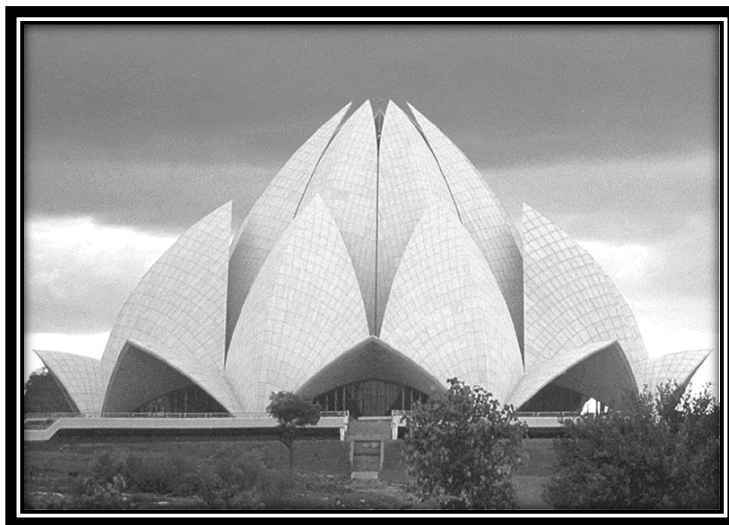


The Bahá'í Fund

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 feature of the individual's spiritual growth, as well as a necessity for the development of the Cause. One can give to the Fund through the Treasurer of the Local Spiritual Assembly or group, or access the numerous online options. A Bahá'í can also earmark his or her contribution, or donate directly to the Regional Bahá'í Council Fund, the National Bahá'í Fund, the Continental Bahá'í Fund, the International Bahá'í Fund, or other permanent or short-term Bahá'í funds. All donations are kept in the strictest confidentiality.



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

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

The **Regional Bahá'í Council Fund** is a branch of the National Fund and is used to support the teachings and service work of the Bahá'í community in a specific region. This includes support where needed of neighborhood volunteers, training institutes, Local Spiritual Assemblies, homefront pioneers, teaching committees, and regional growth facilitators.

The **National Bahá'í Fund** is used to fund all National Bahá'í objectives: publishing, education, schools, centers, administration, teaching, proclamation, training, the House of Worship and its dependencies, various desks of the National Assembly, support of the many other Bahá'í Funds, and numerous additional projects, needs, and services.

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.

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...*
 - A. Read the quotation out loud in its entirety.
2. **CONFIRMING MEANING:** *A spray from the fountain of light...*

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

 - A. Each participant **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.
 - C. Repeat A and B above until everyone is satisfied with their understanding of the words.
3. **FINDING VALUE:** *Mining the gems of truth...*
 - A. Read the quotation out loud again in its entirety.
 - B. 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 from God that cause spiritual strength
degree: extent or measure
friends: fellow Bahá'ís
Fund: accumulation of donated resources specified for Bahá'í purposes
love: warm feelings of affection and adoration

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: state of joining together in harmony
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; one who voluntarily gives due respect, service, and worship

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 or put to an end
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 work: imparting of knowledge that causes others to learn [about the Bahá'í Faith]
want: the state of need
work: [teaching and administrative] efforts and activities [of the Bahá'í faith]

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 pressure [to coerce or compel]
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

6. He does not feel that it is desirable to lay down any conditions for giving to the Bahá'í Fund. This is an entirely personal matter, and each believer must act according to his own judgement and the needs of the Faith.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, dated 19 October 1947, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. I, p. 541 #1239)

conditions: qualifications or requirements
he: The Guardian, Shoghi Effendi

lay down: state or declare forcefully
personal matter: issue for individual choice

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7. We must be like the fountain or spring that is continually emptying itself of all that it has and is continually being refilled from an invisible source. To be continually giving out for the good of our fellows undeterred by fear of poverty and reliant on the unfailing bounty of the Source of all wealth and all good – this is the secret of right living.

(Shoghi Effendi, cited in *Bahá'í News* 13, September 1926, p. 1, published in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. I, p. 529 #1212)

bounty: generously bestowed gifts and favors
continually: regularly and repeatedly
fellows: fellow human beings
fountain: source from which there is a continuous sustaining supply

reliant: confident, trusting, and dependent
right: conforming to the Will of God
Source: cause or origin [*symbolizing* - God]
spring: ultimate source
undeterred: not discouraged or prevented

SHARING EXERCISE: *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, one thing that was outstanding or inspiring and what spiritual feelings it enkindled. Please remind everyone not to remark on the comments of others.

One thing from the quotations that was outstanding or inspiring to me was _____

It made me feel _____

Explain _____

SOME QUESTIONS: *A cup from the showers of confirmation...*

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 *Lights of Guidance*, A Bahá'í Reference File, 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 or contribute directly online to most of the Bahá'í Funds.
4. The believers are free to give to any of the Bahá'í Funds, and it is their individual choice to decide on the amount. We are encouraged to make a sacrifice for the best use of our resources, but are guided not to incur debt or borrow for the sake of giving to the Fund.¹ To make a sacrifice means to give up something of value of *our own*, for something we consider of greater _____
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 _____
-
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,”² and that “no pressure should be used upon the friends.”³ 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...”⁴ Why is this, do you think? _____
-
9. Without regular funds donated by the Bahá'ís, the maintenance, expansion, and development of the Faith would be seriously restricted. Why is this? _____
-
10. Establishing the Faith throughout the world is the “...*infallible* [incapable of error] *remedy for all the ills that afflict the children of men*.”⁵ 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 Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. I, p. 536 #1226

² *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 101

³ *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. I, p. 537 #1227

⁴ *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. I, p. 531 #1218

⁵ *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 183

APPLICATION: Showing forth divine light...

Facilitator

Read through #1 together and proceed as stated. Then take time for the participants to write out their individual plans for action in #2. (these are not shared) When everyone has finished, move on to the closing reading.

1. IMAGINING THE POSSIBILITIES: *Visions of radiant lights...*

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...."** Suggest as many ideas as you want.

2. DECIDING ACTION: *Mirroring forth a beam of light...*

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...*** _____

My next step will be... _____

CLOSING MEDITATION: A heart song...

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 Regional Bahá'í Council Fund, the National Bahá'í Fund, the Continental Bahá'í Fund and the International Bahá'í Fund.
3. a, b, d, and e
4. value or worth
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. All answers are valuable