

# Style of the Language of Shoghi Effendi

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*A friend of mine took notes from these series of talks given at a conference in Acut. As my friend shared his notes and told me about the talk, I took my own notes. Therefore these notes should be taken accordingly.*

## Introduction

When writers write, they are expressing something or they are saying something. That is the content. There is a distinction between what the writer is saying and how he/she is saying it. The how is the style of the writer.

When you have a great writer, the style (the how) is an expression of the what. The media becomes an echo of the content. This is very rare and when you find someone who you feel achieved this, that writer becomes a standard for excellence. Shakespeare and Dante are examples just to name a few.

A side note, we commonly think that we are actively and consciously choosing our words in order to convey or say what we think or mean. I suspect that as science progresses, we will find that the words we use, to a greater extent determine what we think than we would think. A book has recently been published which is about the non-reality of the spoken language in media, in commercials and the language used in diplomacy work. The basic tenant of the work is that words are increasing becoming more and more meaningless.

Shoghi Effendi has commented the style of the Kitáb-i-Iqán calling it,

*A model of Persian prose, of a style at once original, chaste and vigorous, and remarkably lucid, both cogent in argument and matchless in its irresistible eloquence, this Book, setting forth in outline the Grand Redemptive Scheme of God, occupies a position unequalled by any work in the entire range of Bahá'í literature, except the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh's Most Holy Book. (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 138)*

Considering the above description, we see that Shoghi Effendi is giving us a model of language. It is not far to extend this to the English language. It should be original, chaste and vigorous.

That a work is original suggest that you can easily recognize it. Imagine you have a musician, one who is original. You will recognize the artist when listening to his/her music. There is no doubt in your mind about it. It is like I would read it out loud to you without giving reference, you will still recognize it.

Shoghi Effendi has in his writings, mastered the language and made it his own so to say. No doubt, he himself has been influenced by other great writes. It is reported that Shoghi Effendi had Gibbons by his bed.

As to chaste, Bahauallah advised Nabil as he was writing his narrative (no clear reference) “*Neither to overstate nor understate, neither to expand the description of events nor reduce their importance*”.

Shoghi Effendi has expressed that chastity is to indulge in neither of those extremes. The above is an interesting definition of the meaning chastity in terms of style. I have heard that a Persian scholar was told that he should be strictly factual, and his narrative should be free from doubtful reports and assumptions.

Vigorous has all kind of meanings; it has to do with vitality, a push, having a point, not elaborating excessively to the point that you lose your way. The following is an example of how Shoghi Effendi is vigorous in his language (*The Promised Day is Come* p 129). Take note the simplicity of the quote.

*God, ..., does not only punish the wrongdoings of His children. He chastises because He is just, and He chastens because He loves. Having chastened them, He cannot, in His great mercy, leave them to their fate. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 115)*

Being vigorous in one’s style can also have the quality of simplicity. It can push aside obstacles.

During the course of these talks, I wish to try to show how Shoghi Effendi does basically four things and in these four elements we can find the style reflected.

He is helping us think about time – In linguistic style, time, pace and tempos are very important and relevant. Shoghi Effendi is using his style, linguistically, to help us understand how we decipher time, how we understand history, how we are to understand the present and how to understand the future.

The educative process – He is giving us qualities we are to acquire both individually and collectively, both in the administrative work and in our teaching world.

The last two are galvanizing us to action and to give us a vision.

## **Definitive negatives**

In the writings of Shoghi Effendi, we find that he often starts by telling us what something is NOT. This I call the definitive negatives. There are some points in this style.

The first one is the precision. Let us take one example of this. Shoghi Effendi did not consider or wanted to call *God Passes By* a history of events. He called it a review. This is clearly stating that it is not a history book. This means, that opposition which is raised because of factual errors, is quite pointless as it is not a history book but rather a review.

One of the things we learn from the definitive negatives, i.e. the style of starting by expressing what it is not, is that it helps us to focus on what the central point is. This is a very effective way of being precise. It becomes very precise as we understand that it is not this, it is not that, it is not this either and slowly we start seeing what it is.

Let us see an example.

*Ceasing to designate to itself a movement, a fellowship and the like -- designations that did grave injustice to its ever-unfolding system -- dissociating itself from such appellations as Bábí sect, Asiatic cult, and offshoot of Shi'ih Islam, with which the ignorant and the malicious were wont to describe it, refusing to be labeled as a mere philosophy of life, or as an eclectic code of ethical conduct, or even as a new religion, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh is now visibly succeeding in demonstrating its claim and title to be regarded as a World Religion, destined to attain, in the fullness of time, the status of a world-embracing Commonwealth, which would be at once the instrument and the guardian of the Most Great Peace announced by its Author. (Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 196)*

Note how it is being clear that it is not a movement, dissociating itself, refusing to etc. In this example we see that there are eight things that it is NOT and then we read what it is. This way of expressing or defining something is something we find often in the writings of Shoghi Effendi.

This is also what we can call “rhetoric control”. By this is meant that Shoghi Effendi can control what he means and assist us in better understanding what he is saying by first eliminating what it is not.

Let us examine another example.

*The Faith standing identified with the name of Bahá'u'lláh disclaims any intention to belittle any of the Prophets gone before Him, to whittle down any of their teachings, to obscure, however slightly, the radiance of their Revelations, to oust them from the hearts of their followers, to abrogate the fundamentals of their doctrines, to discard any of their revealed Books, or to suppress the legitimate aspirations of their adherents. Repudiating the claim of any religion to be the final revelation of God to man, disclaiming finality for His own Revelation, Bahá'u'lláh inculcates the basic principle of the relativity of religious truth, the continuity of Divine Revelation, the progressiveness of religious experience. His aim is to widen the basis of all revealed religions and to unravel the mysteries of their scriptures. He insists on the unqualified recognition of the unity of their purpose, restates the eternal verities they enshrine, coordinates their functions, distinguishes the essential and the authentic from the nonessential and spurious in their teachings, separates the God-given truths from the priest-prompted superstitions, and on this as a basis proclaims the possibility, and even prophesies the inevitability, of their unification, and the consummation of their highest hopes. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 107)*

Looking at the quote above, we can see the same style and also that it is gradual. Let us examine the words used.

- To belittle = to shrink
- To whittle down = to slowly, little by little, like peeling layers, carve away
- To obscure = no longer subtle way but to snuff it, to cover up

- To oust = to dig out of the heart, to remove, it's more violent, it's an action.
- To abrogate = annulling, undermining
- To discard = to throw away
- To suppress = to press down

As we have seen, Shoghi Effendi often starts with what it is not, the negative if you will, and then moves on to what it is, the positive if you wish. Just at that juncture, where we move from what it is not to what it actually is; there is a sentence which we can call the pivot sentence. Shoghi Effendi often puts this in one sentence.

A closer examination reveals that when Shoghi Effendi is in the “what it is not” section, he often uses verbs but when we move to the “what it is”, he uses nouns. This is interesting as nouns are much more solid than verbs.

A question that might be asked is why Shoghi Effendi uses this style, why he chooses to hammer his message by telling us with so many “what it is not”. This is only a personal reflection. If we read the Tablet of the True Seeker, we can read that we should empty us of all knowledge. This of course does not mean to erase memory or to forget all we know but that we need to redefine what we consider to be fact and true. It is erasing the definitions of the past we have had of different concepts. We must purge our hearts from all previous notions. It concerns understanding what it is not, it is erasing the definitions of the past that is in us or what we have been told it is. So in this light, it is when we establish what it is not, that we can begin to explain what it truly is.

Using the style of definitive negatives has some other effects. Some reflections on this matter are as follows.

By writing in this style, Shoghi Effendi is voicing our deepest doubts and fears. He is alerting us or if you wish bringing to light, making us aware of our doubts and our fears. This because it will help us grow. To take the above example, “*Ceasing to designate to*” he is listing or some of the doubts that a person may have when first hearing about the Faith. These are comments that we may very well hear as we teach or when we are intellectual opposition. In this way, Shoghi Effendi is giving voice our fears which better enable us to combat and challenge them by first hearing them so we can contrast and compare them. We see the negatives identified in order to express what it is not before asserting what it actually is.

The negative definitive also protects and warns us from limited interpretations. Let us take the description of the principle of oneness of mankind which Shoghi Effendi gives us in World Order.

*Let there be no mistake. The principle of the Oneness of Mankind -- the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve - is no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and pious hope. Its appeal is not to be merely identified with a reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and good-will among men, nor does it aim solely at the fostering of harmonious cooperation among individual peoples and nations. Its implications are deeper, its claims greater than any which the Prophets of old were allowed to advance. Its message is applicable not only to the*

*individual, but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family. It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal, but stands inseparably associated with an institution adequate to embody its truth, demonstrate its validity, and perpetuate its influence. It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced. It constitutes a challenge, at once bold and universal, to outworn shibboleths of national creeds -- creeds that have had their day and which must, in the ordinary course of events as shaped and controlled by Providence, give way to a new gospel, fundamentally different from, and infinitely superior to, what the world has already conceived. It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world -- a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units. (Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 42)*

Note how well we are assisted in understanding what this principle is not and by this process we are both cautioned and guided as to what not to do in our interpretations and understandings of this wonderful principle.

Another reflection on the use of definitive negatives is how it so well identifies where we have been and most probably will be attacked. The Administrative Order will most likely be questioned and compared to other forms of political and governmental structures. By clarifying what it is not, we are assisted in defending the Faith in the areas where it might be attacked in the future.

## **Oppositions**

The second method in the style of the writings of Shoghi Effendi is something I wish to call “the pivot principle”. It is that moment, that sentence (it usually is only one sentence) where he goes from the negatives to the positives, from the “what it is not” to “what it is”.

As soon as one says that it is not this but it is that, one is doing the “contrasting – comparing” thing. We could call it dialect method. The above quote starting with “Let there be no mistake” is an example of this as we can clearly see that first we are told what it is not and then moving to what it actually is. A closer examination will probably show that for each “what it is not” we see an expression contrast to that term.

## **Circumlocutions**

The method of circumlocutions could be described as the “indirect” method. The word in itself means to walk around or to orbit with words. The idea is to get to the point by taking orbiting paths rather than going straight to the point. It is related to the word circumambulation which means circle round. One could perhaps say that circumlocution is to circumambulate around a subject with words.

With circumlocution is not meant to be evasive, be escapisms or excessive adornment and exaggerations. Let us think of euphuism where it is at its best, value adding and involving the artistic section of the brain in its quest to better understand. It is however at its worst, hypocrisy, excessive, useless and even patronizing.

*Leaders of religion, exponents of political theories, governors of human institutions, who at present are witnessing with perplexity and dismay the bankruptcy of their ideas, and the disintegration of their handiwork, would do well to turn their gaze to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, and to meditate upon the World Order which, lying enshrined in His teachings, is slowly and imperceptibly rising amid the welter and chaos of present-day civilization. (Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 23)*

Take a note of how courteous Shoghi Effendi is when expressing it “would do well to turn their gaze” while at the same time being very clear about the processes.

Let us take another quote. This one is from the Advent of Divine Justice and so perfectly exemplifies the dialectic principles (the opposites).

*Let not, however, the invincible army of Bahá'u'lláh, who in the West, and at one of its potential storm centers is to fight, in His name and for His sake, one of its fiercest and most glorious battles, be afraid of any criticism that might be directed against it. Let it not be deterred by any condemnation with which the tongue of the slanderer may seek to debase its motives. Let it not recoil before the threatening advance of the forces of fanaticism, of orthodoxy, of corruption, and of prejudice that may be leagued against it. The voice of criticism is a voice that indirectly reinforces the proclamation of its Cause. Unpopularity but serves to throw into greater relief the contrast between it and its adversaries, while ostracism is itself the magnetic power that must eventually win over to its camp the most vociferous and inveterate amongst its foes. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 42)*

It is very interesting to read that unpopularity will serve to greater relieves, and that ostracism will itself be the magnetic power which will win over more people. We see that we should not fear being unpopular and ostracism, that is what distinguishes us.

A sentence like this one, where the principle of opposites, with dialectic structure, right or wrong, black or white, is like the two sides of the same coin. But take that same coin and spin it. You suddenly see a sphere but it's not actually a sphere, it only looks like a sphere. What is happening is that it is a flip of the one side to the other side and then back to the first side. It is the opposites orbiting and when the orbiting is fast, you suddenly see the whole.

*From the record of its tumultuous history, almost every page of which portrays a fresh crisis, is laden with the description of a new calamity, recounts the tale of a base betrayal, and is stained with the account of unspeakable atrocities, there emerges, clear and incontrovertible, the supreme truth that with every fresh outbreak of hostility to the Faith, whether from within or from without, a corresponding measure of outpouring grace, sustaining its defenders and confounding its adversaries, has been providentially released, communicating a fresh impulse to the onward march of the Faith, while this impetus, in its turn, would through its manifestations, provoke fresh hostility in quarters*

*heretofore unaware of its challenging implications -- this increased hostility being accompanied by a still more arresting revelation of Divine Power and a more abundant effusion of celestial grace, which, by enabling the upholders of that Faith to register still more brilliant victories, would thereby generate issues of still more vital import and raise up still more formidable enemies against a Cause that cannot but, in the end, resolve those issues and crush the resistance of those enemies, through a still more glorious unfoldment of its inherent power. (Shoghi Effendi, Messages to America, p. 51)*

We see that there emerges a supreme truth about crisis and victories which could be understood as crisis and victories are the same thing, very much like the twin processes of integration and disintegration. Let us remember the example of the coin, instead of seeing two flat surfaces, two opposites, one side and then the other, we see them both and suddenly a paradox emerges. A paradox is when you can contain opposites in our minds. This is exactly what Shoghi Effendi makes us do, to contain both sides as a whole. We cease to see opposites and start see paradoxes which are wholes.

Circumlocution is about three dimensional thinking. Let us take another example where we see the principle of circumlocution. It is a prayer for fasting.

*Cause me, O my Lord, to be reckoned among them who have been so stirred up by the sweet savors that have been wafted in Thy days that they have laid down their lives for Thee and hastened to the scene of their death in their longing to gaze on Thy beauty and in their yearning to attain Thy presence. And were any one to say unto them on their way, "Whither go ye?" they would say, "Unto God, the All-Possessing, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting!"*

*The transgressions committed by such as have turned away from Thee and have borne themselves haughtily towards Thee have not availed to hinder them from loving Thee, and from setting their faces towards Thee, and from turning in the direction of Thy mercy. These are they who are blessed by the Concourse on high, who are glorified by the denizens of the everlasting Cities, and beyond them by those on whose foreheads Thy most exalted pen hath written: "These! The people of Baha. Through them have been shed the splendors of the light of guidance." Thus hath it been ordained, at Thy behest and by Thy will, in the Tablet of Thine irrevocable decree.*

*Proclaim, therefore, O my God, their greatness and the greatness of those who while living or after death have circled round them. Supply them with that which Thou hast ordained for the righteous among Thy creatures. Potent art Thou to do all things. There is no God but Thee, the All-Powerful, the Help in Peril, the Almighty, the Most Bountiful. (Baha'u'llah, Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah, p. 82)*

The idea of circumlocutions is very directly linked to almost all the precious prayers given to us by Bahá'u'lláh. When we read “the Help in Peril, the Almighty”, with each of these attributes, we circumambulate the meaning of God simply because it's impossible to directly approach or understand Him.

This is the first principle of circumlocutions that Shoghi Effendi uses. He uses them to teach us awe, reverence and due respect. He is teaching us the necessary attitude that we need to

show, through circumlocutions and instead of going directly, in order to understand how to approach such a great and potent mystery that is beyond our comprehension.

This technique is very interesting as it is mystical in its nature. It however has a secondary aspect. When we have mysteries like that, Shoghi Effendi uses circumlocutions because the dialectic and didactic methods are just not enough and do not work.

Let us revisit the quote from the fasting prayer. Let us see who is referred to when it says they and them. Bahá'u'lláh could have simply stated that it is the martyrs, the dawn breakers or the heroes of the Faith. He forces us to go through circumlocutions in order to understand the meanings. He says that they who have been so stirred up. It's very interesting as He evokes a drama here. You have those who have been stirred up, and then you are introduced to a second part, they who ask where you are going. Then we are introduced to those who have transgressed and turned their back to God. This is a drama, it is not something you can best describe or explain using dialectic or didactic methods.

Shoghi Effendi also uses circumlocutions when writing about the Administrative Order.

*The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh had been instituted solely through the direct operation of His Will and purpose. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, on the other hand, may be regarded as the offspring resulting from that mystic intercourse between Him Who had generated the forces of a God-given Faith and the One Who had been made its sole Interpreter and was recognized as its perfect Exemplar. The creative energies unleashed by the Originator of the Law of God in this age gave birth, through their impact upon the mind of Him Who had been chosen as its unerring Expounder, to that Instrument, the vast implications of which the present generation, even after the lapse of twenty-three years, is still incapable of fully apprehending. This Instrument can, if we would correctly appraise it, no more be divorced from the One Who provided the motivating impulse for its creation than from Him Who directly conceived it. (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 325)*

We can see that Shoghi Effendi uses several circumlocutions for both Bahá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá. Why does Shoghi Effendi use circumlocutions? Because as we can read in the quote, it takes time before we will understand the subject and its mystical significance. It is like if we would try to understand the sun, we cannot go to close to it, it would kill us. We need to orbit it in order to survive and understand. We need both distance both in time and space in order to slowly gain bigger understanding. We simply need time to understand this matter.

Another way we can see how Shoghi Effendi uses circumlocutions are when he is describing the Covenant.

*That God-born Force, irresistible in its sweeping power, incalculable in its potency, unpredictable in its course, mysterious in its workings, and awe-inspiring in its manifestations -- a Force which, as the Báb has written, "vibrates within the innermost being of all created things," and which, according to Bahá'u'lláh, has through its "vibrating influence," "upset the equilibrium of the world and revolutionized its ordered life" -- such a Force, acting even as a two-edged sword, is, under our very eyes, sundering, on the one hand, the age-old ties which for centuries have held*

*together the fabric of civilized society, and is unloosing, on the other, the bonds that still fetter the infant and as yet unemancipated Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. (Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 46)*

We see five adjective phases of circumlocutions to describe the Covenant. Note the two-edged sword and think of the coin.

On rare occasions, Shoghi Effendi uses the style of circumlocutions when referring to himself. We can see this in the following quote

*That they may ascend from height to height, go forward from victory to victory, is the fervent prayer of one who has invariably followed the course of their exploits with undiminished confidence and admiration, who has cherished the brightest hopes for the ultimate attainment of their Mission, and whose love and esteem for them has correspondingly increased with every revelation of the capacities and energies with which they have discharged, and are constantly discharging, their Mission. (Shoghi Effendi, The Unfolding Destiny of the British Baha'i Community, p. 340)*

### **Use of questions**

Shoghi Effendi quite often uses the style of asking questions and in asking them, answering the very same question. By using the style of question mode, he is inviting us and challenging the thinking process within us. With this style, Shoghi Effendi is answering the very same question but not stating or asserting it while being very precise and frank. We find this style being used when the answer cannot be given directly.

Let us take one example. The example is on the subject of Bahá'ís non-involvement in politics. See how Shoghi Effendi is giving a very solid answer by posing it as a question.

*How can a Faith, it should moreover be borne in mind, whose divinely-ordained institutions have been established within the jurisdiction of no less than forty different countries, the policies and interests of whose governments are continually clashing and growing more complex and confused every day -- how can such a Faith, by allowing its adherents, whether individually or through its organized councils, to meddle in political activities, succeed in preserving the integrity of its teachings and in safeguarding the unity of its followers? How can it insure the vigorous, the uninterrupted and peaceful development of its expanding institutions? How can a Faith, whose ramifications have brought it into contact with mutually incompatible religious systems, sects and confessions, be in a position, if it permits its adherents to subscribe to obsolescent observances and doctrines, to claim the unconditional allegiance of those whom it is striving to incorporate into its divinely-appointed system? How can it avoid the constant friction, the misunderstandings and controversies which formal affiliation, as distinct from association, must inevitably engender? (Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 199)*

Shoghi Effendi has turned the notion of Bahá'ís non-involvement in politics into a question in which answers those who ask why. He is not actually answering the question directly but by

asking the question, he has clarified this and raised the issue to another level. Shoghi Effendi is raising a possibility; he is suggesting a way of looking at this matter and speculating with you. This is in line with the courtesy in responding. One could perhaps suggest that Shoghi Effendi is also teaching us how these kinds of questions can be answered. Notice also the circumlocutions in the above quote.

Let us take another example. The underlying question in this example is simply how come there are covenant breakers in a Faith that has so much focus and emphasis on unity.

*Were anyone to imagine or expect that a Cause, comprising within its orbit so vast a portion of the globe, so turbulent in its history, so challenging in its claims, so diversified in the elements it has assimilated into its administrative structure, should, at all times, be immune to any divergence of opinion, or any defection on the part of its multitudinous followers, it would be sheer delusion, wholly unreasonable and unwarranted, even in the face of the unprecedented evidence of the miraculous power which its rise and progress have so powerfully exhibited. That such a secession, however, whether effected by those who apostatize their faith or preach heretical doctrines, should have failed, after the lapse of a century, to split in twain the entire body of the adherents of the Faith, or to create a grave, a permanent and irremediable breach in its organic structure, is a fact too eloquent for even a casual observer of the internal processes of its administrative order to either deny or ignore. (Shoghi Effendi, Messages to America, p. 50)*

Note that the answer in the question is very precise, clear and powerful. Shoghi Effendi uses the words divergence of opinions and defection. Shoghi Effendi is also teaching us how to approach such questions, clear and uncompromising in our answer but courteous and non-assertive in its form of question.

## Enumeration

Studying the writings of Shoghi Effendi one will very soon notice that he uses the style or technique of enumeration. By enumeration here is meant listing things.

Let us see one example from God Passes By where Shoghi Effendi describes Kitáb-i-Iqán.

*Within a compass of two hundred pages it proclaims unequivocally the existence and oneness of a personal God, unknowable, inaccessible, the source of all Revelation, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent and almighty; asserts the relativity of religious truth and the continuity of Divine Revelation; affirms the unity of the Prophets, the universality of their Message, the identity of their fundamental teachings, the sanctity of their scriptures, and the twofold character of their stations; denounces the blindness and perversity of the divines and doctors of every age; cites and elucidates the allegorical passages of the New Testament, the abstruse verses of the Qur'án, and the cryptic Muhammadan traditions which have bred those age-long misunderstandings, doubts and animosities that have sundered and kept apart the followers of the world's leading religious systems; enumerates the essential prerequisites for the attainment by every true seeker of the object of his quest; demonstrates the validity, the sublimity and*

*significance of the Báb's Revelation; acclaims the heroism and detachment of His disciples; foreshadows, and prophesies the world-wide triumph of the Revelation promised to the people of the Bayán; upholds the purity and innocence of the Virgin Mary; glorifies the Imams of the Faith of Muhammad; celebrates the martyrdom, and lauds the spiritual sovereignty, of the Imam Husayn; unfolds the meaning of such symbolic terms as "Return," "Resurrection," "Seal of the Prophets" and "Day of Judgment"; adumbrates and distinguishes between the three stages of Divine Revelation; and expatiates, in glowing terms, upon the glories and wonders of the "City of God," renewed, at fixed intervals, by the dispensation of Providence, for the guidance, the benefit and salvation of all mankind. Well may it be claimed that of all the books revealed by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation, this Book alone, by sweeping away the age-long barriers that have so insurmountably separated the great religions of the world, has laid down a broad and unassailable foundation for the complete and permanent reconciliation of their followers. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 138)*

The above quote does not just give a very long list, it so much more than that. It is describing what the Kitáb-i-Iqán contains and in doing so, Shoghi Effendi is also giving us a commentary, a framework and an interpretation. Notice how Shoghi Effendi is also giving us a list of the topics of Kitáb-i-Iqán according to their priority and importance beginning with the existence and oneness of God. It is remarkable that this is done in one sentence.

In the writings of Shoghi Effendi we also find enumeration as definition. In the following quote, Shoghi Effendi is describing or defining what a world federal system is.

*A world federal system, ruling the whole earth and exercising unchallengeable authority over its unimaginably vast resources, blending and embodying the ideals of both the East and the West, liberated from the curse of war and its miseries, and bent on the exploitation of all the available sources of energy on the surface of the planet, a system in which Force is made the servant of Justice, whose life is sustained by its universal recognition of one God and by its allegiance to one common Revelation - such is the goal towards which humanity, impelled by the unifying forces of life, is moving. (Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'llah*, p. 204)*

Shoghi Effendi is, by using the method of enumeration in his style of writing, giving us a clear definition of what the functions and tasks of a future world federal system is.

Shoghi Effendi also uses enumeration as summary and in particular summary of the past. In the following quote, Shoghi Effendi is, in twenty sentences, summarizing the first century of the Bahá'í era.

*With the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh draws to a close a period which, in many ways, is unparalleled in the world's religious history. The first century of the Bahá'í Era had by now run half its course. An epoch, unsurpassed in its sublimity, its fecundity and duration by any previous Dispensation, and characterized, except for a short interval of three years, by half a century of continuous and progressive Revelation, had terminated. The Message proclaimed by the Báb had yielded its golden fruit. The most momentous, though not the most spectacular phase of the Heroic Age had ended. The Sun of Truth,*

*the world's greatest Luminary, had risen in the Siyah-Chal of Tihran, had broken through the clouds which enveloped it in Baghdad, had suffered a momentary eclipse whilst mounting to its zenith in Adrianople and had set finally in 'Akká, never to reappear ere the lapse of a full millenium. God's newborn Faith, the cynosure of all past Dispensations, had been fully and unreservedly proclaimed. The prophecies announcing its advent had been remarkably fulfilled. Its fundamental laws and cardinal principles, the warp and woof of the fabric of its future World Order, had been clearly enunciated. Its organic relation to, and its attitude towards, the religious systems which preceded it had been unmistakably defined. The primary institutions, within which an embryonic World Order was destined to mature, had been unassailably established. The Covenant designed to safeguard the unity and integrity of its world-embracing system had been irrevocably bequeathed to posterity. The promise of the unification of the whole human race, of the inauguration of the Most Great Peace, of the unfoldment of a world civilization, had been incontestably given. The dire warnings, foreshadowing catastrophes destined to befall kings, ecclesiastics, governments and peoples, as a prelude to so glorious a consummation, had been repeatedly uttered. The significant summons to the Chief Magistrates of the New World, forerunner of the Mission with which the North American continent was to be later invested, had been issued. The initial contact with a nation, a descendant of whose royal house was to espouse its Cause ere the expiry of the first Bahá'í century, had been established. The original impulse which, in the course of successive decades, has conferred, and will continue to confer, in the years to come, inestimable benefits of both spiritual and institutional significance upon God's holy mountain, overlooking the Most Great Prison, had been imparted. And finally, the first banners of a spiritual conquest which, ere the termination of that century, was to embrace no less than sixty countries in both the Eastern and Western hemispheres had been triumphantly planted. (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 223)*

Notice the verbs in the above quote, it says hath risen, hath broken, hath suffered etc. Also note that as Shoghi Effendi moves through the century, he uses period, giving it a full stop. It is a forceful and affirmative way of stating it and then full stop. It is twenty verbs in twenty sentences. Shoghi Effendi chooses his punctuation very carefully. If one analysis this section of God Passes By closely, you will see as he moves through the century, his verb tense gradually becomes more and more from “hath been done” to become as a preparation for the future. About half way through the paragraph, the “hath been done” starts being anticipatory as well.

Shoghi Effendi also uses enumeration as evidence or proof of the present circumstances.

*The vitality which the organic institutions of this great, this ever-expanding Order so strongly exhibit; the obstacles which the high courage, the undaunted resolution of its administrators have already surmounted; the fire of an unquenchable enthusiasm that glows with undiminished fervor in the hearts of its itinerant teachers; the heights of self-sacrifice which its champion-builders are now attaining; the breadth of vision, the confident hope, the creative joy, the inward peace, the uncompromising integrity, the exemplary discipline, the unyielding unity and solidarity which its stalwart defenders*

*manifest; the degree to which its moving Spirit has shown itself capable of assimilating the diversified elements within its pale, of cleansing them of all forms of prejudice and of fusing them with its own structure -- these are evidences of a power which a disillusioned and sadly shaken society can ill afford to ignore. (Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'llah, p. 154)*

Notice the present tense of the words, such as, exhibit, have already surmounted, that glows, are now attaining etc. Shoghi Effendi uses semi colons which does not give you the full luxury of a full stop. With a semi colon you know that you are only a portion of a whole sentence. It does not give you that full stop. You are in the present and there are several things going on at the same time and therefore the use of semi colon. We can also see the lists within a list in the above quote. You have six lists, each separated but kept together in one sentence with semi colons and each list has a list within it separated by a comma.

Another aspect of enumeration as evidences of present situations is that they seem to be timeless. It is not possible to say that it is only a description of the time in which it was written. It is as, if not more, descriptive of today as it was of the time it was written. The following quote is an example of this timeless description.

*The recrudescence of religious intolerance, of racial animosity, and of patriotic arrogance; the increasing evidences of selfishness, of suspicion, of fear and of fraud; the spread of terrorism, of lawlessness, of drunkenness and of crime; the unquenchable thirst for, and the feverish pursuit after, earthly vanities, riches and pleasures; the weakening of family solidarity; the laxity in parental control; the lapse into luxurious indulgence; the irresponsible attitude towards marriage and the consequent rising tide of divorce; the degeneracy of art and music, the infection of literature, and the 188 corruption of the press; the extension of the influence and activities of those "prophets of decadence" who advocate companionate marriage, who preach the philosophy of nudism, who call modesty an intellectual fiction, who refuse to regard the procreation of children as the sacred and primary purpose of marriage, who denounce religion as an opiate of the people, who would, if given free rein, lead back the human race to barbarism, chaos, and ultimate extinction -- these appear as the outstanding characteristics of a decadent society, a society that must either be reborn or perish. (Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'llah, p. 187)*

Having seen how enumeration is used to describe the past and the present, we move to take a look at enumeration as a survey of what lies ahead. In the Advent of Divine Justice, we read the following.

*This present Crusade, on the threshold of which we now stand, will, moreover, by virtue of the dynamic forces it will release and its wide repercussions over the entire surface of the globe, contribute effectually to the acceleration of yet another process of tremendous significance which will carry the steadily evolving Faith of Bahá'u'lláh through its present stages of obscurity, of repression, of emancipation and of recognition -- stages one or another of which Bahá'í national communities in various*

*parts of the world now find themselves in -- to the stage of establishment, the stage at which the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh will be recognized by the civil authorities as the state religion, similar to that which Christianity entered in the years following the death of the Emperor Constantine, a stage which must later be followed by the emergence of the Bahá'í state itself, functioning, in all religious and civil matters, in strict accordance with the laws and ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy, the Mother-Book of the Bahá'í Revelation, a stage which, in the fullness of time, will culminate in the establishment of the World Bahá'í Commonwealth, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, and which will signalize the long-awaited advent of the Christ-promised Kingdom of God on earth -- the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh -- mirroring however faintly upon this humble handful of dust the glories of the Abha Kingdom. (Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World - 1950-1957, p. 155)*

Shoghi Effendi uses enumeration to break up and measure the stages of development that lies ahead of us, as a survey of what lies ahead in terms stages, development and steps. We see in the above quote that there are seven stages. It is very interesting to see that Shoghi Effendi uses only a comma in separating these stages. Comparing this with when describing the past where punctuation was used to mark a full stop, going to the present with semi colon and in enumerating of the future, it is separated by a comma, giving us a sense or feeling of momentum.

## Repetition

Shoghi Effendi, in his writings, uses his style to also give a prioritization. One way this is seen is in the enumeration. Another way is in the repetitions in his style. Shoghi Effendi uses the style of repetition in several ways. Here are some examples of how the style of repetition is used.

*In sheer dramatic power, in the rapidity with which events of momentous importance succeeded each other, in the holocaust which baptized its birth, in the miraculous circumstances attending the martyrdom of the One Who had ushered it in, in the potentialities with which it had been from the outset so thoroughly impregnated, in the forces to which it eventually gave birth, this nine-year period may well rank as unique in the whole range of man's religious experience. (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 3)*

Shoghi Effendi is telling us that this nine-year period is very special and unique. The way he is doing this is by repetition starting with “in sheer”.

Another example of the style of repetition is the following from the Advent of Divine Justice.

*The field is indeed so immense, the period so critical, the Cause so great, the workers so few, the time so short, the privilege so priceless, that no follower of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, worthy to bear His name, can afford a moment's hesitation. (Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 46)*

Note the repetition with the word “so”, notice how many times he uses the word “so and also notice how he goes from so to no. This is also an example of contrast.

Let us examine another example.

*How pressing and sacred the responsibility that now weighs upon those who are already acquainted with these teachings! How glorious the task of those who are called upon to vindicate their truth, and demonstrate their practicability to an unbelieving world! Nothing short of an immovable conviction in their divine origin, and their uniqueness in the annals of religion; nothing short of an unwavering purpose to execute and apply them to the administrative machinery of the Cause, can be sufficient to establish their reality, and insure their success. How vast is the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh! How great the magnitude of His blessings showered upon humanity in this day! And yet, how poor, how inadequate our conception of their significance and glory! This generation stands too close to so colossal a Revelation to appreciate, in their full measure, the infinite possibilities of His Faith, the unprecedented character of His Cause, and the mysterious dispensations of His Providence. (Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 24)*

Notice the circumlocution in the first sentence where the reference is not only to Bahá'ís but also our friends and those who are acquainted with the teachings. It is a repetition of how in the beginning and then it is a “nothing short” repetition which goes to a “how” repetition again.

*This challenge, so severe and insistent, and yet so glorious, faces no doubt primarily the individual believer on whom, in the last resort, depends the fate of the entire community. He it is who constitutes the warp and woof on which the quality and pattern of the whole fabric must depend. He it is who acts as one of the countless links in the mighty chain that now girdles the globe. He it is who serves as one of the multitude of bricks which support the structure and insure the stability of the administrative edifice now being raised in every part of the world. Without his support, at once whole-hearted, continuous and generous, every measure adopted, and every plan formulated, by the body which acts as the national representative of the community to which he belongs, is foredoomed to failure. The World Center of the Faith itself is paralyzed if such a support on the part of the rank and file of the community is denied it. The Author of the Divine Plan Himself is impeded in His purpose if the proper instruments for the execution of His design are lacking. The sustaining strength of Bahá'u'lláh Himself, the Founder of the Faith, will be withheld from every and each individual who fails in the long run to arise and play his part. (Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 130)*

Note the repetition in this passage and how it builds up from the individual, then to the World Centre and then to the Author of the Divine Plan which is Abdu'l-Bahá himself (circumlocution) and finally to Bahá'u'lláh Himself but note that He will not be paralyzed but that He will not give us His sustaining help. It will be withheld from the individual. We can see the circularity where it starts from the individual and ends again with the individual.

## **Supplication**

Shoghi Effendi was fully aware of the great tasks and responsibilities that rest on our shoulders. When one is aware of this and at the same time realizing that it is an impossibility to realize or achieve all that has been listed in the writings, there is only one alternative namely supplication or appeal. Shoghi Effendi supplicates us and invites us to supplicate God. Let us take a look at some examples.

*"Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their prospective nations, with the politics of their governments and the schemes and programs of parties and factions. In such controversies they should assign no blame, take no side, further no design, and identify themselves with no system prejudicial to the best interests of that world-wide-Fellowship which it is their aim to guard and foster. Let them beware lest they allow themselves to become the tools of unscrupulous politicians, or to be entrapped by the treacherous devices of the plotters and the perfidious among their countrymen. Let them so shape their lives and regulate their conduct that no charge of secrecy, of fraud, of bribery or of intimidation may, however ill-founded, be brought against them. Let them rise above all particularism and partisanship, above the vain disputes, the petty calculations, transient passions that agitate the face, and engage the intention, of a challenging world. It is their duty to strive to distinguish, as clearly as they possibly can, and if needed with the aid of their elected representative, such posts and functions as are either diplomatic or political from those that are purely administrative in character, and which under no circumstances are affected by the changes and chances that political activities and party government, in every land, must necessarily involve. Let them affirm their unyielding determination to stand, firmly and unreservedly, for the way of Bahá'u'lláh, to avoid the entanglements and bickerings inseparable from the pursuits of the politician, and to become worthy agencies of that divine policy which incarnates God's immutable Purpose for all men." (Compilations, Lights of Guidance, p. 448)*

See how delicate it is suggested by stating "let them refrain". He could have expressed it as "do not".