one of the friends, and particularly the local Assemblies, to arise and with unflinching resolve to endeavour to follow up the splendid work she has so ably, yet so unostentatiously, accomplished. They would be certainly failing in their debt of gratitude to her, if they allow the seeds she has faithfully and painstakingly scattered, during these months of arduous uninterrupted effort, to get lost. Rather, they should spare no effort to water these seeds and enable them to germinate and yield in due time most abundant and lasting results.[pg 177]

With regard to the formation of Bahá'í Youth groups; the Guardian is most pleased to hear of the satisfactory progress that has been accomplished along this line, and of the extensive programme you have arranged for the development of Bahá'í Youth activity during the coming year. He wishes me to express, in particular, his appreciation of the very warm response made by six of these youth groups to the suggestion of the National Youth Committee of America regarding the holding of special youth meetings on the 26th of this month. He wishes you to assure them of his special prayers for the success and confirmation of their efforts.

In connection with the Six Year Plan initiated by your National Spiritual Assembly; the Guardian cannot too highly praise this undertaking of unprecedented magnitude which your Assembly has resolved to carry out. One year has already elapsed since that Plan was first launched, and the task that will have to be accomplished during the remaining five years is indeed immense, and calls for no less than a combined and tremendous sacrificial effort by every Assembly, group and individual believer throughout India and Burma.

But the friends should derive much encouragement at the realization that their efforts for the prosecution of this Plan are, in a way, far more meritorious than those which their fellow believers in the American Continent are exerting in connection with the Seven Year Plan of the American National Spiritual Assembly.

Whereas this latter Plan, which, it should be fairly admitted, is the largest enterprise of its kind ever undertaken by any national Bahá'í Community, has been conceived and formulated directly by the Guardian himself, the Six Year Plan adopted by the Indian National Spiritual Assembly has been initiated solely through the efforts of the elected body of the national representatives of the Indian and Burmese believers, and represents therefore the spontaneous undertaking of the Indian Bahá'í Community itself, and as such is endowed with a special merit

and a unique spiritual potency. When successfully completed this Plan will constitute indeed an abiding monument to the resourceful energy, the unstinted devotion, and the unquenchable enthusiasm of the Indian Bahá'ís, from which future generations of believers in that land will derive endless inspiration and guidance.

In view of the paramount importance of this Six Year Plan, and the urgency which the friends must undoubtedly feel to carry it out as speedily and efficiently as possible during the remaining five years,[pg 178] the Guardian would advise that in the next Annual Convention, meeting in Calcutta, a special session be devoted to the findings and consideration by all the delegates and the friends present of such policies and means as, in their considered opinion, can best insure the speedy and timely completion of this glorious undertaking.

The Guardian would particularly suggest that special stress be laid on the necessity for pioneer teaching in those states and provinces in India and Burma, where the Cause has not yet been introduced.

Those believers who have the means, and also the capacity to teach, should be encouraged, no matter how great the sacrifice involved, to settle in these virgin territories, until such time as a Local Assembly has been constituted, or at least a group of firm believers formed that can safely and gradually evolve into a firmly organized and properly functioning Local Assembly. This policy of teaching by settlement which the Guardian has also advised and indeed urged the American believers to adopt has been proved by experience to be the most effective way of establishing the Faith in new territories, and he therefore confidently recommends it for adoption by your Assembly.

As regards the Indian Summer School; its importance, the Guardian feels, cannot be overstressed, specially in view of its recognized teaching value, both as a centre for the training of Bahá'í teachers, and also for the attraction of outsiders to the Cause. The wide popularity which this newly established yet highly promising institution is already enjoying, truly attests its high value as one of those vital institutions of the Faith in this formative age of its development.

The Guardian wishes me to stress the importance for your Assembly to start collecting from now detailed reports, articles and any other material for use in the next issue of the "Bahá'í World." He would advise that you mail directly any materials you gather to the address of Mrs. A. French, 390 Grove Street, Pasadena, California.

Regarding the questions which our dear Bahá'í brother Mr. Samadani of Delhi had asked the National Spiritual Assembly to submit to the Guardian for his explanations; he wishes me to answer them in the order in which they have been asked:

1. The David referred to by the Báb, and stated by Him to have preceded Moses, is not the same one as King David, the father of King Solomon, who lived in the tenth century B.C. and who obviously lived many years, and indeed many centuries after Moses. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has explained this in a Tablet...
1. Although in the Questions and Answers, Bahá'u'lláh has[pg 179] specifically stated that non-Bahá'ís have no right to inherit from their Bahá'í parents or relatives, yet this

restriction applies only to such cases when a Bahá'í dies without leaving a will and when, therefore, his property will have to be divided in accordance with the rules set forth in the Aqdas. Otherwise, a Bahá'í is free to bequeath his property to any person, irrespective of religion, provided however he leaves a will, specifying his wishes. As you see therefore it is always possible for a Bahá'í to provide for his non-Bahá'í wife, children or relatives by leaving a will. And it is only fair that he should do so.

1. The severe laws and injunctions revealed by the Báb can be properly appreciated and understood only when interpreted in the light of His own statements regarding the nature, purpose and character of His own Dispensation. As these statements clearly reveal, the Bábí Dispensation was essentially in the nature of a religious and indeed social revolution, and its duration had therefore to be short, but full of tragic events, of sweeping and drastic reforms. These drastic measures enforced by the Báb and His followers were taken with the view of undermining the very foundations of Shí'ah orthodoxy, and thus paving the way for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh. To assert the independence of the new Dispensation, and to prepare also the ground for the approaching Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb had therefore to reveal very severe laws, even though most of them were never enforced. But the mere fact that He revealed them was in itself a proof of the independent character of His Dispensation and was sufficient to create such widespread agitation, and excite such opposition on the part of the clergy that led them to cause His eventual martyrdom.
1. The Báb specified that the Bayán is not completed and that "“He Whom God would manifest” (Bahá'u'lláh) would complete it, though not in its actual form, but only spiritually in the form of another book. The Íqán is believed to be its continuation.”

With the assurances of the Guardian's prayers on your behalf and on behalf of your distinguished fellow members in the National Spiritual Assembly and with greetings.

Dearly beloved co-workers:

I feel increasingly grateful and elated I witness the evidences of your constancy, vigilance, and devotion to the manifold and pressing needs of the Faith in both India and Burma. You are indeed laying a firm and unassailable foundation on which future Bahá'í generations can[pg 180] successfully build. Your splendid initiative is truly remarkable, your courage in the face of the formidable obstacles that confront you magnificent, and your fidelity in ushering in the spiritual and administrative principles of the Administrative Order exemplary. Persevere and rest assured that the Beloved will crown your noble endeavours with the success they deserve.

Shoghi



March 2, 1939

My dear Mr. Vakíl,

I am directed by the Guardian to thank you for your welcome letter of February 8th, with enclosures, and he was pleased to read the paper clippings with pleasure.

It gives him much satisfaction to learn of your proposed journey with your family to Haifa this May, and he wishes me to assure you of his heartfelt welcome.

Please find enclosed the receipt for your contribution which he deeply appreciates.

He sincerely trusts and prays that as a dear and devoted brother and fellow worker, our beloved Master may always bless your efforts richly both spiritually and materially and may render you a great and growing asset to the progress of the Bahá'í Faith in India.

My dear and valued co-worker:

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. For yourself I shall offer with a grateful heart my fervent prayers.

Your
Shoghi

true

brother,



July 2, 1939

[To the National Spiritual Assembly][pg 181]

Dear Bahá'í Brother,

I am instructed by our beloved Guardian to acknowledge with deep appreciation the receipt of your welcome communication dated June 5th with enclosures, all of which he was indeed profoundly interested and much pleased to read.

He is truly delighted to know that your Annual Convention this year has been most united, and highly constructive and fruitful in its results, and trusts that the important discussions and

deliberations held by the delegates at various Convention sessions will have the result of stimulating afresh the progressive and systematic penetration of the teaching work throughout India and Burma. The Six Year Plan of teaching inaugurated last year by your National Spiritual Assembly, the Guardian focus, however, cannot succeed unless it receives the continued moral and material support of the entire body of the Indian and Burmese believers, and it is this fact which the National Assembly should continually endeavour to impress upon them all, through frequent appeals destined at once to encourage and provide the facilities required for all those friends who are qualified to work in the field of pioneer teaching. The Guardian would particularly recommend that the National Spiritual Assembly should make every possible effort to open up to the Cause those Indian provinces which still remain deprived of the light of the Teachings, and to this end would suggest that those believers who can arrange to settle in those virgin territories should at once be urged to do so, and the necessary facilities extended to them by the National Spiritual Assembly, with the view of enabling them to prolong their stay until some definite results are accomplished. Also, he feels, your Assembly should endeavour to strengthen the weak areas which have been recently opened, and also launch a wide and systematic campaign for the dissemination of Bahá'í literature throughout the whole country.

In connection with resolution #15 recorded in the minutes of your National Spiritual Assembly; the Guardian wishes you to make clear to all the believers that membership in a Bahá'í Assembly or Committee is a sacred obligation which should be gladly and confidently accepted by every loyal and conscientious member of the Community, no matter how humble and inexperienced. Once elected [pg 182] to serve in a given Assembly a believer's duty is to do his utmost to attend all Assembly meetings, and cooperate with his fellow-members, unless, however, he is prevented from doing so by some major reason such as illness, and even then he should notify the Assembly to this effect. The National Spiritual Assembly's duty is to urge, and also facilitate attendance at Assembly meetings. If a member has no valid reason to justify his repeated absence from Assembly meetings, he should be advised, and even warned, and if such warning is deliberately ignored by him, the Assembly will then have the right to suspend his rights as a voting member of the Community. Such administrative Sanction would seem to be absolutely imperative and necessary, and while not tantamount to a complete expulsion of such member from the Cause, deprives him of any real participation in its administrative functions and affairs, and is thus a most effective corrective measure which the Assembly can use against all such halfhearted and irresponsible individuals in the Community.

Now concerning Mr Muḥammad Ishaq's questions; first concerning the meaning of "Resurrection": although this term is often used by Bahá'u'lláh in His Writings, as in the passage quoted in your letter, its meaning is figurative. The tomb mentioned is also allegorical, i.e. the tomb of unbelief. The Day of Resurrection, according to Bahá'í interpretation, is the Judgement Day, the Day when unbelievers will be called upon to give account of their actions, and whether the world has prevented them from acknowledging the new Revelation.

The passage in Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet in which He explains the Sura of "The Sun" should not be interpreted literally. It does not mean that after the Day of Resurrection praise and peace will cease to be vouchsafed to the Prophet. Rather it means to the end of time, i.e. indefinitely and for all times.

The intercession spoken of by Bahá'u'lláh in one of His prayers which you have quoted is a purely spiritual act and is applicable to Muḥammad as well as to all Prophets. This passage, however, refers more particularly to that kind of intercession in which Muslims believe, though the manner and circumstances of it, according to Bahá'í belief, are mysterious and unknowable.

With the renewed assurances of his continued prayers on your behalf, and on behalf of your fellow members in the National Spiritual Assembly.[pg 183]

Dearly valued co-workers:

I long to hear of the progress of your teaching work in those areas and provinces where the light of the Faith has not as yet shone forth. Teaching is the paramount task that urgently demands the concentrated attention and the complete consecration of the united and persistent efforts of the believers of India and Burma at the present stage of the Six Year Plan which they of their own accord have so magnificently initiated. No dissipation of efforts, no delay in the initiation and execution of the necessary measures for its success should be allowed. All assemblies, all committees and individuals should regard the teaching work as the most essential factor in the discharge of their obligations to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and as the supreme purpose of the machinery of the Administrative Order which they have lately so laboriously and faithfully erected. I will from all my heart pray that the high aim they pursue may be reached, that their hopes may be fulfilled, and that their individual and corporate lives may equally reflect the noble principles that animate their Cause.

Your true and grateful brother,
Shoghi



— 192 —

November 26, 1939

[To the National Spiritual Assembly]

Dear Bahá'í Brother,

I am instructed by our beloved Guardian to acknowledge with grateful thanks the receipt of your communication of August 22nd last, written on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma, and to also express his regret at the considerable, though quite unavoidable delay caused in informing you of its arrival.

What you had written him regarding the various steps taken by the National Spiritual Assembly to further the Six Year Plan of Teaching has immeasurably rejoiced his heart, and he too joins with your Assembly in humbly supplicating Bahá'u'lláh to vouchsafe to all those dear friends who have offered to undertake pioneer teaching in various parts of India such measure of His guidance and blessings as would enable them to effectively further the interests of this Plan. He

would urge you all to persevere in your self-sacrificing exertions, and, notwithstanding the various handicaps under which you may be compelled to labour; to confidently strive to achieve this high teaching objective.[pg 184]

The copy of the English translation of the compilation on “Bahá’í Laws on Matters of Personal Status” which you had submitted for the Guardian’s consideration has safely reached him, and while he does not advise that your Assembly should proceed with the publication of the English text at present, he has no objection to its being translated and published in Urdu and Burmese. As to the Iranian translation of the same; the friends in Írán have already completed this work, and the Guardian would therefore advise that you consult the Iranian National Spiritual Assembly on the subject before deciding to publish the text of the Iranian translation.

Assuring you and your dear fellow members of his continued prayers for the confirmation of your services Dear and valued co-workers: The energetic prosecution of the Six Year Plan, despite the perils, the uncertainties and gravity of the present hour, is the paramount task facing the believers of India and Burma. All projects and activities, however desirable and urgent, must henceforth be subordinated to this most pressing and vital issue, inasmuch as it is the fountainhead from which all future blessings will flow and the one and only instrument which can at the present time, most effectively establish and consolidate the Administrative Order of the Faith throughout the Indian Peninsula. My prayers for your signal success in such a mighty and glorious enterprise will continue to be offered, with increasing fervour, at the Threshold of Bahá’u’lláh. Persevere and be confident.

Shoghi



— 193 —

DECEMBER 5, 1939

IMPART HEART STIRRING NEWS TRANSFER SACRED REMAINS PUREST BRANCH AND
'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S MOTHER SPOT CONSECRATED RESTING PLACE GREATEST HOLY LEAF AND
DESIGNED FUTURE CENTRE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS BELOVED FAITH.

SHOGHI



— 194 —

December 8, 1939

Dear Mr. Vakíl,[pg 185]

The Guardian's hope, however, is that, spurred by the noble example of Martha's life and character, the friends in every land will make a supreme and united effort to carry onward the great teaching task which she had so untiringly been endeavouring to accomplish during all these years, and thus bring eternal joy and impart infinite hope and solace to her heart in the other world.

Dear and valued coworker:

Your true and grateful brother,
Shoghi

— 195 —

LOVING REMEMBRANCE PRAYING SIGNAL SUCCESS TEACHING[pg 186] PLAN.

