

# Centers of Bahá'í Learning

Extracts from the Writings of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice

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## 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 dated 21 October 1925 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Green Acre Summer School, published in "Bahá'í News" (10 February 1926), p. 3)*

2. 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 dated 18 November 1931 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, published in "Bahá'í News" 63 (June 1932), p. 4)*

3. 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 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 dated 27 January 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, published in "Bahá'í News" 63 (June 1932), p. 3)*

4. 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 dated 10 September 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)*

5. 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)*

6. 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 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 dated 17 October 1936 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles)*

7. 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 dated 15 August 1938 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Central States Summer School)*

8. 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, 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 dated 1 December 1938 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma)*

- 9 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" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 9)*

10. 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 dated 22 August 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)*

11. 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 dated 24 August 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers)*

12. 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", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1987), p. 340)*

13. 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 dated 18 July 1957 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada)*

### **Administration:**

14. The Bahá'í summer schools were originated in America to meet the requirements of the friends. They have been adopted by other Bahá'í Communities the world over, but there is no reason why they should be called "summer schools". There is nothing rigid about the term, it is purely descriptive. The Guardian feels that although you can have the immediate affairs of your summer schools managed by a convenient Local Assembly, they should remain under the direct

supervision of the National Spiritual Assembly as they are national in character and not purely local.

*(From a letter dated 26 December 1941 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand)*

15. Regarding the summer schools in general: although there is no objection to their being under the direct management of a special Committee elected for that purpose, they must be generally supervised by the National Spiritual Assembly in respect to policy, etc. In other words they must be considered as a national and not a purely local institution"

*(From a letter dated 18 April 1942 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand)*

16. Bahá'í summer schools in the United States originated in the same informal manner as Yerrinbool; they were (and some still are) the property of individual believers who resided on them, but they are administered by Committees appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly and which usually include, out of courtesy and consideration, the owners. The American friends also desired to have many more summer schools, but the Guardian has so far not permitted them to add to the number, as it dissipates the energy and funds of the believers and would at present weaken those already existing.

*(From a letter dated 13 May 1945 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand)*

17. WELCOME EXPANSION SCOPE ANNUAL CONFERENCE THROUGH INAUGURATION SUMMER SCHOOL DESIGNED PROLONG SESSIONS CONFERENCE STIMULATE SPIRIT BAHÁ'Í FELLOWSHIP, DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING FUNDAMENTAL SPIRITUAL ADMINISTRATIVE PRINCIPLES FAITH, FIX PATTERN FUTURE INDEPENDENT NATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOLS TEN EUROPEAN GOAL COUNTRIES"

*(Shoghi Effendi, cable dated 20 July 1950 to Third Bahá'í European Teaching Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark, published in "Bahá'í News" 236 (October 1950), p. 1)*

18. As regards the question you asked about a Summer School, there is no reason why a property should either be rented or bought for this purpose. You can arrange to hold a Summer School in any suitable place where the friends can find accommodation, and a hall can be rented for its sessions. This is what they have done in England for many years to great advantage. It is a simple and economical way of holding the School. The primary purpose of the School is to deepen the knowledge of the friends in the Teachings, to enable them to consort, as Bahá'ís, with each other, and to confirm any contacts who may have attended. The School may be held during the winter season or any other time of the year.

*(From a letter dated 30 June 1957 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska and an individual believer)*

### **Courses and Curriculum:**

19. ...he sincerely trusts that these summer courses will serve to deepen the knowledge and the understanding of the friends and enable them to diffuse the teachings of the Faith to the struggling and almost hopeless world.

The wide range of the topics that are to be discussed and studied by the friends cover most of the important aspects of the Cause and such a plan will undoubtedly give them a broad and a sound knowledge of the essentials of the Faith. Special stress, however, should be put on the history of the Movement as well as on the guiding principles of Bahá'í Administration; for on these two points most of the believers are not adequately informed. It is, therefore, a great opportunity for them to strengthen the basis of their beliefs and to try to deepen their understanding of the basis of the present-day Bahá'í administrative system.

*(From a letter dated 5 August 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)*

20. Definite courses should be given along the different phases of the Bahá'í Faith and in a manner that will stimulate the students to proceed in their studies privately once they return home, for the period of a few days is not sufficient to learn everything. They have to be taught the habit of

studying the Cause constantly, for the more we read the Words the more will the truth they contain be revealed to us.

*(From a letter dated 24 November 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)*

21. The basic purpose of all Bahá'í summer schools, whether in East or West, is to give the believers the opportunity to fully acquaint themselves, not only by mere study but through whole-hearted and active collaboration in various Bahá'í activities, with the essentials of the Administration and in this way enable them to become efficient and able promoters of the Cause. The teaching of the Administration is, therefore, an indispensable feature of every Bahá'í summer school and its special significance can be better understood if we realize the great need of every believer today for a more adequate understanding of the social principles and laws of the Faith. It is now, when the Cause is passing through some of the most difficult stages of its development, that the friends should equip themselves with the necessary knowledge of the Administration. The Guardian wishes you, therefore, to stress again, in all the coming summer schools, this vital point and in this way add to the effectiveness and success of your efforts along this line.

*Postscript in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi:*

I certainly advise you to concentrate next year on "The Dawn-Breakers" as well as on the needs, the principles and the purpose of Bahá'í Administration. The Cause in your land is still in its formative period. It needs men and women of vision, of capacity and understanding.

*(From a letter dated 25 September 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers, published in "Bahá'í News" 78 (November 1933), p. 4)*

22. He feels that in your next summer meetings continued emphasis should be laid upon the teaching of the administration, especially in its relation to the outside world, so as to impress the non-Bahá'í attendants at the School with the nature, character and world significance of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. The teaching of the Administration should, indeed, be considered as forming a permanent and vital feature of every Bahá'í summer school. For upon its thorough and intelligent understanding by the entire community of the believers must inevitably depend the effectiveness and continued expansion of Bahá'í activities throughout the world.

*(From a letter dated 6 November 1934 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)*

23. With regard to the School's programme for the next summer: the Guardian would certainly advise, and even urge the friends to make a thorough study of the Qur'án, as the knowledge of this Sacred Scripture is absolutely indispensable for every believer who wishes to adequately understand, and intelligently read the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. Although there are very few persons among our Western Bahá'ís who are capable of handling such a course in a scholarly way yet, the mere lack of such competent teachers should encourage and stimulate the believers to get better acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures of Islám. In this way, there will gradually appear some distinguished Bahá'ís who will be so well versed in the teaching of Islám as to be able to guide the believers in their study of that religion.

*(From a letter dated 2 December 1935 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Central States Summer School Committee and an individual believer)*

24. As regards the study courses for the next year's session: the Guardian wishes you to cover the same subjects, namely the Administrative Order and Islám, but feels that these should be studied through more detailed and concentrated examination of all their aspects. An effort should be made to raise the standard of studies, so as to provide the Bahá'í student with a thorough knowledge of the Cause that would enable him to expound it befittingly to the educated public.

*(From a letter dated 8 November 1937 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)*

25. The course on character building, ... the Guardian feels, is particularly important and should be given due emphasis and studied carefully and thoroughly, especially by the young believers in attendance at the school. These standards of Bahá'í conduct, which he himself has set forth in his last general epistle, "The Advent of Divine Justice", and which it should be the paramount duty of every loyal and conscientious believer to endeavour to uphold and promote, deserve serious study and meditation, and should constitute the main central theme of this year's programme at all the three Bahá'í Summer Schools in the States.

Since the purpose of the Summer School is not only to impart knowledge of the Teachings, but to infuse in the hearts of all those present such spirit as will enable them to translate the ideals of the Cause into daily deeds of constructive spiritual living, it is more than fitting therefore that this year's meetings should be principally devoted to the study of Bahá'í morals, not only in their theoretical aspect, but first and foremost in their relation to the present-day needs and requirements of Bahá'í community life.

The principles and methods laid down by the Guardian in his "Advent of Divine Justice" on the vital subject of Bahá'í ethics should indeed prove of valuable inspiration and guidance to all the students and friends attending the Summer School classes, and thus prepare them to better appreciate the privileges, and more adequately discharge the responsibilities, of their citizenship in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

*(From a letter dated 20 May 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)*

26. ... there is as yet no such thing as a Bahá'í curriculum, and there are no Bahá'í publications exclusively devoted to this subject, since the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá do not present a definite and detailed educational system, but simply offer certain basic principles and set forth a number of teaching ideals that should guide future Bahá'í educationalists in their efforts to formulate an adequate teaching curriculum which would be in full harmony with the spirit of the Bahá'í Teachings, and would thus meet the requirements and needs of the modern age.

These basic principles are available in the sacred writings of the Cause, and should be carefully studied, and gradually incorporated in various college and university programmes. But the task of formulating a system of education which would be officially recognized by the Cause, and enforced as such throughout the Bahá'í world is one which [the] present-day generation of believers cannot obviously undertake, and which has to be gradually accomplished by Bahá'í scholars and educationalists of the future.

*(From a letter dated 7 June 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)*

27. He feels ... that some of the courses are not sufficiently Bahá'í in nature, but carry the student off into an unnecessary study of special techniques -- history, psychology or whatever it may be, which however valuable these topics may be in training the human mind and fitting the individual for contact with others, are a waste of time, in view of the very limited period that most of the Bahá'ís spend at a Bahá'í summer school.

The friends should concentrate on deepening their grasp of the Teachings, particularly on studying what has already been done, and what must be done to fulfil the goals of this World Crusade.

*(From a letter dated 11 May 1954 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)*

28. He thinks the less time spend on such topics as "Current Events in the Light of the Bahá'í Faith", and "The Bahá'í Faith and Modern Science", the better. There is no harm in having an evening lecture by a qualified speaker once on each of these subjects, but he certainly does not feel that much time should be spent on them, for the very simple reason that there is so little that can be said on the subject. The Bahá'ís are not scientists, and cannot very well go into details of the relation of the Bahá'í Faith to modern science; and "Current Events in the Light of the Bahá'í Faith" is also a topic which can be dealt with briefly.

He feels that the most important thing for the Bahá'í Schools all over the world at present to do is to strongly impress upon the Bahá'í attendants the urgency of arising, not only to fulfil pioneer goals and to consolidate the work on the home front, which is getting weaker every year instead of stronger, but also to bring home to the friends the necessity of dispersing.

The Bahá'ís must realize that they belong to a world-wide Order, and not an American civilization. They must try and introduce the Bahá'í atmosphere of life and thought into their Summer Schools, rather than making the Summer School an episode and a pleasant vacation period, during which they learn a little more about the Faith.

*(From a letter dated 23 May 1954 written on behalf of the Shoghi Effendi to the Green Acre Program Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)*

29. Through the intensive study of Bahá'í Scriptures and of the early history of the Faith; through the organization of courses on the teachings and history of Islám; through conferences for the promotion of inter-racial amity; through laboratory courses designed to familiarize the participants with the processes of the Bahá'í Administrative Order; through special sessions devoted to Youth and child training; through classes in public speaking; through lectures on Comparative Religion; through group discussion on the manifold aspects of the Faith; through the establishment of libraries; through teaching classes; through courses on Bahá'í ethics and on Latin America; through the introduction of winter school sessions; through forums and devotional gatherings; through plays and pageants; through picnics and other recreational activities, these schools, open to Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike, have set so noble an example as to inspire other Bahá'í communities in Persia, in the British Isles, in Germany, in Australia, in New Zealand, in India, in Iraq and in Egypt to undertake the initial measures designed to enable them to build along the same lines institutions that bid fair to evolve into the Bahá'í universities of the future.

*(Shoghi Effendi, "God Passes By" p. 341)*

### **Teaching the Public and Attracting Ethnic Minorities:**

30. The Summer Schools provide a splendid setting and environment to which the best element among the coloured race should be specially attracted. Through such association prejudice can be gradually eradicated, and `Abdu'l-Bahá's ardent wish fully realized.

The Guardian finds it impossible to overestimate the importance and urgency of this sacred duty that confronts both the Local and the National Assemblies.

*(From a letter dated 28 July 1936 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)*

31. The Guardian welcomes your suggestion to extend to various groups and clubs in Davison and the adjoining centres, whom you find to be well disposed and sympathetic towards the Faith, an invitation to attend certain special meetings at the Louhelen Summer School. He will pray that this plan you have conceived may result in further intensifying the campaign of teaching throughout those regions.

*(From a letter dated 27 January 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers)*

32. He hopes your Committee will continue to endeavour in raising the standard, both intellectual and spiritual, of the school, and make it an attractive centre not only to the believers but especially to non-Bahá'ís. It is, indeed, the teaching value of the school which you should particularly emphasize. The courses, lectures and general activities conducted by the friends should be arranged in such a way as to attract the attention of the outside public to the Cause. The Summer School is a high occasion for teaching the Message. Through daily association with the believers, non-Bahá'ís will come to see the Cause functioning as an active and living community entirely dedicated to the service of what is best and highest in the world. The lectures will familiarize them with the principles underlying the New World Order, while their participation in the social life of the believers will enable them to see the way in which these very same principles are put into operation.

This is the aspect of the Summer School which the Guardian wishes your Committee to stress. He is confident that thereby the teaching work will receive a powerful impetus.

As regards the courses, he would advise you to continue laying emphasis on the history and teaching of Islám, and in particular on the Islámic origins of the Faith.

*(From a letter dated 14 October 1936 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)*

33. He was delighted to hear of the great success your "Winter Institute for Bahá'í Education" met with. Such progressive activities, especially when carried on in co-operation with local people who are not Bahá'ís, do a great deal of good, and not only expand the knowledge of the believers themselves but bring the Faith before the public in an excellent light.

*(From a letter dated 9 February 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Phoenix, Arizona)*

## **Youth Activities:**

34. Indeed it is very important for the Faith, to extend the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh amongst the youth, as it is through their activities, that the Cause of our Beloved Master will in future spread all over the American continent. They have upon their shoulders all the responsibilities for the progress of the Movement; it is our duty to rear their spiritual feelings, enlighten their hearts with the light of guidance which has been shed before us by the Master.

The Guardian was pleased to learn of the interest and sympathetic understanding which are growing amongst these students. He hopes that, through your help, you will every year widen the scope of their activities and give them fresh opportunities to their sincere endeavours to spread the teachings.

### *Postscript in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi:*

I wish to urge the necessity of concentrating, at your next summer session, on the systematic study of the early history and principles of the Faith, on public speaking, and on a thorough discussion, both formally and informally, of various aspects of the Cause. These I regard as essential preliminaries to a future intensive campaign of teaching in which the rising generation must engage, if the spread of the Cause is to be assured in that land. May you succeed in your efforts to attain that goal!

*(From a letter dated 2 November 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers)*

35. He would advise you, however, to devote some more of your time to active teaching in public. To that end he would urge you to attend, if possible, all the sessions and meetings at the Geyserville Summer School, that you may not only deepen your knowledge of the Teachings, but also acquire the necessary training for expounding them to the public. The ambition of every young Bahá'í should be, indeed, to become a well-informed and competent teacher. For this very purpose the institution of [the] Bahá'í Summer School has been established, and its importance so strongly and repeatedly emphasized by the Guardian.

*(From a letter dated 21 June 1935 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)*

36. The obligation to teach is essentially the responsibility of young believers. Their whole training should therefore be directed in such a way as to make them competent teachers. It is for this very purpose Bahá'í summer schools, which constitute the very basis upon which the Bahá'í universities of the future will be established, should be widely attended by young believers.

The Guardian would appeal to each and every member of your group to do his utmost to be present at least in one of the three summer schools now existing in the States. And for those young believers who will be travelling abroad during the summer months it is always possible to attend the German Bahá'í Summer School at Esslingen.

*(From a letter dated 15 May written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Bahá'í Youth Groups in the United States)*

37. Remembering the strong emphasis repeatedly laid by the Guardian on the importance of the institution of the summer school, both as a centre for the preparation and training of prospective teachers and pioneers, and for the commingling and fellowship of various elements in the Bahá'í Community, the Bahá'í Youth, on whom Louhelen Ranch has exercised a particular and indeed irresistible appeal, and whose sessions they have so frequently and in such large numbers attended, have a peculiar responsibility to shoulder in connection with its development into that ideal Bahá'í University of the future, which should be the aim of every existing Bahá'í Summer School to establish in the fullness of time.

*(From a letter dated 29 July 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Louhelen School)*

38. As regards the questions you asked him: There is nothing in the teachings against dancing, and any arrangements for it at Summer Schools, etc., are left to the discretion of the Committee or Assembly in charge to make.

*(From a letter dated 24 February 1947 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)*



### **Pioneers and Pioneering:**

39. ...it should be the main concern of the teaching bodies in charge of the Central and South American teaching campaign to provide all such prospective pioneers with the fullest opportunity not only to acquire a perfect mastery of Spanish, but in addition to familiarize themselves, as thoroughly as possible, with the history, customs, and the social and religious background and traditions of the people in these Latin American countries. The Summer School, one of whose chief aims is to train and prepare the believers to become well-qualified and competent teachers, offers indeed good prospects of developing into a training ground for all prospective Central and South American Bahá'í pioneers, and it would be therefore most opportune if the Committees in charge of our three Summer Schools decide to start classes for the teaching of Spanish, and of any such subjects as would be helpful for teaching in Spanish-speaking countries.

*(From a letter dated 29 July 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)*

40. He was pleased to hear that you were able to attend the Summer School at Geyserville this year, as these institutions are of the greatest help to the friends and inspire them to carry on their often lonely pioneer work with renewed zeal.

*(From a letter dated 22 November 1941 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)*

41. Nor should any occasion be neglected by the pioneers of attending, if their personal circumstances permit, either the British or German Bahá'í summer schools, and of forging such links with these institutions as will not only assist them in the discharge of their duties, but enable them to initiate, when the time is ripe, an institution of a similar character, under the auspices of the European Teaching Committee -- an institution which will be the forerunner of the summer schools that will have to be founded separately by the future Assemblies in their respective countries.

*(From a letter dated 5 June 1947 written by Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís of the West)*

### **Prospects for the Future:**

42. Shoghi Effendi hopes that your summer school will increasingly develop and will become an important centre for the spread of the Message. You should try to raise its intellectual as well as its spiritual standard and to pave the way for its future development into one of the foremost Bahá'í universities in the West. Much stress should be laid on the thorough study of the history and of the teachings of the Cause, and particularly of the nature, basis and outstanding features of the Administration.

*(From a letter dated 1 October 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís of Esslingen, Germany)*

43. He was also very pleased to hear that the Summer School is becoming an institution of national importance, and that the friends are increasingly attending it and realizing its great value in the life of the entire Community of believers. In a country such as India it might grow to be the first permanent institution of Bahá'í learning if the believers support it sufficiently and carry out their teaching campaign with whole-hearted devotion and zeal; for, with the influx of many new Bahá'ís into the Cause in that country, it should not be difficult to evolve it into a Bahá'í university as time goes by.

*(From a letter dated 10 January 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma)*

## **TEACHING INSTITUTES**

44. This is essentially an activity aimed at deepening the knowledge of the friends to prepare them for active participation in the teaching work. In some countries it may continue to be an activity

conducted either in local Bahá'í Centres or possibly housed in hired quarters, like most Summer Schools. However, in other countries, and particularly in mass teaching areas, it may have to be a modest structure acquired or erected in the rural areas where the majority of the believers reside rather than in capital cities, to obviate transportation expenses for those attending.

*(From a circular letter dated 14 May 1964 written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies)*

45. The material to be taught is prepared ahead of time, presented in simple language, and translated into the vernacular.

The subjects taught usually consist of Bahá'í History, Laws and Teachings and the Administrative Order. Special emphasis is laid upon living the Bahá'í life, the importance of teaching, prayer, fasting, Nineteen Day Feasts, Bahá'í elections, and contribution to the Fund.

*(Prepared for inclusion with a letter dated 24 December 1964 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Guatemala)*

46. We are happy to note plans for the Institute, but we feel that it would not be appropriate to issue a certificate for those who have completed the course. Instead, if you can afford it and if you feel it would be suitable you might give those who complete the course a pamphlet or piece of Bahá'í literature with an appropriate inscription.

*(From a letter dated 14 July 1965 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Indian Ocean)*

47. We have also noted that you intend to give graduation diplomas to the friends who attend the institutes. Your desire to acknowledge devoted attendance at the institutes is most commendable, but we feel it would be preferable in future to give a suitable gift, such as a book, rather than a diploma. From experience in other areas of the world we have learned that such diplomas sometimes are misused by their recipients. For this reason we have discouraged their use.

*(From a letter dated 27 October 1965 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Guatemala)*

48. Teaching Institutes activities may be carried on in the Hazíratu'l-Quds as long as necessary, but you should keep in mind the goal of eventually acquiring a Teaching Institute elsewhere.

*(From a letter dated 22 January 1968 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands)*

49. We greatly appreciate your desire to serve the Cause and at the same time honour the beloved Hand of the Cause and wonder whether more feasible plans would appeal to you. For instance, you might consider establishing a fund to maintain Bahá'í tutors in villages, who would teach not only reading and writing but the elements of the Faith as well. We have always stressed to those National Spiritual Assemblies which establish Teaching Institutes that at the present time such an Institute is a function and not necessarily a building and there are many places where such educational work can be pursued if a number of teachers can be supported. On the other hand, we have no idea of the size of the principal you have in mind for your endowment and wonder whether a very simple school where not only children but adult literary classes could be held, would meet your intention.

*(From a letter dated 18 April 1971 to an individual believer)*