

Shoghi Effendi by Ruhiyyih Khanum

Kampala Conference, 26 Jan 1958

In Simpler English

Overview

Two months after the passing of Shoghi Effendi, Ruhiyyih Khanum spoke at the Conference in Uganda of the life and personality of Shoghi Effendi.

This is that talk, with the English made simpler, for people whose English is their second language, and younger readers.

Contents, Contact Details, and Links, are all at the end.

Story

Introduction; About Shoghi Effendi

I long to be able to speak as well as this subject deserves.

Shoghi Effendi was the oldest grandson of Abdu'l-Bahá. The Master loved him so much. He was a weak child, but he became healthier and stronger as he grew. All his life he kept some of that weakness, not of morals or strength of will, but that weakness which caused his heart to stop.

Spiritual Power like Electricity

Everyone meeting the Guardian, felt the great power of his spirit and mind; it felt like the buzzing and shaking where electricity is made for a whole city.

I have felt this strange force for twenty years; when he went outside the house, I felt it less, and walking up the gardens near the Shrine of the Báb it became smaller, and when he was at the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, it disappeared. It was extraordinary and real; not an imagination.

Sensitive Child, Needing Encouragement

Everyone close to Shoghi Effendi felt he was very sensitive. He was very sensitive as a child - one of those children who you should always encourage.

Some children are tough plants; and other children you must tell them what they are doing is beautiful - the Guardian needed encouragement like this.

I hope you will understand a little bit of the nature of Shoghi Effendi who became the Guardian of the Faith.

Sorrow and Suffering

I was in Haifa recently. One of the Hands said, "You should write his life." I said, "How could a pen write such sorrow."

Shoghi suffered as the Guardian and as a child; at school and at college, where he was so different from everyone else, already on the path to his future.

Joyful

The Guardian was not a sad person; he was unusually joyful and bright.

Humility in Person, Strength for the Faith

He was humble beyond words, the most humble person I have ever seen. He had self-respect, yet without any pride. But as Guardian, he would allow no offence to the Guardian or the Faith - but in his own nature he was complete humility.

Studied Hard, Plans as Translator

As a child he had the right qualities for being Guardian - he studied hard and loved the teachings of the Faith, and he set them in his memory. He adored the Master, Abdu'l-Bahá.

One day the Master came into a room, and found Shoghi Effendi alone, putting the Writings to memory. He asked him what he was doing. The rest of the family was downstairs drinking coffee and tea and talking. Abdu'l-Bahá looked out the window at them and said to Shoghi, "I don't want you to be like they are."

Shoghi Effendi asked Abdu'l-Bahá if he could study in England. He served the Master as translator and secretary. He went to England with Abdu'l-Bahá's permission, but he never dreamed it would be the last time he would see his beloved Grandfather. His plan was to make his English perfect, so he could translate the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Passing of Abdu'l-Bahá

When Shoghi Effendi was studying at Oxford, Abdu'l-Bahá went to some of His family and asked them to telegram Shoghi Effendi electronically, to return to Haifa immediately. They probably thought this was too expensive, and as they could not see the hurry they wrote to him by post instead. If they had telegraphed Shoghi Effendi he would have seen Abdu'l-Bahá alive.

Never Expected Guardianship

The Guardian often told me, that he never dreamed he would be Guardian. He never expected there would be such a thing, or that he would be it. All his hopes were to serve the Master and translate the teachings into English. As the eldest grandson, he thought he might need to open any instructions left by Abdu'l-Bahá and send them for the friends.

Terrible Blow at Abdu'l-Bahá's Passing

So this young man of 24, with such an eager, pure and humble heart, so full of love for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, received his first terrible shock when he heard Abdu'l-Bahá had left the world. He went from Oxford to the office of the Secretary of the London Assembly, and arrived when he was out of the office. He was shown into the office to wait for his return. Accidentally his eyes saw a telegram open on the table and he learned that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had passed to the higher world. In a few minutes the secretary returned to his office, and found Shoghi in a broken heap on the floor.

Shock of Being Made Guardian

They brought the Guardian back to Haifa ill from sadness and shock. When he arrived, the second most terrible blow of his life hit him. The Will of Abdu'l-Bahá was read to him, and he found the weight on the Báb, on Bahá'u'lláh, on Abdu'l-Bahá, had now come onto his shoulders. He told me, "The day they read the Will to me, I stopped being a normal human being."

How He Received Inspiration

We assume so much. Before I went to Haifa, I thought as many of the friends, that the Guardian just sat there and listened all the time as 'Abdu'l-Bahá¹ spoke into his ears and it was a lovely, gentle experience.

Though I am like an ant looking at the Sun, I have noticed some things. Divine inspiration seems not like a book continuously read before the eyes, but like pulsations and flashes of lightning.

The Guardian was always guided and protected. Yet he suffered deeply and terribly over situations; but he was always guided - these great flashes would come and he would always say and do the right thing; God was always with him; but it was not constant - it was in flashes; and between those flashes was infinite suffering.

On Becoming Guardian

When Shoghi Effendi came to Haifa and learned he was Guardian, his nobility and leadership appeared, and continued throughout his life. He at once did two things; one concerning the Master's family, the other concerning the world of non-Bahá'ís.

No Longer Went to Mosque

He refused to go to the Mosque. 'Abdu'l-Bahá always went to the mosque. It was wise then: the family were like prisoners and it was good to avoid upsetting the powers of the Holy Land.

Everything in the Faith is new; the past is destroyed;

it is a new age, a new Faith, something new and glorious is born. It was all in the teachings. There was a veil over it in the Holy Land; it was torn in Persia. Then Shoghi Effendi said, "I will not go to the Mosque" - and the veil was torn.

Master's Family

He showed a love and kindness to the Master's family that I do not think Bahá'ís realise. He said, "My family has been raised high by one among it being Guardian, I must give to my aunts, uncles and cousins something for what they have not received." He turned down his own mother and father and brothers and sisters, and went to his aunt's home and lived there, and made his uncle, not his father, his representative; he made his cousins, not his brothers, his secretaries. In those months when he was so broken by the passing of the Master, he would take his drink only from his aunt.

Switzerland Retreat through Sorrow

Then his sorrow became so great, he fled to Switzerland, and tried to take to his heart what God had put on his back.

International House of Justice

In the first years of Guardianship some Bahá'ís from the West came to him, saying it was time to form the International House of Justice. He paid no attention to them. He knew you cannot place a roof on the earth; first you must have a strong floor, then pillars, and only then you can place the roof.

Covenant-Breakers

From the start he began to suffer what every leader of religion has suffered - covenant breakers. In this world, where there is sun there is a shadow, and it is blackest where it is closest to the light. In the heaven where the sun shines there is no shadow. That is the world of God. But in this world there is shadow. The Guardian had a heart that was like a bubbling spring of water. By himself he had the most joyful heart of anyone I have seen, and sometimes even with his troubles, to the end of his life, there were times his heart bubbled. Now it is bubbling freely on high. But in those early years he suffered so terribly, it left its marks all his life.

Going Away; Worn Out; Conscientious

When my mother and I were in Haifa in 1922 or 1923 (I was a child), he was going away, and called us to his bedroom. He was in bed and looked so worn out, with dark circles under his eyes. He said, "Mrs. Maxwell I cannot stand it, I am going away." He did; but of course he returned in the autumn to do his work. He cared so much for carrying the weight that was placed upon him.

Simple Tastes

In the early years, to the end of his life, he gave

¹ or "Bahá'u'lláh" - versions differ.

himself nothing. There were very few things he liked or wanted; he had very simple tastes in food, dress, and everything; but a beautiful thing was that when he liked a thing, he liked it completely and forever.

The friends do not know how hard he was on himself, giving himself nothing, living very simply.

He would eat once a day. He just did not feel hungry, and was like this as a child. I was terribly worried and I used to ask doctors about it. They would say, "Do not worry; if he is healthy and doesn't want it, let him be this way." And I became used to it.

Great Walker; Stamina

He was a great walker; he could keep going through great tiredness - I have never seen anything like it. He told me once, in his younger days he walked 35 km in one day over three mountains.

Simple Living

I think it encourages the friends to know, especially poorer friends who sacrifice so much for this Faith, that the Guardian, although he was so careful of honour as the Guardian, as a man and where people did not know him, he lived with complete simplicity.

Summers in Switzerland; Tiny Room

The Guardian only lasted as long as 36 years because he went away in the summer to rest; he had a room in Switzerland for a coin and a half. Once a relative went to see the Guardian, and he couldn't stand up straight in the room: it was so small, he banged his head against the bent ceiling.

Taking the Cause in Hand; Writing Method and Style

When the Guardian came back after the passing of the Master, he took the Cause firmly in hand. He began a series of inspiring letters which he sent out to the East and the West.

Style of Writing

The Persian friends had letters written by him when he was the Master's secretary, and they said there was a clear change in the manner and style of his writing.

Writes Out Loud

The Guardian spoke out loud everything he wrote. He would write and speak at the same time. He liked to have someone in the room when he was writing.

When he was chanting, not speaking, it sounded just like a nightingale behind the door.

Writings and Translations

Now I will speak of his writings and translations of the Faith. He said, "I have given the English-speaking Bahá'ís all the most necessary teachings of the Faith".

God Passes By

It took the Guardian two years to write "God Passes By". He read 200 reference books; all the books written by Bahá'ís, by enemies, all the Writings, everything. He typed the text twice himself. He used to work 16 hours a day.

Reads Every Letter, Checks Every Address

The Guardian read every word of every letter, spoke the answer to his secretary, wrote the closing words. He even checked the address the secretary had written with the address on the letter. This was the degree of his carefulness.

Signs Huqúqu'lláh Receipts

He used to sign the receipts for Huqúqu'lláh. He had to give this up. One day he signed 2,000 receipts. He kept doing this until the war cut off Israel from Persia. Then he stopped this. His love kept him doing this for so long. He wanted the Persians in villages, some so poor, to have that word Shoghi, written by him, that meant so much to them.

Mixed Community in 1921, Makes New; Discipline

At the time of the passing of Abdu'l-Bahá the Bahá'ís were made of Christian Bahá'ís, Muslim Bahá'ís, Buddhist Bahá'ís, and so on. Everyone in the world has a limit to the work they can do. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave all his force and did all he could for the Faith. Then came the young Guardian. The Guardian made us Bahá'ís. He separated us from the old roots. He saw that we put down roots strongly in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. A father is loving and patient with his children. When the elder brother takes over, he has less fatherly patience and much more brotherly discipline. We got this from Shoghi Effendi.

Three Things in Ministry

These things went on at the same time, during the work of the Guardian:

1. Building up World Order and its Institutes outside the Holy land.
2. Creating an International Centre. The holiness of the resting places of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were pointed out in the Writings, but creating the World Centre at Haifa was the work of the Guardian.
3. Protecting the Faith from covenant breaking.

The work of the Faith wears out the Holy Souls; but it is covenant breaking that crucifies and eventually kills them.

Protecting the Faith and Suffering

While building up the World Order and International Centre he was constantly suffering and sorrowing. When Shoghi Effendi became Guardian the enemies thought he was a young man and that they could deal with him. From the very first day he had

trouble. He rose up, attacked back, and protected and made the Faith pure; but at great cost to himself. One after another they came, from all countries.

Fearless and Firm on Principles

The Guardian was totally without fear. He was like a lion when he defended the Faith. He never retreated even by a hair. I will give you some examples.

Effect of Compromise; Accepts Repentances

How many mosquitoes will give you malaria or yellow fever? When we make deals with our Faith, it is like taking a glass of water and putting a drop of ink in it: the water does not become ink, but the purity of the water is gone.

When hearts returned, the Guardian accepted covenant breakers back into the Faith again.

Refuses to take Large Sum of Money

One summer the Guardian was away and Mr. Maxwell was in charge of matters in Haifa. There was a person who displeased the Guardian; but he was a voting member and attended all meetings. He sent £54,000 and Mr. Maxwell put it in the bank. When the Guardian returned, Mr. Maxwell told him about it. Shoghi Effendi said, "Send the money back in the morning. I am displeased with him, and I am not going to take his money."

Refuses to See Famous Reporter

A very famous reporter from an important group of American newspapers came and wanted to see the Guardian. I begged the Guardian to see him. He said, "I didn't see so and so from some small newspaper in Tel Aviv last week, why should I see this man now?"

Disallows Marriage in Church

In Spain a number of years ago Bahá'ís wanted to marry. This could only be done as members of the Christian Church. Ruhiyyih Khanum said, "Is there some way this can be done? What if these believers leave the Faith?" The Guardian said, "Let them; let everybody in Europe leave the Faith: I am not going to reduce the principles of the Faith."

Open About Faith

The Guardian insisted we should always be open about our Faith. This is difficult in Persia where there is so much persecution. The Guardian would not allow a Bahá'í to pretend he was something else.

Bahá Street

Another example was when the City wanted to change a street name near the Guardian's home to "Bahá Street". Perhaps it was a compliment, or influenced by covenant breakers - I don't know. The sign was put up for only one day. "If that sign isn't down by tomorrow, I will tear it down with my own

hands, and if they put me in prison I don't care!"

Many Side of Character

The Guardian had so many sides to his nature, and you have seen how strong he was in defending the Faith. He never let principles be lessened.

Love and Loyalty

Now I would like to show to you another side of him. He had great love and loyalty for those he loved; but only when they acted well; if their goodness ceased, favours ceased to flow.

Weeps for Zia Baghdadi

I remember when Dr. Zia Baghdadi died and the news reached the Guardian. I don't know exactly when it was, but it was a very, very short time after my marriage with the Guardian. Perhaps in the first month, or maybe even less than that. News came saying that Zia Baghdadi had died and the Guardian cried for almost an hour that night.

Unswayed by Feelings

The Guardian was quite unable to be influenced by emotion. Therefore it is most notable how he would weep for those he loved, who served the Cause greatly. The friends are unaware how the Central Figures of our Faith had a diamond quality in their nature that was never affected by their emotions, how whatever they considered right, they did despite everything.

Expels Household Members

He had an exceptionally loving nature. The friends do not realize how many years of suffering, crushing his heart, hurt and insult, went in secret before he sent those telegrams putting members of the Master's family out of the Faith. He kept silent and endured endlessly; when it became bad for the Cause, he took action. But what they did to him as a person, he always endured.

Suffering from Covenant-Breakers and the Sufferings of Bahá'ís

He suffered very much from two things - the actions of people who were either Covenant-Breakers or becoming one, and he suffered from the suffering of the Bahá'ís.

He would wrap himself up in his quilt and not even take a sip of water for a day or two. He would sometimes lose 2 or 3 kilograms of weight in those times.

If you have an idea of these sufferings, you will understand why his heart stopped suddenly.

Sense of Humour; With Pilgrims; Bed

Shoghi Effendi had a delightful sense of humour.

He walked with the Persian pilgrims, ate his one meal of the day with the western pilgrims, and went home to bed, usually exhausted.

Asked for Marriage Permission

One young man, a pilgrim, wanted to marry. He wanted to ask the Guardian's permission. Of course, this was unnecessary - but he wanted to. He never asked the Guardian directly - later on, he asked through me. The first night he arrived, his hand shook wildly as he raised a glass of water to his lips. With great difficulty he took a sip and managed to set the glass back down on the table. The Guardian followed the progress of this glass carefully with his eyes. The moment this young man put his glass down the Guardian got up and went home. He said, "Did you see that young man's hand! I thought, if I stay another minute, he will have a stroke, and as we've had two deaths this summer I thought we'd better not have more."

Daring, Creativity and Cost-Cutting

The Guardian had three other qualities I think the friends will like to hear, and very important ones for us to remember as we go forward into the next five years of the Plan.

The first of these is daring; the second is creativity, and the third is cost-saving. The Guardian had all these greatly.

No obstacles stopped the Guardian. He ran at them face on; he never tried to avoid them or go around them -- he flew straight at them.

His creativity in the work in Haifa was especially amazing. He found ways of doing things which he had never seen or heard of.

Greening the Terraces and Gardens

For example, he built terraces and gardens. People would come to him and say, "A tree can't grow in one meter of soil! a tree can't grow on top of a container roof! you cannot plant a tree in the ground and pile earth all around it up to its top, it will die," and so on. He did all of those things; he planted trees on tops of cisterns and nothing happened to them; he covered trees up to their tops and it looked as if three beautiful trees would grow out of the soil instead of one. He was not beaten down by the opinions of other people.

Be daring in the way you solve problems, creative in the way you carry them out, and do them at low cost.

Kept Costs Low

The Guardian watched every penny he was responsible for in the Holy Land and all over the world, to a level I think the Bahá'ís have no idea about.

I would need time for the details, but every single piece of work in Haifa was greatly reduced in cost by the Guardian -- the Shrine of the Báb, the gardens, entrances, gates, paths, platforms for ornaments --

the Guardian made very sure he was doing everything for the least cost.

No matter what it was, if he considered the price was too expensive, he would not pay it, even if it was required or very important; if the price was over the top he just would not pay it. This is why he achieved so much, why he could build the Shrines, Archives, help complete the Temple in America, and help in teaching needs. We have a sacred duty to follow his example. The basis of this religion is wholehearted, endless sacrifice -- and we saw this in our Guardian for 36 years.

Life-Sacrifice, No Time, Haste and Urgency

The way in which Shoghi Effendi sacrificed himself in every human sense is unbelievable. He had no life, time or joys of his own, and very little happiness in all his life. He hurried all the time, he had a sense of haste and pressure. I think everyone who worked with him in Haifa and the friends all over the world, when they received his messages, and felt the vibrating power within him, realized this urgency -- hurry, hurry, hurry, all the time, to get it done quickly before something happens.

Figures in 1921 and then in 1957

	At Master's passing	At Shoghi Effendi's passing
Countries and territories opened.	35 countries 5 Islands.	254 countries. 100 Islands.
Languages.	14	237
Assemblies.	200-400	1,000
Centres.	500	4,500 (2,500 in 1953)
N.S. A.'S.	2.	26

Two Plans

The Guardian said to some of the pilgrims, during the final year and a half of his life, something very strange. He said there are two Plans.

Plan for Mankind - Progressive Revelation

One is the eternal Plan of God for mankind on this planet, where all the Prophets and Manifestations of God like Christ, Muhammad, Buddha, Zoroaster and Moses, bring us to this day with the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. This is the Mighty Plan of God, educating humanity and bringing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. He said this is the plan of God, it goes forward in mysterious ways, we do not always understand how it works.

Divine Plan - Bahá'í Era

And the second, he said, is the Divine Plan, carried forward by Bahá'ís as the two Seven-Year Plans, and now this Ten-Year Plan - the World Crusade which we are now engaged in, and part of which has passed.

Hints at His Passing

The Guardian said, "Who knows, maybe this great Plan of God will disturb the lesser Plan..." We always thought (at least I always thought) this meant the war we may be unable to prevent. I never dreamt that what would cut across the Plan, the Ten-Year Plan we are now working in, would be the ascension of our Guardian.

Living Martyrdom; Passing

The Guardian sacrificed himself for the Faith as fully as anyone who was martyred. He burned away until there was nothing left, and suddenly God took his spirit in the blink of an eye, because he had clearly finished his task in this world.

The Guardian was in better health this summer than he had been for years. His own doctor said so; he had good doctors when he had the Asiatic 'flu in London, and he was examined thoroughly, and there was nothing in the world for anyone to believe he might possibly pass away.

Submission to God's Will at His Passing

We can only bow our heads to the Will of God, knowing that Bahá'u'lláh has His Own Plan, that He will guard this Faith, and that nothing can prevent His Will.

The Work Ahead a Shrine for Shoghi Effendi

The Guardian did not leave our hands empty. We have His work to carry on and the greatest shrine we can build in our love and our sorrow for Shoghi Effendi, is our work in this world-encircling Plan.

As You have Faith, So Shall Your Powers and Blessings Be

There are some words of Abdu'l-Bahá which I wish to quote. He said,

"As you have faith, so shall your powers and blessings be. This is the balance, this is the balance, this is the balance."

In the Name of Shoghi Effendi, Press On in Unity

So, in the name of Shoghi Effendi, I appeal to you all to carry on his work as one soul in many bodies.

Contents

Overview	1
Story	1
Introduction; About Shoghi Effendi	1
Spiritual Power like Electricity	1
Sensitive Child, Needing Encouragement.....	1
Sorrow and Suffering.....	1
Joyful	1
Humility in Person, Strength for the Faith.....	1
Studied Hard, Plans as Translator	1
Passing of Abdu'l-Bahá	1
Never Expected Guardianship.....	1
Terrible Blow at Abdu'l-Bahá's Passing	2
Shock of Being Made Guardian.....	2
How He Received Inspiration	2
On Becoming Guardian.....	2
No Longer Went to Mosque.....	2
Master's Family	2
Switzerland Retreat through Sorrow	2
International House of Justice.....	2
Covenant-Breakers	2
Going Away; Worn Out; Conscientious	2

Simple Tastes	2
Great Walker; Stamina	3
Simple Living	3
Summers in Switzerland; Tiny Room	3
Taking the Cause in Hand; Writing Method and Style	3
Style of Writing.....	3
Writes Out Loud.....	3
Writings and Translations	3
God Passes By	3
Reads Every Letter, Checks Every Address	3
Signs Huqúqu'lláh Receipts	3
Mixed Community in 1921, Makes New; Discipline	3
Three Things in Ministry	3
Protecting the Faith and Suffering.....	3
Fearless and Firm on Principles.....	4
Effect of Compromise; Accepts Repentances	4
Refuses to take Large Sum of Money	4
Refuses to See Famous Reporter	4
Disallows Marriage in Church	4
Open About Faith.....	4
Bahá Street.....	4
Many Side of Character.....	4
Love and Loyalty	4
Weeps for Zia Baghdadi	4
Unswayed by Feelings	4
Expels Household Members	4
Suffering from Covenant-Breakers and the Sufferings of Bahá'ís	4
Sense of Humour; With Pilgrims; Bed.....	4
Asked for Marriage Permission.....	5
Daring, Creativity and Cost-Cutting.....	5
Greening the Terraces and Gardens	5
Kept Costs Low	5
Life-Sacrifice, No Time, Haste and Urgency	5
Figures in 1921 and then in 1957	5
Two Plans.....	5
Plan for Mankind - Progressive Revelation.....	5
Divine Plan - Bahá'í Era	5
Hints at His Passing	6
Living Martyrdom; Passing	6
Submission to God's Will at His Passing	6
The Work Ahead a Shrine for Shoghi Effendi	6
As You have Faith, So Shall Your Powers and Blessings Be.....	6
In the Name of Shoghi Effendi, Press On in Unity	6
Contents	6
Info	6

Info

Author : David Merrick, Edinburgh

All comments appreciated :

<http://www.paintdrawer.co.uk/david/email.php>

This Version : 2010-11-14 01:27

Latest Version : [http://www.paintdrawer.co.uk/david/folders/Spirituality/001=Bahai/Shoghi%20Effendi%20by%20Ruhiyyih%20Khanum%20\(Simpler%20English\).doc](http://www.paintdrawer.co.uk/david/folders/Spirituality/001=Bahai/Shoghi%20Effendi%20by%20Ruhiyyih%20Khanum%20(Simpler%20English).doc)