

# **A short compilation on Transliteration from the writings of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice**

**"Regarding the transliteration of Persian and Arabic words the House of Justice requests that the method adopted by the beloved Guardian, and which is described in the various volumes of 'The Bahá'í World', be followed, as it permits all languages which use the Roman alphabet to transliterate such terms in the same way throughout the Bahá'í world."**

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, July 16, 1979, in Lights of Guidance, no. 367)

**"I am forwarding also a copy of the transliterated Oriental terms with few corrections of minor type errors. I am confident that the friends will not feel their energy and patience taxed by a scrupulous adherence to what is an authoritative and universal, though arbitrary code for the spelling of Oriental terms."**

(Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 56)

**"P.S. On another page<sup>[1]</sup> The complete list of terms is to be found in Bahá'í World, volume VII.] is given the list of the best known and most current Bahá'í terms, and other Oriental names and expressions, all properly and accurately transliterated, the faithful spelling of which by all the Western friends will avoid confusion in future, and insure in this matter a uniformity which is greatly needed at present in all Bahá'í literature. The full code will be duly communicated to the various National Assemblies, and the transliteration of the Oriental terms mentioned in the English letters sent out by the Haifa Spiritual Assembly will provide a correct and reliable supplement to the above-mentioned list. I feel confident that all the friends will from now on follow this system and adhere scrupulously and at all times to this code in all their writings."**

(Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 43, March 12, 1923)

**"I am enclosing on a separate sheet the full authoritative code, widely adopted by contemporary Orientalists throughout the world, which will serve as a basis for the transliteration of Bahá'í terms and Oriental names."<sup>[1]</sup> See previous footnote on transliterations: "The complete list of terms is to be found in Bahá'í World, volume VII"]**

(Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 47, April 9th, 1923)

**"The preparation of Bahá'í articles, committee reports, etc., should therefore employ the system of transliteration which the Guardian has supplied."**

(Shoghi Effendi, Directives from the Guardian, p. 79)

**"As the 'Íqán is the most important book wherein Bahá'u'lláh explains the basic beliefs of the faith, he thought a proper rendering of it would infinitely enhance the teaching work in the West. He hopes that this new rendering will be an improvement on the previous one, but he fully admits that it is far from perfect, far from the original itself. Shoghi Effendi has given the proper transliteration of the Eastern terms and wants you to abide by them, keeping every dash, point, accent or inverted comma. To help you in this, he has also on a separate sheet written these in their proper form.**

(Shoghi Effendi, Extracts from the Baha'i News, No. 46 - November 1930, p. 2)

**"Unable to find a good typist, I have had to do the work myself, and I trust that the proofreaders will find it easy to go over and will not mind the type errors which I have tried to correct. I would especially urge you to adhere to the transliteration which I have adopted. The correct title is, I feel, 'The Kitáb-I-'Íqán,' the sub-title 'The Book of Certitude.' May it help the friends to approach a step further, and obtain a clearer idea of the fundamental teachings set forth by Bahá'u'lláh." (Signed) SHOGHI.**

(Shoghi Effendi, Extracts from the Baha'i News, No. 46 - November 1930, p. 2)

**"He would advise the utmost care both on the part of the proof reader and the printer. Particularly regarding the transliteration of Oriental terms, he would urge you to exercise the minutest care. He has carefully revised both the list and the articles in this connection. The book should present a distinctive scholarly character and should be free from all manner of type error. The appreciative replies he has received from eminent men to whom he has sent "The Bahá'í World and to whom he hopes to send Volume III..."**

(Shoghi Effendi, Extracts from the Baha'i News, No. 48 - February 1931, within pp. 8-10, May 29, 1930)

**"As regards the question of how to write some of the Oriental words, like Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the translations which have Latin script, he feels that at least in parenthesis a phonetical pronunciation should be included after the name when the English transliteration is used. There is no use giving people the Teachings, and not enabling them to pronounce correctly the names that have the deepest association of all with our Faith."**

(Shoghi Effendi, June 16, 1954, Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, p. 119)

**"N.B. The spelling of the Oriental words and proper names used in this book is according to the system of transliteration established at one of the International Oriental Congresses."**

(Shoghi Effendi, Dawn-Breakers, p. 673)

**"In regard to the transliteration of Oriental names and words into German he wishes me to inform you that the system of transliteration actually in use in the Bahá'í world has been adopted and approved with only slight changes by a general Orientalist Congress representative of world's greatest Orientalists, including some outstanding German authorities in various branches of Oriental history and literature. As you see, therefore, it is a highly recommendable system of transliteration and this is why the Guardian is so emphatic about its universal adoption by the Bahá'ís the world over. Any departure from that system, he strongly feels, may lead to incalculable difficulties and misunderstandings in the future. He would certainly urge you to adopt it yourself and then advise our German friends to do the same in all their official Bahá'í publications and particularly in the forthcoming issues of the "Sonne der Wahrheit" wherein some chapters of the "Dawn-Breakers" are going to be published."**

(Shoghi Effendi, 14 June 1933, in a letter to Dr. Mühlischlegel, Light of Divine Guidance, vol. I, p. [49](#))

**"He fully appreciates your point about certain well known names of Persian and other Oriental cities being spelt according to the general usage in German literature. However, he feels that it is necessary to follow in full the transliteration used in God Passes By, even for the names of famous cities, etc., which have in European languages an accepted way of being spelt. Only by doing this can confusion be avoided in our Bahá'í translations and uniformity be maintained.**

**"A key to pronunciation should be printed, in order to coordinate it with the German language, and also an explanation of the reason for this system being used: namely that it was adopted by an international Congress as being the most practical and universal means of spelling these oriental names in the latin alphabet.**

**"He hopes that the fact that two people translated different parts of this book will not be noticeable in the style, and thus detract from its literary value in German?"**

(Shoghi Effendi, 30 September 1949 to Dr. Adelbert Muhlschlegel, Light of Divine Guidance, vol. II, pp. 87-88)

**"I have been asked to enclose for your kind attention the following papers: -- ... "3. The system of transliteration to be used in all Bahá'í references.**

(Shoghi Effendi, Unfolding Destiny, 11 November 1925, p. 39)

**"P.S. With regard to the accent in the letter a in the transliteration of Persian names and words and the difficulty of the publishers in having a vertical mark, Shoghi Effendi feels that in case having the regular vertical mark means too much trouble and expense it would be justified to replace it by the horizontal dash on the a, but if the trouble and expense would not be much, for the sake of uniformity throughout transliterations everywhere, it would be best to have the regular vertical mark."**

(Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, 23 January 1926, pp. 46-47)

**"I would also remind you of the absolute necessity of adhering faithfully throughout the pages of the Book to the correct system of transliteration, which if consistently adopted and followed will facilitate the pronunciation of oriental terms with which the friends in the West are to be closely and increasingly associated in future. The "Year Book" should prove a model and help to them all."**

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 8 January 1928 to the Bahá'í Year Book Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

**"... in connection with the transliteration of certain Oriental terms, Shoghi Effendi would urge you to follow, in all such matters, the system which is universally adopted by the Bahá'ís the world over, and which you will find clearly stated in various issues of "The Bahá'í World"."**

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 7 April 1935 to an individual believer)