

The Bahá'í Fund

INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the threshold...*

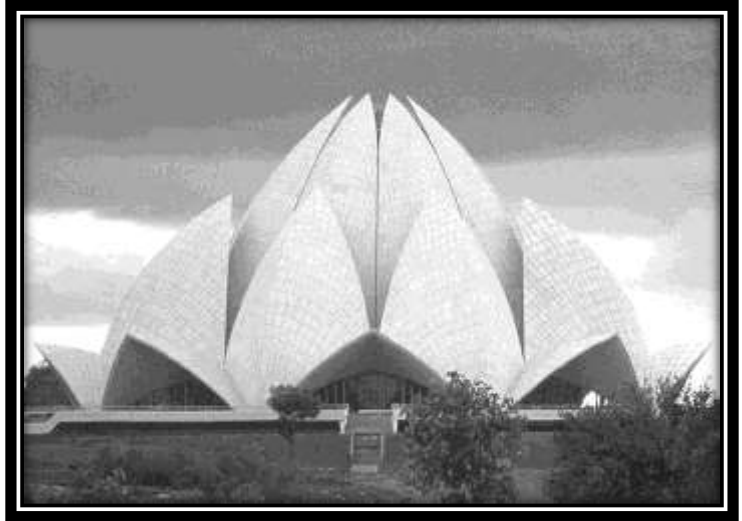
The Bahá'í Faith operates on funds donated by Bahá'ís only. Giving regularly to the Bahá'í Fund is a voluntary act, however, it is identified in the Sacred Writings as a necessity for the individual's spiritual growth, as well as the development of the Cause. One can give to the local Fund by giving to the Treasurer of the Local Spiritual Assembly or group. A Bahá'í can also earmark his or her local contribution, or donate it directly to the National Bahá'í Fund, the Continental Bahá'í Fund, the International Bahá'í Fund, or other permanent or short-term Bahá'í funds.

The **Local Bahá'í Fund** is used to fund all local Bahá'í activities.

The **National Bahá'í Fund** is used to fund all National Bahá'í objectives: publishing, centers, schools, administration, teaching, proclamation, training and others.

The **Continental Bahá'í Fund** provides for the propagation and protection work of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and their Auxiliary Boards.

The **International Bahá'í Fund** enables the House of Justice to aid the Bahá'í work in fruitful but impoverished areas, to assist new National Assemblies to start their work, to contribute to major international undertakings, to finance the operation of the Bahá'í World Centre, to maintain the sacred properties in the Holy Land, to conduct the pilgrimage program, and to defend and proclaim the Faith.



Continental Bahá'í House of Worship for the Indian subcontinent, New Deli, India

OBJECTIVE: *A look to the horizon...*

Facilitator

Review the following objectives with the participants:

The objective of this study is to understand the fundamental verities or basic truths regarding the importance and responsibility of contributing to the Fund.

THE STUDY PROCESS: *Attaining the water of life...*

Facilitator

Review the following study process with the participants. Then study the numbered quotations that follow, one at a time as described below.

1. **READING:** *A drink from the cup of guidance...*

Two volunteers take turns reading the quotation out loud so it is read twice.

2. **CONFIRMING MEANING:** *A spray from the fountain of light...*

PARTICIPANTS: To better understand certain words used in the quotation, take turns with the following:

A. Choose a word from the quotation and state it for the whole group to hear. (Like a fun game – pick a word!) Then...

B. Read out loud the sentence that contains the **word** you selected, **while substituting for that word**, its given phrase, definition, or synonym from the boxes below the quotation.

Repeat A and B above until everyone is satisfied with their understanding of the words.

3. **FINDING VALUE:** *Mining the gems of truth...*

Take turns stating each basic fact or truth you can find in the quotation about the importance and responsibility of contributing to the Fund.

QUOTATIONS: *Within the meadows of Thy nearness...*

1. Contributing to the Fund is a service that every believer can render, be he poor or wealthy; for this is a spiritual responsibility in which the amount given is not important. It is the degree of the sacrifice of the giver, the love with which he makes his gift, and the unity of all the friends in this service which bring spiritual confirmations.

(The Universal House of Justice, cited in *Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968*, p. 19)

amount: sum total
contributing: giving or providing jointly with others
confirmations: validations and assurances that cause spiritual strength
degree: extent or measure
friends: fellow Bahá'ís
Fund: accumulation of donated resources specified for Bahá'í purposes
poor: less than adequate in means or possessions
render: perform

responsibility: act to which one is morally accountable
sacrifice: giving up something of value for something of greater value
service: beneficial deed
spiritual: higher, divine, or heavenly oriented
unity: heartfelt condition of peace, love, and harmony in human relations, free of conflict, contention, dissension, and the struggle for dominance
wealthy: abundant in means and possessions

2. It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of Bahá'u'lláh, who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for the increase of that Fund.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932*, pp. 41-42)

advance: grow and progress
Cause: eternal religious Faith; today, the Bahá'í Faith
conscientious: one whose behavior is governed by what one knows is right
contribute: give or provide jointly with others [to the Fund]
faithful: loyal and devoted
freely: without restraint, reserve, or restrictions

Fund: accumulation of donated resources specified for Bahá'í purposes
generously: give liberally and abundantly
obligation: moral duty and responsibility
sacred: holy, highly valued, and spiritually important
servant: believer who performs service under obligation

3. ...contributions to the Faith are the surest way of lifting once and for all time the burden of hunger and misery from mankind, for it is only through the system of Bahá'u'lláh — Divine in origin — that the world can be gotten on its feet and want, fear, hunger, war, etc., be eliminated. Non-Bahá'ís cannot contribute to our work or do it for us; so really our first obligation is to support our own teaching work, as this will lead to the healing of the nations.

(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, cited in *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*, p. 122, #413)

burden: hard to bear oppression
contribute: give or provide jointly
contributions: funds given or provided jointly with others
Divine: God inspired; holy; sacred
eliminated: removed and gotten rid of
healing: well-being
lead: guide the results
misery: great suffering, pain, sorrow, and distress
obligation: moral duty and responsibility

origin: the source of its beginning
support: serve to carry on
surest: most certain
system: administrative order
teaching: imparting knowledge that causes others to learn [the Bahá'í Faith] [kind of]
want: the state of need
work: [teaching and administrative] efforts and activities

4. The friends must understand that whilst no Assembly or individual may force the friends to give to the Faith, such giving has been considered in our Teachings as a spiritual obligation and an act of sacrifice, which is closely related to the spiritual development of the individual believer.

(The Universal House of Justice, cited in *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*, p. 262, #876)

Assembly: Bahá'í Administrative Body
development: gradual improvement, advancement, or growth
force: exert physical, intellectual, or moral power [to cause]
related: connected by something shared

sacrifice: giving up something of value for something of greater value
spiritual obligation: higher or divine moral duty
Teachings: specific beliefs, concepts, perceptions, principles, standards, morals, ideals and truths taught [in the Bahá'í Faith]

5. ...the progress and promotion of the Cause of God depend on material means.

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Vol. I, p. 489, #1099)

Cause of God: purpose and plans of the Bahá'í Faith
depend: rely for support
material: physical or tangible

means: resources or available wealth
progress: advancement and improvement
promotion: the furtherance and expansion

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6. ...the acceptance of the offerings dependeth on the spirit of joy, fellowship and contentment that the righteous souls who fulfil this injunction will manifest. If such is the attitude acceptance is permissible, and not otherwise. Verily thy Lord is the All-Sufficing, the All-Praised.

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Vol. I, p. 490, #1102)

acceptance: willingness to favorably receive
All-Praised: sole One completely glorified and extolled
All-Sufficing: sole One completely competent or capable to meet or satisfy needs
attitude: mental and emotional state
contentment: the state or quality of being happy enough with what one has or is
dependeth: is based or conditioned
fellowship: companionship, friendly association, and mutual sharing
fulfil: put into effect

injunction: directive to join in
joy: pleasure and delight
manifest: clearly show
offerings: presentation of a gift or contribution as an act of worship
otherwise: if conditions are different than that expressed
permissible: formally consented; allowable
righteous: morally right, fair, and just
spirit: disposition, outlook, or attitude
verily: in very truth

SHARING: *A breath from the spirit of inspiration...*

Facilitator

Ask the participants to complete the statements below. When everyone has finished, have each person share, in a round, the one thing that was most outstanding or inspiring and how it made him or her feel. Please remind everyone not to remark on the comments of others.

The one thing from the quotations that was the most outstanding or inspiring to me was _____

 It made me feel _____
 Explain _____

SOME QUESTIONS: *A gentle breeze from the testing winds...*

Facilitator

Ask the participants to answer the following questions. They can usually find answers in the quotations just studied or in the introduction. When everyone has finished, review the questions, then share and discuss the answers.

1. "...because the Institutions which the Bahá'ís are gradually building are in the nature of gifts from Bahá'u'lláh to the world,"¹ only _____ can give to the Bahá'í Funds.
2. Name several Bahá'í Funds.

¹ LOG, p. 254, #854

3. Which of the following are true statements about giving to the Bahá'í Funds?
- a. Provisions are made to donate to the local Fund at the Nineteen Day Feasts.
 - b. Local or National Treasurers make provisions for the believers to make donations to the National Bahá'í Fund, the Continental Bahá'í Fund and the Bahá'í International Fund.
 - c. Each believer *must* contribute to the Bahá'í Fund at the Nineteen Day Feast.
 - d. One can “ear-mark” a local contribution to be donated to any other Bahá'í Fund.
 - e. One can independently mail contributions directly to any of the Bahá'í Funds.
4. Contributions to the Fund are **most** acceptable when given in the spirit of
- a. joy and fellowship.
 - b. obligation and responsibility.
 - c. contentment and sacrifice.
 - d. hopeful reward.
5. Sometimes people who are not Bahá'ís give money or other resources to the Bahá'í Faith. They are informed that if they insist on giving to the Bahá'í Faith, those funds will be donated to a charitable organization in their name. This is because _____
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6. Shoghi Effendi wrote that we should “ever bear in mind the cardinal principle that all contributions to the Fund are to be purely and strictly voluntary in character,”¹ and that “no pressure should be used upon the friends.”² Therefore, “compulsion,” “coercion,” “psychological pressure,” “solicitation” and “mob psychology” should not be used to inspire Bahá'ís to give to the Fund.
- true
 - false
 - only if the Funds are in the red
7. Giving regularly to the Faith is considered
- a. a spiritual obligation.
 - b. an act of sacrifice.
 - c. an act the Treasurer of a Bahá'í community can enforce.
 - d. an act closely related to the spiritual development of the individual believer.
8. Shoghi Effendi has stated that “...contributions to the welfare of individuals are secondary to contributions towards the National and Local Funds...”³ Why is this, do you think? _____
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9. Without regular funds donated by the Bahá'ís, the maintenance, expansion, and development of the Faith would be seriously restricted. Why is this? _____
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10. Establishing the Faith throughout the world is the “...*infallible* [incapable of error] *remedy for all the ills that afflict the children of men.*”⁴ What then, might be the order of priorities, regarding the giving of our personal resources. (list them in order of importance: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th)
- ___ Give to individuals in need.
 - ___ Give to the Local and National Bahá'í Funds.
 - ___ Give to worthy charitable organization.
 - ___ Keep it in our personal rainy-day fund.

¹ BA, p. 101

² COC, Vol. I, p. 537, #1227

³ COC, Vol. I, p. 531, #1218

⁴ GWB, p. 183

APPLICATION: *Showing forth divine light...*

Facilitator

Read through the following paragraph together and proceed as stated. Then take time for the participants to write out their individual plans for action. When everyone has finished, move on to the closing reading.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote: *“It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action....”* Imagine how the Bahá'í Teachings in this study class could be translated into reality and action. Take turns sharing the possibilities. Begin your statements with: *“One could....”*

From your experience in this study class on the Bahá'í Fund, describe what **you** are inspired to put into reality and action. **I will make conscious efforts to...** _____

A letter from a friend you know...

Dear Friends,

From time immemorial, I have served Bahá'u'lláh's servants throughout the world. I have supported the work at the World Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Faith. I have helped maintain the work of other Bahá'í institutions throughout the world, the Hands of the Cause, the Continental Boards of Counsellors, the National Spiritual Assemblies, the Auxiliary Board members, the Local Spiritual Assemblies and their assistants.

I have built Bahá'í schools, Temples and Centres, and have supported full-time Bahá'í teachers and Bahá'í teaching projects. I have sent Bahá'í travelling teachers to the east of the earth and to the west thereof. I have sponsored great Bahá'í local, national and international conferences and conventions. It is I who take care of the Bahá'í representative at the United Nations and those representatives at other non-governmental organizations. From the beginning, I have been labouring night and day.

Friends, I have withstood the test of many generations. I have given to millions longing for the meaning and essence of their existence. I have welcomed millions of men and women from all walks of life seeking rest from their labours of search and uncertainty, seeking peace and security, and a reason for living.... Friends, for me to continue to serve you well, you must nourish me always so that I may be healthy to serve you always. Friends, I need you just as you need me.

Your friend, The Bahá'í Fund

(The New Zealand Bahá'í News, November, 1986)

ANSWERS: *Affirming treasures...*

1. Bahá'ís
2. The Local Bahá'í Fund, the National Bahá'í Fund, the Continental Bahá'í Fund and the International Bahá'í Fund.
3. a, b, d, and e
4. a and c
5. only Bahá'ís can give to the Bahá'í Funds
6. true
7. a, b, and d
8. Because regular contributions to the Faith will affect more people by rapidly establishing the Bahá'í Faith and thus the healing of all the problems of the world. There are, of course, many other reasons.
9. because, *“...the progress and promotion of the Cause of God depend on material means.”*
10. First give to the Local and National Bahá'í Funds. The rest are of course personal preferences.