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Dedication to the Sacredness of the Bahá'í Fund Compiled by the National Spiritual Assembly of Azerbaijan



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4. Bahá'u'lláh's New World Order and My Envelope

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From two ranks amongst men power hath been seized: kings and ecclesiastics.

—Bahá'u'lláh

Every Bahá'í ... must realize what a grave responsibility he has to shoulder in this connection [the Bahá'í Fund].

—Shoghi Effendi

All, no matter how modest their resources, must participate.

—Shoghi Effendi

In previous editions of *The Roaring Fountain*, the concepts of sacrifice, generosity, and devotion were briefly discussed in relation to the Bahá'í Fund, but what about participation? Who in the Bahá'í community is invited to participate in the process? We see the world around us rapidly evolving. The push toward globalization and multiculturalism is ever-increasing, and with it, the face of the world is

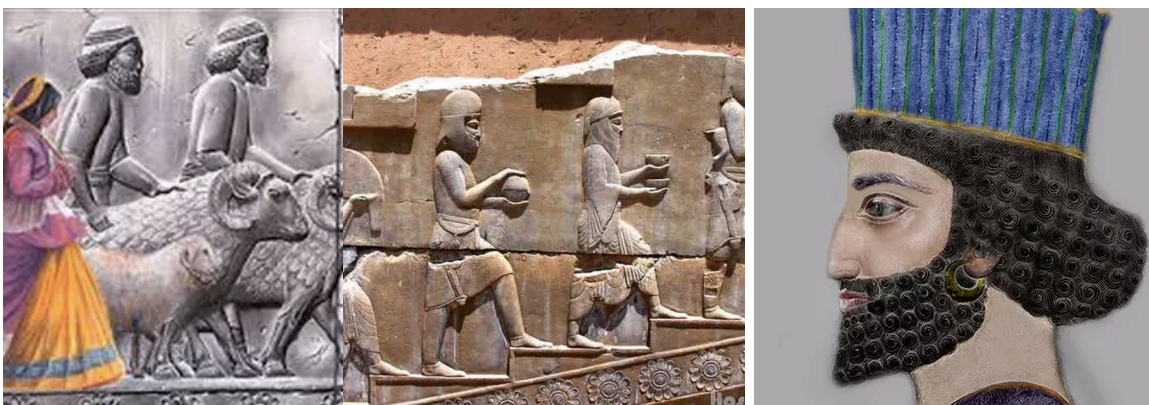
transforming. While power, rights, and responsibility were traditionally in the hands of the few, power has now been dispersed, fundamental human rights have been acknowledged, and there is a growing belief that the world is interconnected and that all nations and people, no matter how big or small, contribute to one greater whole. It is in this context that the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh paves the way for universal contributions in the path of God, an integral part of "the emergence of a world community."

The emergence of a world community, the consciousness of world citizenship, the founding of a world civilization and culture—all of which must synchronize with the initial stages in the unfoldment of the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Era—should, by their very nature, be regarded, as far as this planetary life is concerned, as the furthestmost limits in the organization of human society, though man, as an individual, will, nay must indeed as a result of such a consummation, continue indefinitely to progress and develop.

—Shoghi Effendi



When I was a junior youth, I was fascinated by ancient history and how great civilizations ruled the world. The majesty of the kings and rulers, their power and supreme sovereignty, their great palaces, kingdoms, and crowns—they all captivated my imagination. I used to visit the library near our house to look at books and paintings of the ancient Roman Empire, the Egyptian pharaohs, and the Persian kings. I learned that the Persians ruled over almost half of the world's population from their capital in Shíráz. And I remember how intrigued I used to be by the colorful drawings of the multitudes lining up in front of the kings' palace, Persepolis, to make offerings on the occasion of Naw-Rúz.



Persepolis in Shíráz where masses of people came to pay respect to the King and offer contributions

On one of the pictures of Persepolis, I noted people coming forward to the king, heads bowed in adoration, seeking his good-pleasure. I asked my father why the people brought so much food for the king? Did he not have enough food? My father explained that before the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, people offered what they could to the kings, who prayed for the world, gave to the ecclesiastics on behalf of their kingdom, and built churches, mosques, and monasteries. My father was a trustee of Ḥuqúqu'lláh

in our community and said that the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh had shifted this responsibility of offering in the path of God from the kings to individuals; and thus, the principle of universal participation was born.

The Bahá'í teachings have redefined the nature of contributions in the path of God for an ever-advancing humanity that has reached its adolescence. The new World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, unfolded in 1863, has completely transformed how wealth is distributed in the world. Bahá'u'lláh took the world's power, natural resources, and capital—previously controlled by the kings—and spread it to the people of the world. He inspired humanity to seek democracy, social justice, federalization, and equality, while nurturing grass roots community-building. And as He was incarcerated by the royal decree of the Turkish and Iranian kings in the 1860s, Bahá'u'lláh made one of the most revolutionary statements in human history:

From two ranks amongst men power hath been seized: kings and ecclesiastics.

—Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh's prophecy was soon fulfilled at the turn of the same century, as all kingdoms of the world fell into the people's hands, one after the other—including Turkey, Iran, Russia, France, Spain, China, and many others. Even though a few kings remain in the world today, they do not rule the people, because "power hath been seized" from them. It is this fundamental change in the course of human civilization, decreed by Bahá'u'lláh, that initiated the shift of responsibility for contributing in the path of God—from the kings, who controlled the world's wealth, to every human being regardless of social status, age, gender, education, employment, and material possessions. The people of the world have become kings of their own lives; in the Bahá'í community, men and women have been given equal right to contribute in the path of God, while children and youth are encouraged to embark on a life of generous giving. But this shift in human consciousness was also accompanied by words of caution:

Every Bahá'í ... must realize what a grave responsibility he has to shoulder in this connection [the Bahá'í Fund]....

—Shoghi Effendi

The word "every" is quite clear for me, but I had to open the dictionary to understand a "grave" responsibility. Grave means serious, firm, weighty, and crucial. The shift of wealth from the kings to the citizens of the world assigned a "grave responsibility" to all people to give generously and sacrificially in the Path of God..

Giving to the Fund ... is a spiritual privilege ... of which no believer should deny himself. It is both a responsibility and a source of bounty.

—The Universal House of Justice

These quotes answer our question about who should participate in the Bahá'í Fund: "Every Bahá'í" because "no believer should deny himself" of the privilege. If we want to be part of God's ever-advancing civilization in humanity's age of maturity, we should adopt a new attitude of generosity and giving. Let us pay closer attention to the language of this age of adolescence:

O Son of Being! Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.

—Bahá'u'lláh

When children are young, parents never say, "Love me that I may love thee," because they love their children without expectation of anything in return. God's love is similarly unconditional. But as children

become adults, they have a more mature relationship with their parents. They must show love in order to better appreciate their parents' love. Likewise, in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, in this age of human maturity, the true Lover demands love so that we do not deprive ourselves of His bounty: *"If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant!"*

Why do Bahá'í Holy Writings put so much emphasis on universal participation? Why do scriptures state that *"all ... must participate"*? Although there is no real answer to such a question, Bahá'ís believe that, like a physician, Bahá'u'lláh gave the world a remedy for today's unique problems.

The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy. Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present-day afflictions can never be the same as that which a subsequent age may require.

—Bahá'u'lláh



Times have changed. As recently as a few decades ago, during an era of collective farms in the Soviet Union, people did not accumulate wealth. All properties, homes, lands, businesses, factories, and even the harvest from the farms belonged to the State. Today we live in a different world, where everyone owns things. Even children have their own room, telephone, computer, and vehicle. It is the ownership that carries with it the *"grave responsibility"* of disciplining our hearts, minds, and actions to be generous and to give back sacrificially to our world. This discipline, in turn, is promised to serve as a divine remedy—to bring us higher knowledge, love for humanity, and self-respect, and to lead to global prosperity.

Apathy about generosity leads humanity away from this remedy, to a life of attachment, selfishness, ego, and greed. The signs of such an undesirable life are readily apparent in our world, and the advice of the *"Divine Physician"* will sooner or later prove to be the only remedy. As we become wealthier in our lives, we must strive to correspondingly increase the degree of our generosity to ensure that we always give sacrificially. We cannot be afraid; the same generous God Who gave us our wealth will refill our bowls over and over again. *"This is the secret of right living!"*

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

One cannot deny the rapid changes in our society. This is a proof of the enormous impact of Bahá'u'lláh Revelation. Our lives serve as a journey to discover the pearls of wisdom handed to us by the "Divine Physician." And this journey is for everyone.

In this journey the seeker becometh witness to a myriad changes and transformations, confluences and divergences. He beholdeth the wonders of Divinity in the mysteries of creation and discovereth the paths of guidance and the ways of His Lord. Such is the station reached by them that search after God, and such are the heights attained by those who hasten unto Him.

—Bahá'u'lláh

Any Bahá'í can give to the Cause's Funds, adult or child.

—Shoghi Effendi



The Journey Continues...

Next Chapter: Can the Holy Spirit find me?...

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This Site is Managed by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Azerbaijan. The Material presented here was initially published between 2001 to 2006. Kindly contact us at AzerbaijanBahailcmasi@gmail.com



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