

**ANTHROPOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF
BAHAI BELIEVERS' ORDINARY LIVES: THE
CASE OF THREE NEIGHBORHOODS IN BOLE
SUB-CITY, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**BY
ZERHUN AFEWORK**

**JUNE 2017
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

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GLOSSARY

ABHÁ: Most Glorious.

'ABDU'L-BAHA: Was the Baha'i name of Abbas Effendi, son of Baha'u'llah and leader of the Baha'i faith, 1892–1921.

ALLÁH-U-ABHÁ: A form of the Greatest Name say by Baha'is 95 times per day.

ANIMATOR: An older person (typically a youth) who accompanies and assists members of a junior youth group in the development of their capacities.

ATO: A form of address for a man.

AYYÁM-I-HÁ: The name for the days added to the Baha'i calendar to bring the total to 365 or 366 (leap year).

BAB: Ali Muhammad, a religious leader in Iran who founded the Babi faith. His religious name means "gate."

BAHA: An Arabic word meaning "glory", "splendor", or "light".

BAHA'I: Literally "one of Glory" or "follower of Baha'u'llah.

BAHA'I ELECTIONS: Elections conducted according to Baha'i principles to select individuals to serve as members of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies and the Universal House of Justice.

BAHA'I INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY: The Baha'i organization that works with the United Nations.

BAHA'I WORLD CENTER: The center of the Baha'i faith, located in Haifa, Israel.

BAHA'U'LLAH: The Baha'i name for Mírzá Husayn Ali Núrí, founder of the Baha'i faith. It means "Glory of God."

BAHJI: The last home of Baha'u'llah, and a place of Baha'i pilgrimage.

BLESSED BEAUTY: A title of Baha'u'llah.

BOOK OF CERTITUDE: The book in which Baha'u'llah describes divine progression (see Kitáb-i-Íqán).

CONSULTATION: In Baha'i usage, a technical term referring to the process of collective decision-making.

COVENANT: The Baha'i spiritual agreement and pledge taken by all Baha'is.

COVENANT-BREAKERS: Those expelled from the faith for failing to accept the covenant of Baha'i unity.

DEEPENING: A meeting held to discuss a Baha'i book or teaching at an advanced level.

DISPENSATION: The period of time during which the laws and teachings of a Prophet of God have spiritual authority.

DIVINE MESSENGER: Is a person sent by God to teach humanity.

FAST: A nineteen-day period of spiritual renewal and development during which Baha'is abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset.

FESTIVAL OF RIDVÁN: The 12-day celebration of Baha'u'llah's declaration.

FUND: The institution of the Baha'i fund.

GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLAH: A collection of works by Baha'u'llah, read as scripture.

GREATEST NAME: The name Baha'u'llah ("the Glory of God") and its derivatives, such as Alláh-u-Abhá ("God is Most Glorious"), Baha ("glory", "splendor", or "light"), and Ya Bahá'u'l-Abhá ("O Thou the Glory of the Most Glorious!").

GUARDIAN OF THE FAITH, GUARDIANSHIP: Term for a leader of the Baha'i faith; the position held by Shoghi Effendi.

HANDS OF THE CAUSE OF GOD: Group of leaders appointed to assist in Baha'i administration.

HIDDEN WORDS: A book of instruction written by Baha'u'llah.

HOLY DAY: A day commemorating a significant Baha'i anniversary or feast.

HUQUQU'LLAH: "Right of God"; the voluntary wealth tax paid by Baha'is to support the faith.

KITÁB-I-AQDAS: Most Holy Book, a book of rules for the Baha'i faith written by Baha'u'llah.

KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN: Book of Certitude, a book written by Baha'u'llah.

LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY: The nine-member governing body of the Baha'is in a locality, elected annually by secret ballot by all the local adult Baha'is.

MANIFESTATION OF GOD: Designation of a Prophet "endowed with constancy" Who is the Founder of a religious Dispensation, He manifests the nature and purpose of God in accordance with the capacity and needs of the people to whom He comes.

MASHRIQU'L-ADHKAR: A Baha'i house of worship.

MITHQÁL: A unit of weight, equivalent to a little over 3 1/2 grammes, used in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas with reference to quantities of gold or silver for various purposes.

NAW-RÚZ: "New Day". In Baha'i usage, it refers to the Baha'i New Year.

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES: The nine-member governing body of the Baha'is of a particular country, elected annually by regionally elected delegates.

NEW WORLD ORDER: A coming time of universal peace and unity under Baha'i principles.

NEIGHBORHOOD: In Baha'i usage, it refers to a particular area in which Baha'i believers living near one another; and Baha'i believers who reside in a certain

neighborhood are carry out the different Baha'i community activities together, and they celebrate the Nineteen Day Feast together.

NINETEEN DAY FEAST: A Baha'i institution inaugurated by the Bab and confirmed by Baha'u'llah in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. It is held on the first day of every Baha'i month, each consisting of nineteen days and bearing the name of one of the attributes of God. The Feast is the heart of Baha'i community life at the local level and consists of devotional, consultative, and social elements.

PERSIA: The former name of Iran.

PILGRIMAGE: A journey made with the intention of visiting a holy place.

PIONEER: In Baha'i usage, a believer who leaves his/her hometown or country to reside elsewhere for the purpose of teaching the faith.

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION: The unfolding of God's plan for humanity through the teachings of different religious leaders over the ages.

QIBLIH: In Baha'i usage, it refers to a prayer-direction or point of adoration, the focus to which the faithful turn in prayer.

REVELATION: The conveying of truth from God to humanity. The word is used to refer to the process of divine communication from God to His Manifestation and from the Manifestation to His people; to the words and acts of such communication themselves; and to the entire body of teachings given by a Prophet of God.

RIDVÁN: An Arabic word meaning "paradise"; the garden on an island in the Tigris River where Baha'u'llah addressed His followers.

RIDVÁN DECLARATION: Baha'u'llah's sharing with his followers the revelation that he is a divine messenger.

RUHI WORKBOOK: A series of books designed by the Ruhi Institute, which is a Baha'i training centre in Colombia.

SEVEN VALLEYS AND THE FOUR VALLEYS: Two mystical works revealed by Baha'u'llah in Baghdad.

SHI'I ISLAM: One of the two main branches of orthodox Islam.

SHRINE: In Baha'i usage, the term holy shrines refers to the burial places of Baha'u'llah, the Bab, and 'Abdu'l-Baha.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: The grandson of 'Abdu'l-Baha; Guardian of the Baha'i faith, 1921-57.

SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES: Administrative institutions of Baha'u'llah's World Order that operate at the local and national levels and are elected according to Baha'i principles.

SUB CITY: The second administrative unit next to the city administration of Addis Ababa.

TABLETS: Form of letters to individuals or communities, much of the early works of Baha'i religion were in the form Tablets.

TUTOR: In Baha'i usage, it refers to a facilitator and collaborator of the study circle.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: The supreme governing and legislative body of the Baha'i Faith.

WEREDA: The smallest administrative unit (next to sub city) of the city administration of Addis Ababa.

WOIZERO: A married woman.

YÁ BAHÁ'U'L-ABHÁ: A form of Baha'u'llah's name (the Greatest Name) that is used as an invocation.

YEAR OF PATIENCE: A procedure undertaken by discontented Baha'i married couples in a way patiently waiting one complete year that intends to reestablish unity between them.

ABSTRACT

This thesis tries to deal with some aspects of Baha'i family life and, Baha'i community building core activities kernel for all Baha'i adherents' ordinary lives. A distinctive Baha'i element of family life is the critical importance of educating daughters which is more necessary than that of sons if Baha'i parents cannot provide education for both a boy and a girl at a time. Baha'i mothers chief responsibility to educate their children spiritually in early ages; and applying to both parents religious practices up to the age of maturity by Baha'i and Non-Baha'i spouse children are other prominent features in Baha'i family. On the other hand, Baha'i community building core activities are central to the community development taking place in Baha'i. Since qualitative methodology concentrates on rich description, attempts to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them, and turns the world into a series of representations including key informants interview, focus group discussions, conversations, and observation; it applied to this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Different accounts reveal that Baha'i religion was emerging from Shi'i Islam and its foundation lies in the middle of the nineteenth century in Iran. In 1933, there was a call for the Baha'i community of Egypt to send a pioneer to Ethiopia to open the land to this religion. Sabri Elias, a young Baha'i of twenty-seven years of age eventually responded to the call, and he succeeded in establishing the local governing body of the Baha'i faith in Addis Ababa in 1934.

In the case of me, the present researcher, it was about my teenage that I first became acquainted with a Baha'i religion. During that time I was walking with other people on the way Bole-Atlas to Rwanda in Addis Ababa. Then, we saw an interesting compound. In the outer part of it, there was a small garden in which nine pointed star seen on the ground, and next to it, there was also a flat slab of stone inscribed as "Baha'i Centre". Subsequently, we entered to the compound and we came across with a Baha'i believer, who gave us pamphlets on basic teachings of this religion. Still, I could not remember fully all the conversations we have had other than home devotional meetings. After a while, I attended one devotional meeting. Since then, however, I did not further investigate about the Baha'i religion for a long period of time.

Yet, at the end of anthropology of religion class of my MA study in Addis Ababa University, and at a time about to decide a thesis topic, I decided to carry out a research

which has to be related to the course entitled anthropology of religion. Later on, I contemplated a lot about the topic which could be my research focus. Finally, I tried looking back and started to read literatures in relation to the Baha'i religion, and I also began to think in depth to widen my enquiry to the aforementioned research level. Afterwards, I continued to read more and more with regard to the Baha'i religion, and in the mean time, I was also trying to discuss about the Baha'i faith at different occasions with peoples who were not Baha'i believers. Amazingly, even if my discussants were not quite large in number, almost all were not familiar to the Baha'i religion. As a student of anthropology, this further enhanced my interest to study the Baha'i religion in detail.

This thesis, therefore, basically will try to deal with Baha'i adherents' ordinary lives by examining family life and community building core activities take as case three Baha'i neighborhoods in Bole, Addis Ababa. Nonetheless, this study is by no means complete, instead, it comes up with a remarkable account for further research on Baha'i adherents' ordinary lives discussing with some aspects of Baha'is' family life and Baha'i community building core activities.

The chapters of this thesis are outlined as follows. Chapter one is an introductory portion of the study coupled with theoretical review. Chapter two discusses Baha'i religion history and its basic teachings. Fieldwork reportage will be presented in chapter three and four. Thus, Baha'i believers' family life is treated in chapter three; and chapter four devoted to community building activities. Finally, chapter five provides a conclusion.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Robert N. Bellah indicated that many objects that we encounter in the world of everyday have, at least potentially, religious meanings (Bellah 2011: 8). Schielke and Debevec (2012: 2-3), also argue that religion is a part of human's complex ordinary life and a religious life is inseparable from the wider course of life. Again, Nancy T. Ammerman articulated that religion is interwoven with the lives of the people in many ways (2007: 4). Moreover, in support of Dick Houtman and Stef Aupers on deeper spiritual selves, religion may serve to inform people's judgments, decisions and choices required for everyday life (2010: 7).

Moving to Baha'i religion but stronger view, in Baha'i, there is a firm belief about the essential oneness of all the myriad forms and grades of life (Esslemont 2006: 65). Similarly, Baha'i followers' who had a discussion with me so far explained that for instance, there is no dichotomy between daily spiritual way of life and worldly way of life, or, no extension between the two. In short, according to Baha'i teachings, the material and spiritual aspects of daily life are inseparably connected and must both be addressed inseparably (Esslemont 2006: 65).

Hence, I began to compare and contrast the Baha'is' view with that of the discussion presented above and people's typical classification of the spiritual way of life, and the worldly way of life. I also tried to correlate it to the story which I have already mentioned (i.e. my observation of peoples' little awareness about Baha'i religion and Baha'i followers' actual lives). Concurrently, I kept talking with Baha'i followers. Eventually, with persistent consultation with my advisor in particular, a research:

Anthropological Understanding of Baha'i Believers' Ordinary Lives boldly came to the front. Then, I continued to look for documents which may substantiate this study.

To begin with a review of anthropological interest to study religion, anthropology is the study of the diversity of human thoughts and actions, and it emphasizes to look at how real human individuals conceive and use their religious resources (Eller 2007: xiii-xiv). Conversely, according to Giordan and Swatos, historically, much of social scientific study of religion did not examine how people actually lived their lives both in respect to religious duties and beliefs (2011: xiii). Under the themes which will be articulated in the specific objectives of this research, however, the study tried to explore how Baha'i followers' actually live their lives with respect to religious duties and beliefs.

Proceeding to look at Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency *Ethiopian 2007 Census* report, it disclosed that in Ethiopia: more than forty-three percent of the population is reported to be Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, almost thirty-four percent reported to be Muslim, more than eighteen percent were Protestant, nearly one percent reported to be Catholics, and more than two percent is adhered to traditional beliefs (Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency 2007). Yet, in the document, those religious adherents but who are not members of the abovementioned religions generally counted as 'Other' (Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency 2007). In the view of the fact that, one can easily understand that Baha'i believers, which are the target community studied in this thesis, were not treated separately like that of Orthodox Christians, Muslim, Protestants, or Catholics in the aforementioned report.

During the time to develop this thesis proposal, I also attempted to look for research materials exhaustively using Addis Ababa University Kennedy Library electronic access service on religion in Ethiopia, particularly on Baha'i case. Nevertheless, I found only two research papers (both researchers are Baha'i faith believers and I am an Orthodox Christian): Dagmawit Eshetu's MA thesis entitled *Beliefs and Social Practices of the Baha'i Community of Ethiopia: the Case of the Baha'i Community of Zone 3 and Zone 4 Addis Ababa* (2003), and Tayechalem Girma's MA thesis entitled *The Ideal and Practices of Gender Equality of The Baha'i Community in Addis Ababa* (2007).

Except the two MA theses which I have already mentioned, all in all, my search for academic research materials in relation to Baha'i in Ethiopia was significantly unsuccessful. Dagmawit and Tayechalem also confirmed about the lack of academic research literatures on Baha'i in Ethiopia (Dagmawit 2003: 8 and Tayechalem 2007: 4).

Dagmawit in particular asserted that *one can definitely say that the Baha'i community of Ethiopia is one of the least studied religious communities in Ethiopia* (Dagmawit 2003: 8). Accordingly, in Ethiopia, Baha'i's: history, beliefs, teachings, social principles, social practices and so forth are not studied well and insignificantly known (Dagmawit 2003: 8).

On the other hand, anthropological curiosity to understand religion or, to look for people's actual religious experiences is persistent (Schielke and Debevec 2012:1). However, in line with the previous discussions, one can easily understand that the heightened gap to the availability of academic studies with respect to Baha'i believers' ordinary lives in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, therefore, in association with the Baha'i

adherents' ordinary lives: family life and community building core activities are little known and not studied extensively.

Likewise, family life and community building core activities have not been investigated as kernel instances to demonstrate Baha'i adherents' ordinary lives in the abovementioned two MA theses.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this thesis is to study Baha'i believers' ordinary lives in Addis Ababa taking the case of three neighborhoods in Bole sub city namely Bole-Tana neighborhood, Imperial neighborhood, and CMC neighborhood where some 70 Baha'i believers reside.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Following to the preliminary data collection to this research; the researcher comprehend that Baha'i believers' ordinary lives are best examined in the family milieu and by inquiring the community building core activities. Therefore, the specific objectives of the research include:

- To explore how Baha'i teachings of family life (i.e. parent-children relationship, relationship between spouses, parental responsibilities and children obligations) are put into practical action.
- To indentify the essential spiritual values which are employed in Baha'is' actual lives.

- To analyze the application of certain religious duties in Baha'is everyday life.
- To understand how the community building core activities affect believers' ordinary lives.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 The Study Area

Addis Ababa is located at 9° 2' N and 38° 45' E (Gebre 2008: 56). Its total area is 540 sq km, and the city lies between 1800 and 3200 meters above the sea level (Gebre 2008: 56). The lowest and the highest annual average temperatures of the city are 9.89°C and 24.64°C respectively; and the annual average rainfall is 1178 mm (Gebre 2008: 56).

According to 2007 census report, Addis Ababa's total population is 2,739,551, of which forty-eight percent is male and fifty-two percent is female. Regarding religion, the same report disclosed that about seventy-five percent of Addis Ababa's population is Orthodox Christians, sixteen percent is Muslims, nearly eight percent is Protestants, less than one percent is Catholics, and almost one percent of the population is followers of "Other" religions (Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency 2007).

Currently, Addis Ababa City Administration is divided into ten sub cities which are the second administrative units next to the city administration (Bureau of Finance and Economic Development of Addis Ababa 2013: 14). The sub cities further divided into one hundred sixteen weredas, which are the smallest administrative unit in the city; and in terms of area coverage, Bole sub city is the largest sub city followed by Akaki-Kaliti and Yeka (Bureau of Finance and Economic Development of Addis Ababa 2013: 14). This study is carried out in areas which are found in Bole sub city of Addis Ababa.

Again, in accordance with 2007 census, Bole sub city population is 308,995 of which forty-seven percent is male and fifty-three percent is female; and from the city dwellers Amhara, Oromo, Gurage and Tigray are the first four ethnic groups respectively. Regarding education, a little above seventy-seven percent of Bole's population is literate and twenty-four percent of the residents are above Grade ten. On the other hand, slightly more than half of the residents are economically active (Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency 2007).

Concerning religion, also as shown in Ethiopian Census Report (2007), a little above seventy-four percent of Bole's population is Orthodox Christians, almost fourteen percent is Muslims, slightly more than nine percent of the population is Protestants, nearly one percent of the population is Catholics, less than one percent of the population is traditional belief followers, and a little above one percent of the population is "Other".

Ethiopian Census Report (2007) further disclosed that considerable number of Bole's population live in the conventional households with few other people live in the hotel or hostel, orphanage, boarding school, university, or college, correctional facility and other collective facility; and the remaining few are homeless. Alternatively, one may observe that Bole sub city residents engage in diverse activities, such as handling of responsibilities at public service and in private companies, commerce, manufacturing and industry, home makers of different types, civil administration, transport and communication, social services like education, in health sector, hotel and catering services, farming of different types and others.

Bole International Airport, few high standard hotels, beautiful recreational sites and renowned villas are among the few emblems of Bole.

1.4.2 Rationale for the Selection of the Study Area

Undoubtedly, Baha'is are present in different parts of Addis Ababa, and in Ethiopia in general. In Bole, however, the prime factor is the availability of a National Baha'i Centre, which is in favorable settings for research for instance the welcoming approach to the Centre, the availability of library, ease to access Baha'i followers and the Local and National Spiritual Assembly members there, which is vital specially in producing the sample frame and because of their resourcefulness for various data. Last but not least, the researcher's residence is in Bole sub city, which also have a positive effect in relation to cost than other remote research site. Similarly, Ritchie and Lewis recommend:

Qualitative studies are almost invariably confined to a small number of geographical, community or organisational locations. This is partly so that the context in which the research is being conducted is known and partly for reasons of resource and efficiency. But, equally, the locations selected are usually chosen because of their salience to the subject under enquiry (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 100).

1.4.3 Studied Community

According to the Baha'i Local Spiritual Assembly of Addis Ababa, as of early June 2016, the Baha'i community customary activities are carrying out through sixteen Baha'i neighborhoods across the city. These are: Bole-Tana neighborhood, Imperial neighborhood, CMC neighborhood, Bole-Homes neighborhood, Gerji neighborhood, Bole-Michael neighborhood, Moenco neighborhood, Olympia neighborhood, Akaki neighborhood, Addisu Gebeya neighborhood, Arada neighborhood, Lebu-Lafto neighborhood, Sarbet neighborhood, Kazanchis neighborhood, British neighborhood, and

Kotebe neighborhood. Again, as described by the Local Spiritual Assembly, the names of the neighborhoods are given after the names of the surrounding localities where the believers are residing. Out of the sixteen neighborhoods, Bole-Tana, Imperial, CMC, Bole-Homes, Gerji, Bole- Michael, and Moenco are completely or at least partly based in Bole sub city.

However, the neighborhoods covered in this study are Bole-Tana neighborhood where sixteen Baha'is reside, Imperial neighborhood where sixteen Baha'is reside, and CMC neighborhood where thirty-nine Baha'is reside during the field work period of March - early June of 2016. Furthermore, Bole-Tana neighborhood constitutes the believers from Bole-Atlas, Bole-Sai Pastry, Bole-Friendship, Bole-Rwanda, and Welosefer areas. Imperial neighborhood organized by Baha'i believers' from the Imperial hotel area. CMC neighborhood represents the believers from CMC, Bole-Ayat, Bole-Summit, Bole- Meri, and Goro areas.

1.4.4 Methodology

When comparing quantitative and qualitative methodologies epistemologically (i.e. concerned with the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired), Ritchie and Lewis asserted the following:

Quantitative methodology investigates the social world in ways which emulate the 'scientific method' as used in the natural sciences, with an emphasis on hypothesis testing, causal explanations, generalization and prediction. By contrast, qualitative methods are seen to reject the natural science model and to concentrate on understanding, rich description and emergent concepts and theories (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 14).

With regard to qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, also provide:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices ... turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 3).

Therefore, believing that qualitative research methodology best fits to this study, it entirely applied to this research.

Nonetheless, to consider the particular function of qualitative researches in providing the kinds of information and understanding needed in social research, it is useful to take into account some of the broader functions such as *contextual* - describing the form or nature of what exists, *explanatory* - examining the reasons for, *evaluative* - appraising the effectiveness of what exists, and *generative* - aiding the development of theories, strategies or actions (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 26-27). As a result, since the study tried to describe the Baha'i community ordinary lives, primarily, it will have contextual function. Besides, in relation to the research topics, the study attempted to understand the purposes for some activities being done and it tried to explain Baha'is' perspective accordingly; therefore, it may have an explanatory function as well.

1.4.5 Methods

According to Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis, approaches to collecting qualitative data can be divided into two very broad groups: those that focus on naturally occurring data and those that generate data through the interventions of the research (2003: 34). In naturally occurring settings, ways to study phenomena include: participant observation, observation, document review, discourse analysis, and conversation (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 34-36). Again, there are different ways in which data can be generated such as

biographical methods, individual interviews, paired (or triad) interviews, and focus groups or group discussions (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 36-37).

In this study, however, at the very beginning, along with the letter from the Social Anthropology Department of Addis Ababa University, which request the studied community to cooperate accordingly; the researcher also submitted the first research proposal to the National Spiritual Assembly Subsequently, research methods in naturally occurring settings such as participant observation, observation, conversation, and document analysis are employed. Focusing on their importance, yet, generate data methods such as focus group discussion, which helps to illuminate the research issue and, key informants' interview that serves essentially to get information on the historical background of the target community, also used.

Hence, in connection with methods in naturally occurring settings, the researcher had tried to take part in the Nineteen Day Feasts, devotional meetings, Ridván holy days, and fasting breaks. In addition, the researcher has observed the family life, and activities in children's class and junior youth spiritual empowerment program. Similarly, conversations are made on different subjects; and the informants played a significant role to fill the gap with answering questions especially on topics those the researcher could not personally observe. Furthermore, document review is employed to comprehend Baha'i religion history and basic beliefs.

Correspondingly, three focus group discussions in which six, six, and seven discussants participated respectively; and thirteen key informants' interview have been conducted. Mainly, members of National and Local Spiritual Assembly, and neighborhoods'

coordinators took part in the interview, and both sexes from different age groups participated in the focus group discussions.

As data collecting tools, field notes, audio-video device, and photo camera were in use. Furthermore, ethnographic accounts, conversation analysis, and documentary analysis procedures are applied for data analysis. In doing so, however, the paper primarily tried to explain the behaviour of members of the studied community according to their own definitions.

1.4.6 Limitations and Mitigating Strategy

The researcher faced a problem basically lack of sufficient supportive theoretical literatures from Addis Ababa University libraries. Even though abundant books are listed in the libraries catalogues, they are not available to borrow. In addition, the inconvenience to carry out this research free from other time consuming duties such as routine family linked and job related responsibilities are another problems. Alternatively, by using free e-books, and with structured work and steady commitment the risks are mitigated.

1.4.7 Ethical Considerations

As Ritchie and Lewis argued, because of the in-depth and unstructured nature of qualitative research, the ethical considerations have a particular resonance in qualitative study (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 66-70). Accordingly, informed consent, confidentiality and using pseudonyms are due considered in this study.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As previously discussed, anthropological curiosity to understand religion or, to look for people's actual religious experiences is obvious. Hence, this research importance is clear in the academia. In addition, it will be worthwhile to Baha'i adherents by making known the Baha'i community's worldview to the general public.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite a keen anthropological interest in religion, scholars cannot agree as to exactly how "religion" should be defined or what the term "religion" should encompass (Eller 2007: 8-9 and Hamilton 2001: 12-13). Efforts at defining religion ranging from Tylor's definition of religion as "the belief in spiritual beings" to the more complex definitions offered by Clifford Geertz have met with considerable resistance (Eller 2007: 8-9 and Hamilton 2001: 12-13). As noted by Hamilton, any definition of religion entails an area of uncertainty (Hamilton 2001: 13). Nevertheless, Geertz's definition by far has been the most influential anthropological definition of religion (Barnard and Spencer 2002: 726).

Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* defined religion as:

(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Geertz 1973:90).

Geertz's definition embraces religion: is a symbolic system, which is a social conception that through social interaction creates reality and provides people with a guideline for how to live; renders powerful and lasting moods and motivations in people in which the moods are in and of themselves and the motivations are directed towards goals, and

infuses these moods and motivations with the sense that they are uniquely real; provides an overall ordering for existence that gives life meaning; instills the overall explanations and ordering for existence with the sense that it is factual; together, these dynamics seem so powerful to believers that religion becomes the only sensible explanation for reality (Geertz 1973: 90-124).

On the other hand, other definitions of religion follow in positing a rigid dichotomy between the so-called supernatural and natural, or sacred and profane orders. For example, James Frazer, in *The Golden Bough* (1958) compares the myths, magical practices, and religions of the world's cultures throughout history and developed the social evolutionary model of magic, religion, and science. He defined religion as "a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life" (Frazer 1958: 58-9). Conversely, Émile Durkheim termed religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set aside and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim 1965: 62). Thus, as Durkheim discussed in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1965), the world's religions are so varied that they have no specific belief or practice in common but develop a community centering on their beliefs and practices that separate the sacred and the profane, sacred refers aspects of life having to do with the supernatural that inspire awe, reverence, respect, and fear, and profane refers everything else; therefore, for Durkheim there are three essential elements of religion: beliefs that some things are sacred or set apart, practices/rituals which center on the

things that are considered sacred, and church/moral community which is forming out of the beliefs and practices.

All in all, in considering attempts to define religion, the undeniable truth is that definitions are not always free from the influence of theoretical predilections and purposes (Hamilton 2001: 13).

Scholars also tried to come up with an approach that distinguishes religion from other human endeavors and thought systems. Most of the premodern theorists employ apologetics/pre-scientific explanations as why religion is true and to prove it (Eller 2007). Others like G.W. Friedrich Hegel, Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, and E. B. Tylor use historical progressive analysis of religion and; Fritz Grabner, Father Wilhelm Schmidt, and G. Elliot Smith follow diffusionism approach (Eller 2007 and Hamilton 2001).

Continuing to other theories of religion, psychological theories appeal in some way to the thought or experience of the individual (Eller 2007); and psychological theories further divided into: Emotionalists, who refer the emotional quality as the most distinguishing and driving feature, and Max Müller, Rudolf Otto and Bronislaw Malinowski are notable figures (Eller 2007); Psychoanalytic reduced religion to a mental process, a “symptom” or manifestation of our mind and Sigmund Freud (1950) is its major proponent; Intellectualists like E. B. Tylor (1958) and James Frazer (1958) view religion arises from question-asking or problem-solving; Primitive mentality versus psychic unity approaches all humans are mentally the same, or, a common “psychic unity” of humanity and what does differ is the local expression or formulation of the

elementary ideas and Adolf Bastian propagates it (Eller 2007); Lévi-Straussian structuralism refers to the view that the meaning or the functioning of a phenomenon depends less on the nature of its individual “bits” than the relationships between those bits, and at the foundation of mythical transformations the human mind operates on binary grounds and Claude Lévi-Strauss is its prominent advocate (Lévi-Strauss 1966); and Neurological theorizes about experimenting of “god spot” in the brain, an area or structure that is “tuned” or “designed” for religious functioning, and it analyzed by Newberg, d’Aquili, and Rause (2002), and Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1988).

Conversely, social theories of religion emphasize on more social style of explanation, or, underline the role of groups and institutions, of community, and/or morality (Eller 2007 and Hamilton 2001). Social theories further classified into: Functionalism which asserts religious beliefs and practices had “national”, “tribal” or “ethnic” sources, and the bedrock of religion is social behavior and, even more so, the social group that engages in the behavior and W. Robertson Smith (1889) promotes it, and as explicated by Émile Durkheim (1965) religion gives members of society a common identity, activity, interest, and destiny that contributed to societal integration and cohesion; Historical materialism maintains religion reflects the on the ground realities of social life, and used to set up and to enforce a view of the world that explains and authorizes the existing social arrangement (Marx 1843), or as Marvin Harris recommends (1974), in whatever case, a practical, nonspiritual reason for the belief or behavior can be found, which is then wrapped in a shroud of religious meaning as a form of legitimation and compulsion; Structural functionalism, basically A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1965) theorizes religion’s important role in the creation and maintenance of the group and society

because the function of any item of culture or society to be the contribution that they make to the formation, thus, religion gives members of society a common identity, activity, interest, and destiny; Symbolic/interpretive anthropology (Geertz 1973, Douglas 1974, Turner 1967, 1969, and 1975) understands religion is a system of symbols, emphasis on symbols which are conveyors and enablers of thought.

Furthermore, "modular" theories underline the modular or composite quality of religion, and it is a particular cumulative expression of elements those may not be specifically religious (Eller 2007). Under modular theories there are personalities like Anthony Wallace, who focuses on thirteen "elementary particles" or categories of religious action that serve as building blocks for religion (1966); Stewart Guthrie theorizes religion is based on a serious appropriation of the anthropomorphic idea (1993); Pascal Boyer (2001) analyzes human thought is not a unitary thing but the result of interoperating thought modules, a "confederacy" of explanatory devices or "inference systems"; and Scott Atran (2002) asserts religion involves the very same cognitive and affective structures as nonreligious beliefs and practices.

Yet, no single theoretical perspective, like no single definition, can probably ever capture the entire essence or nature of religion, and as indicated above what theorists think religion is often depends upon the explanation of it they favor (Hamilton 2001: 13 and Eller 2007: 13). For instance, premodern theorists focus on apologetics/pre-scientific explanations as why religion is true and they neglect the thought or experience of the individual; the role of groups and institutions, of community, and/or morality; and the modular or composite quality of religion. Similarly, ignoring the other aspects of religion, psychological theories give emphasis on the thought or experience of the

individual; social theories of religion stress on the role of groups and institutions, of community, and/or morality; and “modular” theories draw attention to the modular or composite quality of religion.

Touching upon Baha’is view of religion, however, Baha’is understand that the purpose of religion is to promote harmony and unity among human beings, which is more inclined to religion and solidarity of the functionalist approach than other theories of religion. From the Baha’i perspectives, therefore, through the teachings and moral guidance of religion, great segments of humanity have learned to develop qualities that conduce to social order, as Baha’u’llah dictates:

Religion is the greatest instrument for the order of the world and the tranquillity of all existent beings. The weakening of the pillars of religion has encouraged the ignorant and rendered them audacious and arrogant. Truly I say, whatever lowers the lofty station of religion will increase heedlessness in the wicked, and finally result in anarchy (Esslemont 2006: 84).

Shoghi Effendi also uttered, religion is a bulwark for the protection of all peoples and nations, and for the establishment of a permanent and universal peace (Effendi 1944: 282). Subsequently, Baha’is understand, religion provides the bricks and mortar of society in which the shared beliefs and moral values unite people into communities and that give tangible direction and meaning to individual and collective life; then, as members of this community, believers have an obligation to work together, to support one another, and to do all that they can to help the community not only survive but to grow vigorously (Hartz 2009: 113). Once more, as Baha’u’llah and Shoghi Effendi recommended above, the believers also say religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the society. Hence, they consider if the lamp of religion is obscured, chaos and confusion will result. Besides, as indicated by Baha’is,

Baha'i family life and Baha'i community building core activities which are the very basic themes of this research are foundations to build one world community that is envisioned by Baha'u'llah.

CHAPTER TWO

BAHA'I RELIGION

The Baha'i religion traces its beginnings in Persia, now Iran to a religious leader called the Bab ("the Gate") (Hartz 2009: 11). Baha'is see the Bab as the forerunner of the Baha'i faith, because the Bab writings introduced the concept of "He whom God shall make manifest", a Messianic figure whose coming, according to Baha'is, was announced in the scriptures of all of the world's great religions, and whom Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, claimed to be in 1863 (Hartz 2009: 27-37). As Jack David Eller noted (2007: 188), some 7 million Baha'is are reside globally.

This chapter presents Baha'i religion: history, basic teachings, covenants, law, canonical texts, calendar, holy days, religious symbols, houses of worship, pilgrimage, organization, and the Baha'i fund in brief.

2.1 HISTORY

The Promised One of all the peoples of the world hath appeared. All peoples and communities have been expecting a Revelation, and He, Baha'u'llah, is the foremost teacher and educator of all mankind (Esselemont 2006: 8).

Baha'u'llah (1817–92) formerly known as Mírzá Husayn Alí Núrí was one of the Bab's early followers (Hartz 2009: 13-53). While Baha'u'llah was in prison for participating in the Babi movement, he had a vision, and He understood that God had called on him to be a divine messenger of God's word (Hartz 2009: 13-53). Then, He took the name Baha'u'llah, which means "Glory of God", and after the Bab's death, Baha'u'llah brought together the Bab's followers, and they gave themselves the name Baha'i (i.e.

Baha'i is used either as an adjective to refer to the Baha'i Faith or as a term for a follower of Baha'u'llah. It is derived from the Arabic Baha, meaning "glory" or "splendor" (Hartz 2009: 13-53).

When Baha'u'llah died in 1892, His will appointed His son Abbas Effendi (1844–1921), known by the title of 'Abdu'l-Baha (i.e. Servant of Baha) as the "Centre of the Covenant", "Head of the Faith", and the sole authoritative interpreter of Baha'u'llah's writings (Hartz 2009: 13-53 and Hatcher and Martin 1998: xiii).

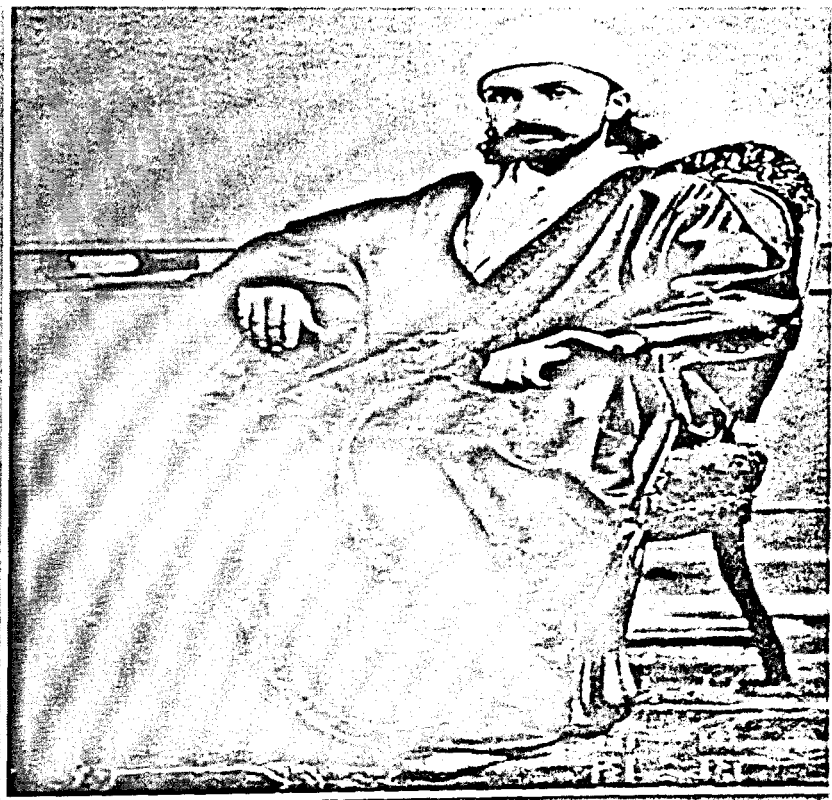


Figure 1. 'Abdu'l-Baha's earlier adulthood photo (Courtesy, Hartz: 2009).

Again, on 'Abdu'l-Baha's death in 1921, he left a will naming his grandson, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani (1897–1957), to succeed him as Guardian of the Faith (Smith 2008: 47 and Hartz 2009: 13).

However, Shoghi Effendi died in 1957 without leaving an heir and the leadership of the faith passed to the Hands of the Cause of God, a group of Baha'i leaders Shoghi Effendi had named earlier to help him in his work (Hartz 2009: 13 and Affolter 2005: 75–114).

In 1963 this interim arrangement ended when Baha'is elected the Universal House of Justice, an institution that was originally planned and described by Baha'u'llah, to lead the faith worldwide in the future (Hartz 2009: 13 and Smith 2008: 56).



Figure 2. Shoghi Effendi's photo (Courtesy, Hartz: 2009).

2.2 BASIC BELIEFS

Three core principles establish a basis for Baha'i teachings and doctrine: the unity of God, that there is only one God who is the source of all creation; the unity of religion, that all major religions have the same spiritual source and come from the same God; and the unity of humanity, that all humans have been created equal, coupled with the unity in diversity, that diversity of race and culture are seen as worthy of appreciation and acceptance (Hutter 200: 737-740).

Baha'is also believe that each person has a rational and everlasting soul, and the soul is the real self of each individual which can be seen in his or her character (McMullen 2000: 57-58). Besides, they argued that human soul needs spiritual nourishment in order to be fulfilled; and the food of the soul is prayer, scripture, love of God, high moral values, and service to humanity (McMullen 2000: 57-58). For Baha'is therefore, time on earth should be devoted to developing the qualities that bring people nearer to God, and they believe in the eternal life of the soul rather than reincarnation; and Heaven and Hell are taught to be spiritual states of nearness or distance from God that describe relationships in this world and the next, and not physical places of reward and punishment achieved after death (McMullen 2000: 57-58).

Baha'is further understand that they cannot fully know God as God is infinite and the human mind is finite (Hartz 2009: 13 and Hatcher 2005: 1-38). Though inaccessible directly, in Baha'is view, God is nevertheless seen as conscious of creation, with a will and purpose that is expressed through messengers termed Manifestations of God (Hartz 2009: 13 and Hatcher 2005: 1-38). Hence, they believe that throughout history God has

sent divine messengers; and these divine messengers are parts of God's plan for humanity, to teach people about God, and to move the human being toward greater spiritual, moral, and intellectual truth (Hartz 2009: 13 and Hatcher 2005: 1–38).

Accordingly, in line with Baha'i teachings, the divine messengers are Moses of Judaism, Krishna of Hinduism, Zarathustra of Zoroastrianism, Gautama Buddha of Buddhism, Jesus of Christianity, the prophet Muhammad of Islam; and the most recent messengers are the Bab and Baha'u'llah (Hartz 2009: 14-16). Therefore, Baha'is see Baha'u'llah as the divine messenger for the modern age; and they also understand that in time God will send yet more messengers to guide humanity (Hartz 2009: 14-16). Concurrently, Baha'is view that all the leaders and founders of the great religions are equally messengers of the one God, each of the divine messengers brought truth and understanding that was right for a particular place and time in the world, and the moral and spiritual values they taught helped civilization to advance (Hartz 2009: 14-16). In Baha'i, religion is thus understood as orderly, unified, and progressive from age to age (Hartz 2009: 14-16).

Moreover, consistent with Baha'i teachings, humanity is understood to be in a process of collective evolution, and the need of the present time is for the gradual establishment of peace, justice and unity on a global scale (Smith 2008: 107–9 and Hartz 2009: 14-16). Referring Baha'u'llah's teachings, Baha'is also argued that now is the time for worldwide unity, and people must learn to get along with one another and must begin to think globally; because, the world is one country and mankind are its citizens (Hartz 2009: 14-16).

Shoghi Effendi wrote the following summary of what he considered to be the distinguishing principles of Baha'u'llah's teachings:

The independent search after truth, unfettered by superstition or tradition; the oneness of the entire human race, the pivotal principle and fundamental doctrine of the Faith; the basic unity of all religions; the condemnation of all forms of prejudice, whether religious, racial, class or national; the harmony which must exist between religion and science; the equality of men and women, the two wings on which the bird of human kind is able to soar; the introduction of compulsory education; the adoption of a universal auxiliary language; the abolition of the extremes of wealth and poverty; the institution of a world tribunal for the adjudication of disputes between nations; the exaltation of work, performed in the spirit of service, to the rank of worship; the glorification of justice as the ruling principle in human society, and of religion as a bulwark for the protection of all peoples and nations; and the establishment of a permanent and universal peace as the supreme goal of all mankind—these stand out as the essential elements [which Baha'u'llah proclaimed] (Effendi 1944: 281–282).

2.3 COVENANTS

The Baha'i faith refers to two separate binding agreements between God and man: A *Greater Covenant* which is made between every messenger from God and his followers concerning the next dispensation, and a *Lesser Covenant* that concerns successorship of authority within the religion after the messenger dies (Smith 2008: 173). Baha'is understand that in a thousand or more years another Manifestation will appear, but until then the words of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Guardian and the decisions of the International House of Justice constitute the authorities to which all believers must turn for guidance (Smith 2008: 173 and Hartz 2009: 16). Hence, no Baha'i may found a school or sect based on any particular interpretation of the teachings or any supposed divine revelation; but anyone go against these injunctions is considered a "Covenant-breaker" and no longer regarded as Baha'i (Smith 2008: 173 and Hartz 2009: 16).

2.4 BAHÁ'Í RELIGIOUS LAW

Bahá'í law comprises various obligations such as to recite obligatory prayer every day, repetition of the Greatest Name ninety-five times a day, holding of a Bahá'í fast, paying to Huququ'llah (the "Right of God"), and to pay a Bahá'í fund, to hold a regular community meeting which occurs on the first day of each month; not to carry the dead body more than one hour from the place of death to a place of burial, the abolishment of priests and confession of sins, the prohibition of such things as drinking of alcohols, taking of drugs except ordered by the doctors, slavery, asceticism, gambling, adultery, sexual intercourse between unmarried couples, homosexual acts, theft, idleness, begging, backbiting, murder, and arson; it also emphasizes education for children and the need to obey governments (Smith 2008: 158–161).

However, as described by the key informants, the observance of personal laws, such as prayer or fasting, is the sole responsibility of the individual; but some laws may be enforced to a degree by Bahá'í institutions. For instance, in the case of individual violation of Bahá'í standards which disrupt community life, an individual may lose his or her administrative rights by the national spiritual assembly. Thus, he or she is not allowed to make financial contribution to the Bahá'í fund, and not able to participate in the administrative affairs of the Bahá'í community like the electoral process and Nineteen Day Feasts.

2.5 CANONICAL TEXTS

Bahá'ís canonical texts are the writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice, and the authenticated talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha

(Collins 1990: 41–158, Smith 2000: 100–101, Schaefer 2007: 7, and Hartz 2009: 54-63).

The writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah are considered as divine revelation, the writings and talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the writings of Shoghi Effendi as authoritative interpretation, and those of the Universal House of Justice as authoritative legislation and elucidation (Collins 1990: 41–158, Smith 2000: 100–101, Schaefer 2007: 7, and Hartz 2009: 54-63).

To mention some of Baha'u'llah's most important writings include the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, literally the *Most Holy Book*, which is His book of laws, the Kitáb-i-Íqán, literally the *Book of Certitude*, which became the foundation of much of Baha'i belief, the Hidden Words, the Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys which are mystical treatises; and there is also a series of compilation volumes of smaller works the most significant of which is the *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah* (Hartz 2009: 54-63 and Hatcher and Martin 1998: 46-137).

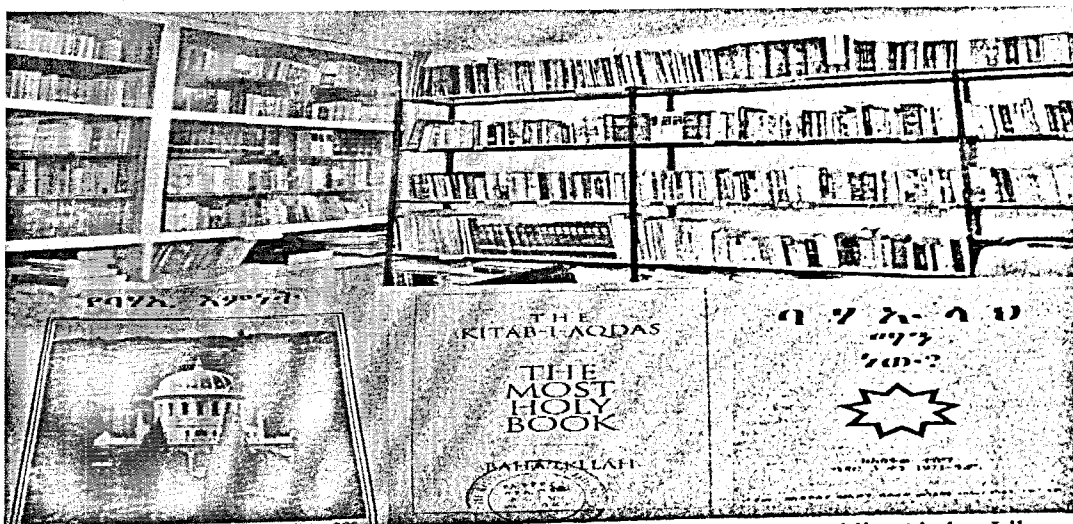


Figure 3. The inside part of The National Baha'i Center of Addis Ababa Library, together with some selected writings (Photographed by the researcher, March 2016)

Again, some of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s writings include, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, *The Tablet to Auguste-Henri Forel*, and *Some Answered Questions* (Collins 1990: 41–158 and Hartz 2009: 63). Additionally, notes taken of a number of his talks were published in various volumes like *Paris Talks*, *‘Abdu’l-Baha in London*, and *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* during his journey to the West (Collins 1990: 41–158).

On the other hand, much of the early works of the religion were in the form of letters to individuals or communities, and these are termed Tablets (Schaefer 2007: 7). Moreover, a special category of works consist of the prayers of the central figures were often included in original letters and have been collected into various prayer books (Smith 1999: 274–275).

Furthermore, according to Baha’i International Community, the *Ruhi workbook*, a series of books designed by the Ruhi Institute in Colombia are the core texts used by Baha’i communities around the world. Today, the Universal House of Justice uses letters as a primary method of communication (Hartz 2009: 54-63).

Next, figure 4 shows a letter sent by The Universal House of Justice to Baha’is all over the world dated December 29, 2016 which is translated to Amharic and given to the researcher by a key informant.

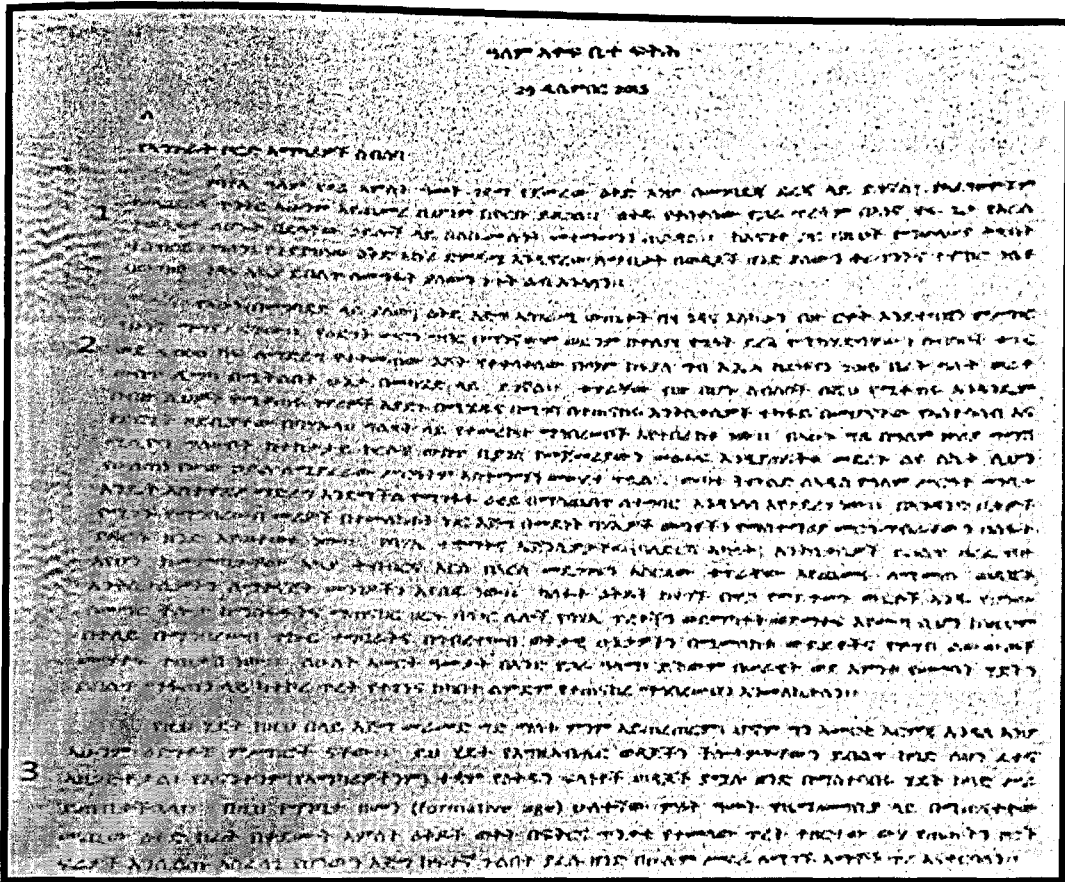


Figure 4. A letter sent by The Universal House of Justice (Photographed by the researcher, May 2016).

2.6 BAHÁ'Í RELIGIOUS CALENDAR

Baha'i calendar is based upon the calendar established by the Bab (Hutter 2005: 737–740, Hartz 2009: 60-67 and Smith 2000: 98-100). The year consists of nineteen months, each having nineteen days; and each of the nineteen months is given a name which is an attribute of God (Smith 2008: 188–190). The remaining four intercalary days (five in a leap year), called Ayyám-i-Há (Hartz 2009: 60-67). The Baha'i New Year called Naw Rúz; and the Baha'i day begins at sunset (Hutter 2005: 737–740).

In addition, the Baha'i week is consists of seven days, and it starts on Saturday and ends on Friday; and each day of the week named after an attribute of God, for instance, Glory is Saturday, Beauty is Sunday, Perfection is Monday, Grace is Tuesday, Justice is Wednesday, Majesty is Thursday and Independence is Friday. Baha'i writings indicate that Friday is to be kept as a day of rest but currently it does not observed in all countries (Smith 2008: 188-190).

2.7 HOLY DAYS

Baha'is celebrate 11 holy days throughout the year (Smith 2000: 182-183 and Hartz 2009: 100-101). The Festival of Ridván, a twelve day festival that commemorates Baha'u'llah's announcement of prophethood, is the most holy Baha'i festival (more discussion on Baha'i holy days will be presented in chapter three).

2.8 FASTING

During the period of fasting, Baha'is in good health between the ages of 15 and 70 abstain from eating and drinking; though exemptions are available for people who are travelling, ill, pregnant, nursing, menstruating, or engaged in heavy labour. Shoghi Effendi also exhorts:

The fasting period, which lasts nineteen days starting as a rule from the second of March every year and ending on the twentieth of the same month, involves complete abstention from food and drink from sunrise till sunset. It is essentially a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make the necessary readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires (Effendi 1973: 28-29).

2.9 HUQUQU'LLAH AND THE BAHA'I FUND

According to Payman Aflatoon (1996), Huququ'llah comprises two words "Huquq" and "Allah". These words are Arabic and mean Right of God, Huquq is Right and Allah, means God (Smith 2000: 189–190).

The principles underlying the Law of Huququ'llah are: 19% of what one owns belongs to God and can be disposed of only by the Universal House of Justice (Smith 2008: 164 and Hatcher and Martin 1998: 198). But, one's needful expenses, residence, and household and professional equipment are exempt from Huququ'llah; and determination of what is needful is left to the conscience of the individual (Smith 2008: 164 and Smith 2000: 189–190).

Hence, when one's wealth, excluding the exempt items, reaches to the value of 19 mithqals (Nineteen mithqals therefore equal 69.191667 grammes) of gold (about \$1,200.00) or more, then it becomes subject to Huququ'llah (Smith 2008: 164, Smith 2000: 189–190, Agarwal 2010: 103 and Stockman 2012: 186–189). Consequently, from one's annual income, all expenses during the year are deductible, and on what is left 19% is payable (Smith 2008: 164, Smith 2000: 189–190, Agarwal 2010: 103 and Stockman 2012: 186–189).

On the other hand, the Baha'i fund, in which donations are never solicited, and contributions are not accepted from Non-Baha'i source is a sole supply for Baha'i community different activities (Smith 2000: 167–168).

2.10 RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

A five-pointed star is the symbol of the Baha'i faith, and number nine is significant to Baha'is since Baha'u'llah received His revelation nine years after the Bab received his, as the highest single-digit number, nine symbolize completeness and unity. Thus, Baha'i houses of worship are nine-sided and in recognition of that completeness, a nine pointed star appear frequently on Baha'is' book covers, paintings and others (Smith 2000: 167–168, Effendi 1974: 167–168 and Effendi 1973: 51–52).

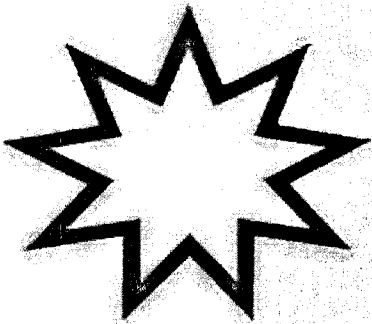


Figure 5. Nine-pointed star (Courtesy, Hartz: 2009).

The ringstone symbol which is designed by 'Abdu'l-Baha is another symbol may found on Baha'is' rings, necklaces, book covers, and paintings (Smith 2000: 167–168).

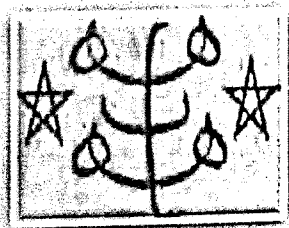


Figure 6. The ringstone symbol (Courtesy, 'Abdu'l-Baha: 1983).

The lower line is said to represent humanity and the world of creation, the upper line symbolize the world of God, and the middle line represents the special station of Manifestation of God and the world of revelation (Smith 2000: 167–168). Likewise, the vertical line is the Primal Will or Holy Spirit proceeding from God through the Manifestations to humanity; and the two stars represent Baha'u'llah and the Bab (Smith 2000: 167–168).

Additionally, the “Greatest Name” symbol is often seen especially in Baha’is home and high up on a wall, is addressing God as “Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá”, The Glory of the Most Glorious (Smith 2000: 24–29). Similarly, as observed by the researcher, it is usual to see ‘Abdu'l-Baha’s photograph in Baha’is house.

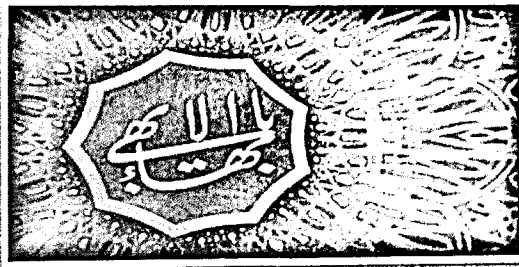


Figure 7. The “Greatest Name” (Courtesy, Hartz: 2009).

2.11 ORGANIZATION

Baha’is have no priests; conversely, at local, regional, and national levels, Baha’is who are 21 years or older, elect members to nine-person spiritual assemblies every year, which run the affairs of the religion (Smith 2000: 24–29).

Then, the elected Local Spiritual Assembly guides the growth and development of the Baha’i community, coordinates the celebration of the Nineteen Day Feasts and Holy

days, oversees the education of children and other educational activities, collaborates with other community groups for the betterment of the spiritual and material well-being of the larger community and serves as liaison with the National Spiritual Assembly (Smith 2000: 24–29).

In the country level, delegates who are elected at unit conventions elect the National Spiritual Assembly (Smith 2000: 24–29). The boundaries of unit conventions are adjusted as required ensuring even distribution of delegates according to Baha'i population (Smith 2000: 24–29). The National Spiritual Assembly is responsible for promoting the faith; stimulating and coordinating activities of local assemblies; and communicating with the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, Israel (Hartz 2009: 104-106).

Finally, The National Spiritual Assemblies elect the Universal House of Justice, and the Universal House of Justice and its nine members are elected every five years (Hartz 2009: 104-106). As Shoghi Effendi (1974) discussed, any male Baha'i, 21 years or older, is eligible to be elected to the Universal House of Justice, but all other positions are open to male and female Baha'is; and there are also appointed individuals working at various levels locally and internationally.

2.12 HOUSES OF WORSHIP

Baha'i houses of worship are called Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, or "Dawning Place of the Praises of God" (Smith 2008: 194). In time Baha'is imagine that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will be the centers of community with administrative centers, schools, colleges, clinics, homes for the elderly, and other community services (Smith 2008: 194).

Worldwide, there are Baha'i worship houses such as in Wilmette of USA; New Delhi, India; Kampala, Uganda; Sydney, Australia; Frankfurt, Germany; Panama City, Panama; and Apia, Samoa (Hartz 2009: 100-101). Until times as national and local houses of worship are established, however, Baha'is also gather in Baha'i centers or each other's homes for devotional meetings and other activities (Hartz 2009: 100-101).

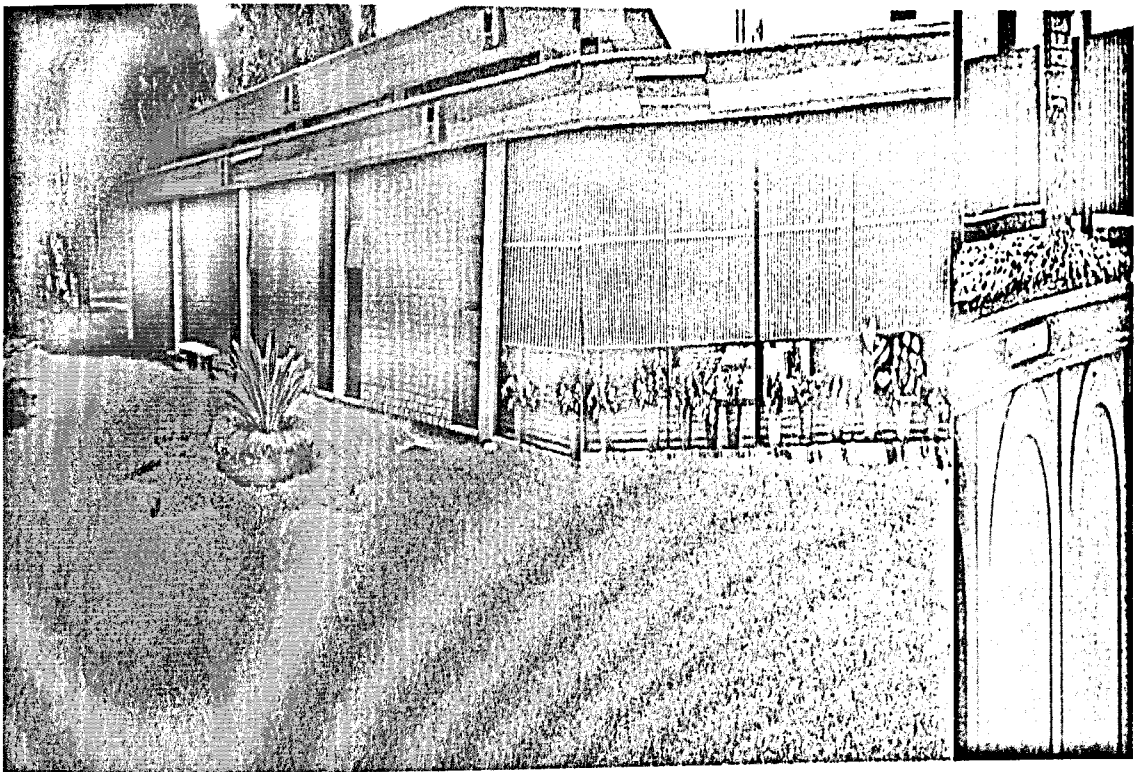


Figure 8. National Baha'i Center of Addis Ababa (Photographed by the researcher, March 2016).

2.13 PILGRIMAGE

In Baha'i pilgrimage, Baha'is visit the Shrine of Baha'u'llah at Bahji, Israel (Vickers and Vickers 2012: 29). For Baha'is this Shrine is the holiest place on earth (Vickers and Vickers 2012: 29). In the city of Haifa also in Israel, the Shrine of the Bab in which the Bab is buried below the floor of the central room, and Baha'u'llah's son 'Abdu'l-Baha is buried in the next room are another areas of Baha'i pilgrimage (Vickers and Vickers 2012: 29).

2.14 BAHAI IN ETHIOPIA

In November 1934, the first Baha'i Local Spiritual Assembly of the country was formed in Addis Ababa (Hassall 2000). According to the research notes by Graham Hassall:

There were ten Baha'is in Addis Ababa when the first Local Spiritual Assembly was elected on 8 November 1934. Its members were Atto Sium Gabril, Atto Haila Gabril, Habib Boutros, Sabri Elias-sec, Edouard Goubran, El-Saad Said, El-Saad Mansour, Abdu'llahi Ahmed, and Aurahil Egsabaihir. A cable announcing formation of the Assembly was sent to Shoghi Effendi, who replied "rejoiced, praying, love, gratitude". Mr Sabri Effendi Elias was from Alexandria in Egypt. He printed one thousand pamphlets in Amharic, and translated Baha'u'llah and the New Era. The same work was later printed in Abyssinian. A circular letter of 21 August 1935 informed Local Spiritual Assembly that spiritual meetings had been suspended due to the "present condition of Ethiopia". Elias was forced to leave Ethiopia by socio-political events in 1935, but he and Mrs Elias returned to Addis Ababa in January 1944. A gathering was held in Addis Ababa in July 1950 to commemorate the centenary anniversary of the martyrdom of the Bab. Mr Gila Bahta was secretary of Addis Ababa Local Spiritual Assembly in 1952. Other members of the Local Spiritual Assembly were Mrs Gila, Dr V. Kies, Mr Sabri Elias, Mrs Sabri, Mr Alfred Shafi, Mr Birch, Sayed Mansour, and David A. Talbot. The Baha'i Community of Abyssinia, now called Ethiopia, was nominated as a consolidation Territory in Africa under the responsibility of the National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt and Sudan National Spiritual Assembly during the Crusade. It subsequently became part of the Regional Spiritual Assembly of North-East Africa, formed in 1956. Holy Days and Baha'i Marriage certificates were recognized in Addis Ababa, and the Local Spiritual Assembly obtained legal incorporation in 1955-56. By 1963 there was one Local Spiritual Assembly in the country, in Addis Ababa, and seven groups (in Adua, Alamaya, Debrezeit, Dessie, Dire-Dawa, Gondar & Jimma). There were, in addition, twelve members in other areas (Adigrat, Ambo, Awassa, Bedele, Endeselasie, Gorsum, Harar, Hosana, Kalafo, Nazareth, Wollisso, Wonji) (Hassall 2000).

In line with the Baha'i National Spiritual Assembly of Ethiopia, at present, in Addis Ababa, Awassa, Nazareth, Mekele, Zway, and Shashemenie and in few areas of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region growing Baha'i communities are exist.

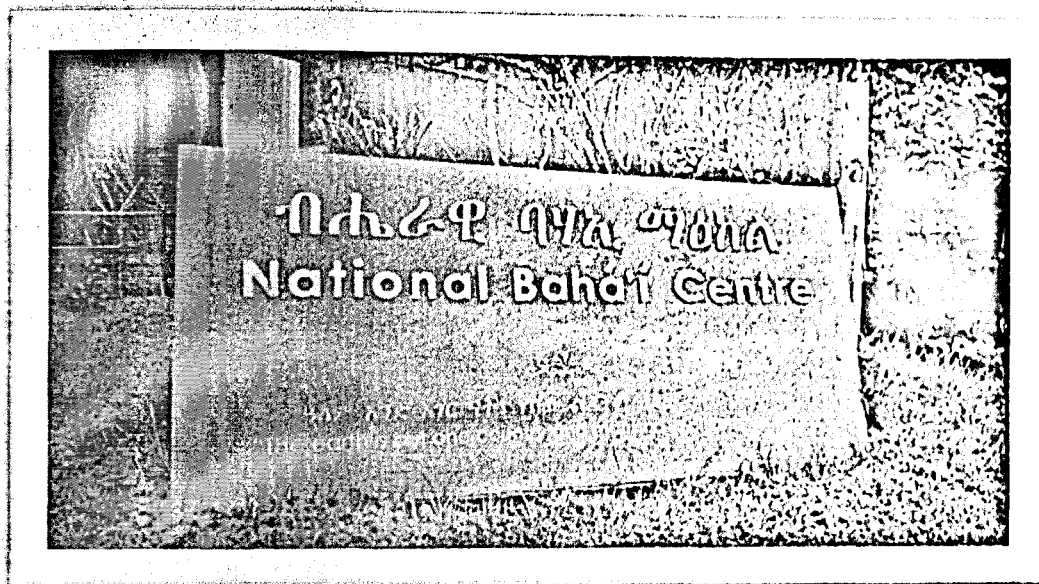


Figure 9 (Photographed by the researcher, March 2016).

CHAPTER THREE

FAMILY LIFE

Different congregations of kin have been classified as specific types of family in anthropological writings (Barnard and Spencer 2002: 340). The conjugal family refers to a heterosexual pair and their offspring; the extended family refers to at least two related conjugal families; the stem family includes a couple, their unmarried children and one married child with spouse and offspring, while other labels have also been devised to refer to specific types of situation (Barnard and Spencer 2002: 340).

This chapter discusses how Baha'i teachings change into practical action in Baha'is conjugal family milieu. The discussion presents the voices of the informants with pseudonyms, the researcher observation as well as the corresponding Baha'i writings. Nevertheless, since addressing to a broad topic (i.e. family life) in a single chapter is very difficult, the chapter traces only limited topics as showcases to Baha'is' family life.

3.1 MARRIAGES AS PILLAR OF FAMILY LIFE

The institution of marriage, which has been defined as the union of man and woman such that the children born from the woman are recognized as legitimate by the parents has constituted a centre for raising family (Barnard and Spencer 2002: 528). Just to provide a general insight marriage as a base to raise family and commencing of a family life (because the study is not intended to carry out ethnography about the marriage practices), next, few facts about Baha'i marriage and its overall procedures are discussed.

In Baha'i, the believers view marriage as the setting for the spiritual development of individuals and society, and it assures the advancement and perpetuation of the human race. According to a key informant Ato Samuel, Baha'i family life is originates from Baha'i marriages. He further detailed the following:

Baha'u'llah in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, exhorts: *Enter into wedlock, O people, that ye may bring forth one who will make mention of Me amid My servants. This is My bidding unto you; hold fast to it as an assistance to yourselves* (Baha'u'llah 1873: 14). But, the requirements of Baha'i marriage include that Baha'is intending to marry are asked to obtain a thorough understanding of the other's character before deciding to marry; and in order to get married both partners must be at least fifteen years of old, yet, the civil laws of the country has to be obeyed. Once the partners have chosen each other, their marriage is dependent upon the consent of all living biological parents whether they are Baha'i or not. Therefore, in all cases of marriage, including remarriage, Baha'is are required to have consent. However, the parents cannot condemn the marriage because of any kind of prejudice such as class, colour, background, even religion, since interreligious marriage is permitted in Baha'i. Parents can comment if they think that the personalities of the couple are not truly fitted to one another and that they should not hasten into it. When the parents grant consent, however, it should be in written form with signature on it, and it has to be present to The Local spiritual Assembly as evidence about consent is agreed upon. Nevertheless, the freedom of the parents in the exercise of this right is unrestricted and unconditioned and they may refuse their consent, and they are responsible for their decision to God alone. On the other hand, Baha'is who cannot marry because of lack of consent of one or more parents could consult with The Local Spiritual Assembly, to see whether it may suggest a way to change the attitude of any of the parents involved. Otherwise, the believers should put their trust in Baha'u'llah, be absolutely faithful to His commands on the observance of chaste life, and rely upon Him to open the way and remove the obstacle. Conversely, there are circumstances in which spouses are not obliged to present the parental consent. For instance, in the case of one or both of the parents have died; in conditions one or both of the parents are certifiably insane and thus unable to give a legal decision; when one or both of the parents are incapable of being traced; in circumstances one or both of the parents have officially renounced responsibility for the child, and in the case of one or both of the parents have seriously abused the child.

Once the parents' approval has been given, as indicated by the informants, then, at a time when the Baha'i marriage ceremony into progress, The Local Spiritual Assembly in whose jurisdiction the marriage is to take place oversees the marriage. In doing so, The Local Spiritual Assembly requires proof of the consents of all parents, and approves two witnesses but they do not need to be Baha'is. Finally, it authorizes the marriage and certificates are signed.

In connection with Baha'i marriage ceremony again most of the informants told that there is no prescribed marriage ceremony and the Baha'i marriage ceremony is simple, and not necessitates festivities except the recitation of a verse by the two parties, which take places in front of The Local Spiritual Assembly: "We will all, verily, abide by the will of God", and everything else is left to the couple's choice and can reflect the culture of the participants. Thus, if the married couples are interested to organize refreshments, lunch and/or dinner parties, there is no condemnation. Moreover, when one of the marriage partner is Non-Baha'i, together with the previously said Baha'i marriage ceremony, normally marriage ceremonies are performed in both religions and the couples are free if they wish to organize festivities like wedding parties; and they can follow the traditional marriage procedures such as if the bridegroom is a Baha'i and his marriage partner is Non-Baha'i, the groom can send elders to the bride parents so as to negotiate and ask permission to marry their daughter, and after having consent, both the bridegroom and the bride families may talk about fixing of the wedding date, they can discuss additional wedding plans and share responsibilities among themselves. In such a kind of interreligious marriage, on the wedding day, the Baha'i wedding ceremony together with additional civil ceremony is carried out on the same calendar day as the Baha'i ceremony on the condition that the two ceremonies are clearly distinct and not commingled into one combined ceremony. Then a lunch, and/or a dinner, and a picnic will continue; and following a wedding day, "Melese", which is a dinner party typically take place in the bride parents' house few days after the day of wedding, and "Qelqel", a dinner party which intends to formally introduce the bride and groom families and relatives, also, it aims to consolidate the relationship between themselves and

customarily it goes on at the groom parents' residence, or the bride and groom house next to a Melese party will proceed if arranged accordingly.

Furthermore, when a Baha'i is marrying a Non-Baha'i and the religious wedding ceremony of the Non-Baha'i partner is to be held in addition to the Baha'i ceremony, as indicated by the informants both ceremonies may, if requested, be held in the place of worship of the other religion provided that equal respect is accorded to both ceremonies and the Baha'i ceremony should not be regarded as a mere formal adjunct to the ceremony of the other religion; and only when a Non-Baha'i partner is concerned that a Baha'i may participate in the religious ceremony of the Non-Baha'i partner. Additionally, if the parents of a Baha'i couple are, for example, Christians, and they wish to pray for the marriage, there is no objection for the couple to attend church with parents, parents' friends and relations, but, such attendance should not involve any form of marriage ceremony or simulated marriage ceremony; since if circumstances called for to pray in other religions worshipping places is not prohibited in Baha'i as 'Abdu'l-Baha exhorts "all must abandon prejudices and must even go to each other's churches and mosques, for, in all of these worshipping places, the Name of God is mentioned" (Esslemont 2006: 76).

Moreover, consistent with a key informant Ato Samuel, as long as both the Baha'i and the other religious ceremony are performed on the same calendar day, it does not matter which ceremony takes place first, or which one is to be legally registered, and there is no condemnation for Baha'is to be present at other religious marriage ceremonies or to take part in festivities usually connected with these events. Yet, he underlined:

Baha'is could not be married by the religious ceremony of another religion. If the couple disobey this Baha'i law, it results in grave spiritual consequences for instance the Baha'i community and institutions do not regard the couple as married, and it bring about losing of rights, which can exclude the person from activities like voting in elections, serving on administrative bodies, attending the Nineteen Day Feast, and giving to the Baha'i Fund. Consequently, the individuals would have to discuss with The Spiritual Assemblies at the local and national level about remedying this spiritually painful situation, and if the Assembly is satisfied that such a couple is repentant, the taken off rights may be restored on condition that they have the Baha'i ceremony. Again for your information, in Baha'i, a couple who are physically incapable of having children may, of course, marry, since the breeding of children is not the only purpose of marriage, Nevertheless, it would be contrary to Baha'i teachings for a couple to decide voluntarily never to have any children. Furthermore, Baha'i discourages, homosexuality, polygamous, sexual relationship outside marriage as well as divorce. Divorce only is contemplated if the couple develops a real dislike for one another, and after the lapse of one full year which is termed the year of patience. It is a procedure that undertake by discontented Baha'i married couples in a way patiently waiting one complete year that intends to reestablish unity between them. However, Baha'is cannot be regarded as divorced unless they have obtained a Baha'i divorce after the completion of a year of patience. But, after they go through a Baha'i divorce accordingly, Baha'is are free to remarriage with another person. Besides, we Baha'is believe sexuality is a normal part of married life and is intended to enhance the relationship. In general, even if marriage by itself is not obligatory in Baha'i, our faith raises it to the status of a divine institution and refers it as the foundation a family, and Baha'i also perceives family is bedrock to human society.

3.2 PARENTS AND CHILDREN

The Universal House of Justice urges:

...The members of a family all have duties and responsibilities towards one another and to the family as a whole, and these duties and responsibilities vary from member to member (Letter from The Universal House of Justice, December 28, 1980).

Hereafter, the study traces parental roles in rearing of children and managing home, parent-children relationship, and few childhood experiences. As a showcase to most

Baha'is home routines, a woman key informant Woizero Hana described:

Being a Baha'i, for instance, I rear our kids to be endowed with the virtues and worthy characters especially at the very beginning. Because, Baha'i teaches for mothers are the first mentors; and truly it is the mothers who determine the future greatness, happiness, courteous ways of learning and judgment, understandings, and the faith of their little ones. Besides, I believe that mother's: attitude, prayers, even what she eats and her physical condition have a great influence on the child when it is still in the womb, and when the child is born, it is she who has been endowed by God with the milk, which is the first food designed for it and it is intended that she should be with the baby to train and nurture it in its earliest days. But, be cautious. It does not mean that Baha'i women are always confined to home, or restricted to

educating children, and these functions are inflexibly fixed and cannot be changed and adjusted to suit particular family situations, nor does not mean that the father does not also educate for, pray for and care for his baby. If say so, how can Baha'i is a religion to these modern time? Or, how can Baha'u'llah is a messenger of this age?

According to Woizero Hana, all responsibilities are up for grabs between her and her husband at home. She also said:

Thanks to the Almighty God! I and my husband earn money for the family. Performing useful work is not only required but considered a form of worship in Baha'i, and one must never live on others like a parasitic plant. Besides, Baha'i women advance and fulfill their mission in all departments of life equal to men. For instance, Baha'i women enjoy equal rights, privileges, education and opportunities to men, even, there are women who are spiritual assembly leaders in the Baha'i faith, since neither a man nor a woman is superior to the other in the eyes of God. Humanity is like a bird with two wings, the one is male, the other is female, and unless both wings are strong, the bird cannot fly. Going to the rearing of children, when our children grow up, I and my husband together devotedly tried to form our kids' virtuous characters. Then, we considered carefully the circumstances under which advice should be given, and conditions under which our intervention would be interpreted as interference, and success in the fulfillment of these essential responsibilities will lessen the danger of our children's being caught up in the destructive behaviour; and in such a way, we provide an advice, aid, and education to our children. This is also concord with the divine teachings. Baha'i writing also called for: *...the father also has the responsibility of educating his children, and this responsibility is so weighty that Baha'u'llah has stated that a father who fails to exercise it forfeits his rights of fatherhood. Similarly, although the primary responsibility for supporting the family financially is placed upon the husband, this does not by any means imply that the place of woman is confined to the home* (Light of Guidance, No771).

Another informant who is a father of two children also uttered that one of the challenges encounter Baha'i couples is to break away from traditional ways of dividing up the regular duties in the family. He added:

We husbands have to train to pitch in with everything: cooking, child care, shopping, and the like. Certainly, this is one of the reasons why 'Abdu'l-Baha said that boys and girls should have the same curriculum and this same principle needs to be practical in the home by providing opportunities for males and females to engage in all family services (see 'Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982:174-175). Nonetheless, it is good for me to train to manage an entire household in our home. Moreover, I and my wife cultivated habits such as praying together, deepening together, dining together, having fun together, planning together, and consulting together. Because, as long as harmony is cultivated in our home, we believe that there will be a possibility to be discovered all the mysteries in our relationship; correspondingly, by increasing our knowledge and awe of one another, apparently, we

increase our knowledge and awe of our Lord. Our home is such a kind of laboratory. Besides, I use to nurture our children characters in accordance with the standards of Baha'u'llah.

Going to childhood experiences, as detailed by a teenage about what he trained from his parents as of early childhood, his parents trained him to respect others by showing courtesy; to enter someone's house only after knocking and/or with their permission; to welcome visitors warmly at the door, converse with others modestly; to answer the phone politely; to use courtesy words such as "please" and "thank you"; not to interrupt unnecessarily: when two people are talking each other, when someone is talking on the phone; when someone is sleeping; when someone is working, or studying. Showing a Baha'i children's book by A.A Furutan entitled, *Baha'i Education for children: Book 1*, a teenage also described that when he was a kid, his mom told him fascinating stories especially at a time to going to sleep. Among the stories his mom narrated to him, he selected one from the book and read.

One of 'Abdu'l- Baha's gardener had a dog. One day, the gardener decided to punish the dog by keeping it in a room for the whole night without any food, because of something the dog had done. The next day, at dawn when the gardener was still asleep, 'Abdu'l- Baha came to his house. The gardener woke up suddenly and bowed down respectively in front of 'Abdu'l- Baha. 'Abdu'l- Baha asked him why he had punished the dog and had not given it food. "Don't you know that it is a sin to hurt the animals and we should never harm them? Hurry up and free the animal." The gardener immediately opened the door of the room where the dog was imprisoned and freed it. The dog came out and lay at 'Abdu'l- Baha's feet. 'Abdu'l- Baha asked the gardener what he had in the house to give it to the dog. The gardener said he had nothing except a few sugar cubes. 'Abdu'l- Baha asked for some and gave them to the dog. The dog was so hungry that it swallowed the sugar cubes and rubbed itself on 'Abdu'l- Baha's feet. 'Abdu'l- Baha told the gardener to prepare some food for the poor dog and to never punish it in that way again (Furutan 2004: 45).

In *Baha'i Education*, 'Abdu'l-Baha also urges when the children are ready for bed "let the mother read holy writings or sing them the odes of the Blessed Beauty, so that from their earliest years they will be educated by these verses of guidance" ('Abdu'l-Baha 1987: 39-40).

On the other hand, to childhood experiences, especially, for those children who brought up in interreligious marriage, another youth informant recounted the most common children experiences as follows:

Since interreligious marriage is permissible in Baha'i, one can encounter interesting childhood experiences especially with those children who grown up in interreligious marriage. Children who grown up in such conditions, usually practice both parents religious activities up to that age of maturity, for instance, they may apply baptism and christening if a Non-Baha'i Christian parent wishes so, they may go to churches, mosques and the like, they may participate in Non-Baha'i religious activities, they may attend to Non-Baha'i religious festivities and others. I, as a fruit of interreligious marriage, also experienced some similar stories.

In relation to occurrences as disclosed above *Light of Guidance* says:

In deciding whether or not to participate in such traditional activities, the Baha'is must guard against two extremes. The one is to disassociate themselves needlessly from harmless cultural observances and thus alienate themselves from their Non-Baha'i families and friends; the other is to continue the practice of abrogated observances of previous dispensations and thus undermine the independence of the Baha'i Faith and create undesirable distinctions between themselves and their fellow-Baha'is.... (Light of Guidance, No 464-465).

Then, especially with regard to baptism, the aforementioned Baha'i writing advices that the Baha'i parent may attend the ceremony with the understanding that he/she will not undertake any commitment or vow which is contrary to the principles of the faith (Light of Guidance, No 464-465).

Concerning to families with Baha'is and Non-Baha'is spouses, another woman informant told that marriage is a birth of new union with a contract between two persons, and it produces a family which implies some reciprocal rights and obligations between the spouses and between parents and their offspring; these also needs wise consideration to uphold unity among the members of a family especially in interreligious marriage. She added:

Particularly in interreligious marriage, the relationship requires to respect spouses' one another religious beliefs and leave children to decide their own faith through independent investigation of truth. Otherwise, chaos occurs in the family. Consequently, criticism one to the other spouses' religious beliefs grows, though Baha'i condemns it. In such a condition,

mainly children who are under the age of fifteen face difficulties about what religion to be followed. This also adds fuel to the prevailing unhealthy relationship between spouses. In Baha'i, children who are below fifteen are under the guidance of their parents and believed that they are not mature enough to declare their faith. Yet, if the conflict continues and unable to resolve using family consultation, the tie between married couples decrease day after day and the marriage endangers with divorce. Therefore, once entered to wedlock, particularly in interreligious marriage, it needs to respect spouses' one another religious beliefs. In Baha'i, there are families which are built in interreligious marriage and still continued happily and there are families in which the spouses are separated with divorce basically because of the aforementioned reason.

Proceeding to children obedience to their parents, to refer to a youth informant words, he told about Baha'i children humble obedience to their parents. He added:

In my case, always, I do the maximum obedience towards my parents. However, it does not include if my parents instruct me to commit a sin. This is what Baha'i thought me.

Similar to most other religions adherents' practices, the researcher also witnessed Baha'i children obedient character not only to their parents, but also towards others at different occasions. Baha'i writing also exhorts children must show forth the utmost obedience towards their parents thereby they attain the good-pleasure of the Almighty God (Light of Guidance, No. 766).

According to another women key informant Woizero Selam, when her child is born, a "naming day" is organized in their home, in which they invited friends and relatives for prayers and a celebration. In conformity with this in *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha*, 'Abdu'l-

Baha dictates:

When thou wishest to name a babe, prepare a meeting therefore; chant the verses and communes, and supplicate and implore the Threshold of Oneness and beg the attainment of guidance for the babe and wish confirmed firmness and constancy; then give the name and enjoy beverage and sweet-meat. This is spiritual baptism ('Abdu'l-Baha 1909: 149-150).

Woizero Selam also uttered:

Up to the age of 5, essentially I nurtured her. Later, she started to attend Baha'i children's classes. Next, at the age of 12, since Baha'i children are expected to pass through Baha'i junior youth programs, she joined it. Until the age of 15, she was under the direction of me and her dad. At the age of fifteen, this is age of maturity for Baha'is, in which children able to declare their religion; then, she declared her faith as Baha'i. Again, for your information, there is no special ceremony when children or any other person declaring the faith as Baha'i, or, joining to the Baha'i community.

A key informant, Ato Belete, also talked about Baha'i view of education and its parallel to enlightening children, and how Baha'i parents change it into practice. He said:

Baha'i sees education as mining for jewels that everyone has talents or jewels within them which need to be found and polished basically through education; and training in arts, sciences, and crafts regarded as essential. Baha'u'llah also revealed: "... *Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone* (see Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, 1978: 51-52). Therefore, you do not find a single Baha'i who doesn't send children to school since it is education that makes new discoveries, and if there were no educator, there would be no such things as comforts, civilization or humanity. However, in cases, for instance if I cannot afford to send both a boy and a girl to school at a time, I send the girl first, because girls grow up to become mothers and mothers are the first teachers of their children; and children are affected by the training of their earliest years.

Nevertheless, the researcher did not encounter cases in which opportunities are given first to girls to learn. This might corresponds to the reason that the absence of incidences which urges applying to send girls first in the fieldwork site.

3.3 PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

A letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer of May 15, 1944 says:

Prayer and meditation are very important factors in deepening the spiritual life of the individual, but with them must go also action and example, as these are the tangible results of the former. Both are essential (Light of Guidance, No. 1483).

According to a key informant, Ato Belete, Baha'is pray daily and the act of prayer is one of the most important Baha'i laws for individual discipline. He further expressed:

Detailing to my case, in order to get closer to God and to Baha'u'llah, to request divine assistance, and renewing my personal communion with the Almighty God, I do pray every day in private, or, with the family at least once a week. Hence, in addition to the prayer books, sometimes I also use my own words in private prayers; and when I am in prayer, I try to depart from all the outward things and turn to God, and then I hear the voice of God in my heart since the higher spiritual truths can be communicated only by means of this spiritual language. Prayer is the language of the spirit which speaks to God with a humble request for the attributes of God, a statement of praise, and asks for such as guidance, protection and the like. As the body needs food every day for it to grow, the soul needs spiritual food every day so, and this spiritual food is prayer. Look, if a person loves someone, he or she will want to be with that person and talk to them as much as possible; and the more you get to know a person, the more you love them, and it is the same if someone loves God and he or she will want to talk to God through prayer as much as possible.

In general, prayer in the Baha'i Faith consists of two distinct types: obligatory and devotional (general) prayer. Apparently, both types of prayer are composed of reverent words, and can be recited or sung.

With regard to obligatory prayers, the informants described that there are three obligatory prayers in Baha'i: the short, the medium and the long. They also explained, usually obligatory prayers are performed from morning till noon, from noon to sun set and, and from sunset till two hours thereafter. Besides, they told that they are applied movements and gestures to the medium and long prayers, since; they are symbolic and are used to help concentration while prayer is in progress. Furthermore, the obligatory prayer is preceded by an ablution, the cleaning of the hands and face and it is recited facing to the Qiblih, the point of adoration that makes Baha'u'llah's shrine the Qiblih. Nevertheless, when water is unavailable or unsafe for washing, believers are recited "In the Name of God, the Most Pure, the Most Pure" five times in place of ablutions; and in place of every obligatory prayer that a Baha'i missed, he/she kneels and bow forehead to the ground, say "Glorified be God, the Lord of Might and Majesty, of Grace and

Bounty”, or only “Glorified be God”; then, after the requisite number of prostrations, sits cross-legged and repeat eighteen times “Glorified be God, the Lord of the kingdoms of earth and heaven.” However, nobody else has the right to check up on whether someone remembering to do any of these things, and they are strictly between the believer and God.

Here is the holy writing about obligatory prayers:

“With regard to the three daily obligatory prayers:... The Baha’i worshipper is free to choose any of these three prayers. The short prayer consists of one verse to be recited once a day at noon. The medium prayer should be recited three times a day: in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. It is accompanied by certain physical gestures such as kneeling, raising the hands, etc. The long prayer which is also accompanied by regulations should be recited once every twenty-four hours. The adoption of one of these three prayers is a spiritual obligation imposed upon all the believers (Light of Guidance, No. 1525).

Those who are ill, in danger, and women in menstrual courses are exempted from obligatory prayer; and Baha’i prayers do not have to be said in a special building as Baha’u’llah dictates:

“Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God has been made, and His praise glorified” (A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Baha’u’llah, the Bab, and ‘Abdu’l-Baha 2006:1).

Again, coming to believers’ experience, according to the informants, they prefer to perform the obligatory prayer when they are alone with free of distractions such as early in the morning or late at night, and most of the informants usually recite the short prayer among the three daily obligatory prayers since its briefness; yet, the long and medium obligatory prayers are also performed.

Here is the short obligatory prayer which is said by a youth informant in English and recorded by the researcher (see also A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Baha'u'llah, the Bab, and 'Abdu'l-Baha 2006:7):

I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee. I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth. There is none other God but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

Incidentally, most of the time, the researcher observed that the majority of the informants try to use English language at least in the middle of our conversation, and they apply it frequently while talking to another Baha'i believer. In the mean time, the researcher witnessed that the Baha'i literatures largely are still in English and Persian languages than in Amharic.

On the other hand, a key informant Sara also told her experience about repeating of the phrase "Alláh-u-Abhá", which is a form of the Greatest Name, 95 times per day using an application uploaded to her mobile phone, while facing to the Qiblih and after performing ablutions. Yet, as said by the informant, when it said immediately after the obligatory prayer, repetition of ablutions is avoided. Once more, she recounted that it is usual to repeat the phrase Alláh-u-Abhá among Baha'is by using prayer beads and counting by their fingers.

As indicated before, in addition to the daily obligatory prayer, nevertheless, group reading from prayer books is another common feature of Baha'i gatherings including home devotionals; and the researcher observed such kind of prayers at different Baha'i faith followers' homes. These collective prayers encompass different topics one for each meeting such as unity, justice, peace and others; and when saying a general prayer, one

does not face to the Qiblah. Once, in such a prayer session, the researcher also invited to participate in to recite his own religion holy verses.

When a Baha'i died, however, as described by the informants, congregational prayer is conducted in which a believer reads prayer for the dead aloud and all others present stand.

Another woman informant discussed her own experiences about family prayer, reciting the verses of God and meditates upon it, and daily vigilances of action. As she said:

Once a week in the evenings we entertain a family meeting for prayers, to meditate and reflect up on sacred writings. Family prayer is the source of family unity which is essential for the smooth functioning of a home. In his Tablets, 'Abdu'l- Baha dictates the following and his aspiration also the focus to our family: *Verily, I pray God to make thy home a center for the radiation of light and the glowing of His love in the hearts of His people. Know that in every home where God is praised and prayed to, and His Kingdom proclaimed, that home is a garden of God and a paradise of His happiness* ('Abdu'l- Baha 1909:69). On the other hand, I recite the verses of God those revealed by Baha'u'llah each morning and evening either silently or out loud, and then I will meditate upon them to understand their sacred meanings. While I meditate, I believe that I am speaking to God; and in that state of mind, I put certain questions to God and He will answer to those my questions. Doing so, I will able to comprehend all the secrets behind my request. Like prayer, reciting the verses of God and meditation are also foods to soul. In addition, as a separate practice, I do what Baha'is called deepening in the faith, in which I continually read, meditate on, and study the writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah, Abdul-Baha, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice. Moreover, since Baha'u'llah urges everyone to reflect everyday on their spiritual life, I weigh my actions every day using a spiritual balance such as love, equity, and justice; and I prepare for a reckoning. Though it seems difficult to practice every day, with the help God I able to manage it at least for few minutes daily in the mornings. Here is Baha'u'llah's utterance for daily vigilances of action which is taken from *The Hidden Words: O SON OF BEING! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds* (Baha'u'llah 1963: 11).

Nevertheless, applying for the above mentioned religious practices; experiences are varied one to the other believers. For instance, some explicated that they recite the verses of God regularly but not to the daily vigilance of actions, and some other explained that they do daily vigilance of actions every day but not recite the verses of God daily; and all are agreed that applying persistently for one religious activity and

irregularly perform to the other one shows the believer his/her own weaknesses to act upon religious duties and hope to correct it.

3.4 HOLY DAYS OBSERVANCES

Holy Days is a matter for conscientious obedience by every individual believer. In the case of businesses and other undertakings entirely under Baha'i control they must also close down during the Baha'i Holy Days, even though Non-Baha'is may be members of their staffs (Light of Guidance, No. 1021).

Basically, Baha'is celebrate eleven holydays throughout the year: Baha'is' new year/ Naw Rúz is observed on March 21; Ridván holy days which are principally commemorate Baha'u'llah's revelation (Ridván First Day is celebrated on April 21 at 3 p.m.; Ridván Ninth Day on April 29, and Ridván Twelfth Day on May 2); Bab's Declaration is commemorated on May 23 two hours after sunset; The Passing of Baha'u'llah is observed on May 29 at 3 a.m.; Martyrdom of the Bab is remembered on July 9 at noon; Birth of the Bab is celebrated on October 20; Birth of Baha'u'llah is observed on November 12; Day of the Covenant is celebrated on November 26; and Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Baha is observed on November 28 at 1 a.m.

According to most of the informants, usually Naw-Rúz, Ridván, the anniversaries of the Birth of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, and of the Bab's declaration which is also the birthday of 'Abdu'l-Baha are celebrated by festal gatherings at which music, the chanting of verses and tablets and short addresses suitable to the occasion; and the anniversaries of the martyrdom of the Bab and the departure of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha are celebrated with appropriate meetings and discourses, the chanting of prayers and Tablets. Besides, except for the Day of the Covenant and Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i family members do not go to work, even, with consultation to the school

administration, children also do not go to schools for the other holy days. Moreover, consistent with the informants, as much as possible, known Ethiopian dishes which are basically cooked from a sheep, a goat, and/or an ox meat together with chicken are prepared for Baha'i holy days especially for Naw Rúz. Even, the usual Ethiopian coffee ceremony coupled with fruits and soft drinks is unavoidable.

On the other hand, during Ridván holy days, as illustrated below, the researcher observed that The National Spiritual Assembly members election and consultation on Ridván message sent by The Universal House of Justice which are taken place at the National Baha'i Center in Addis Ababa. On that time, prayers are said, and then election with secret ballot box is carried out, consultation followed. Besides, the attendants served variety of dishes at lunch and snacks in tea breaks, which also organized in the Centre.

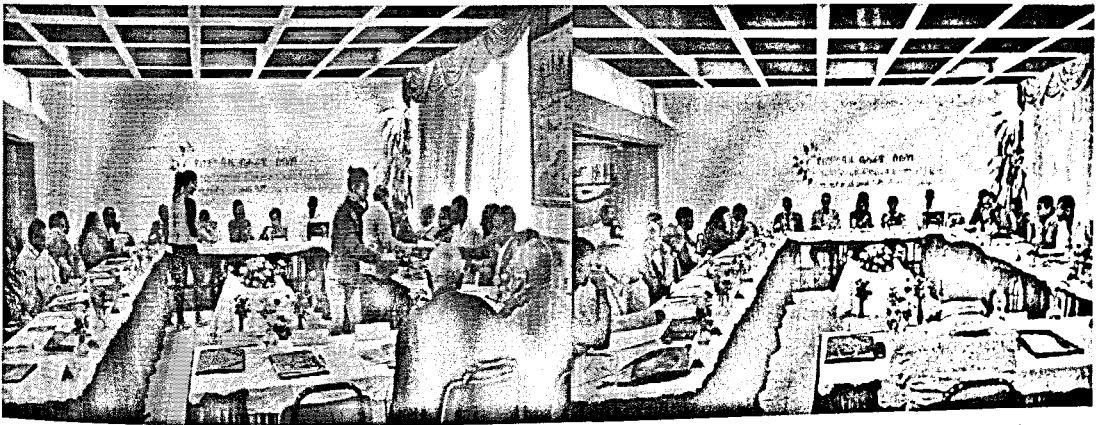


Figure 10 illustrates while Baha'is electing new National Spiritual Assembly members (left), and discussion is in progress on Ridván message sent by The Universal House of Justice (right). (Photographed by the researcher, April 2016)

Apart from the 11 holy days, however, between February 26 to March 1 which is termed as Ayyám-i-Há, Baha'i family members spend their time devoted to hospitality to friends, the giving of presents, and ministering to the poor and sick. Here is a verse from one of the Ayyám-i-Há song (see also *Compilation of Baha'i Songs* 2005: 9).

Ayyám-i-Há is gift of God

A time for young and old

A time for joy, a time for fun

A time for each and everyone.

Ring out, sing out

The glad, glad cheer

Join in, be happy

Ayyám-i-Há is here.

Immediately after Ayyám-i-Há, the month of the fast continues, and every year from March 2-20, Baha'i fast is observed by Baha'i families. As said by the informants, they observe it not only abstaining from food and drink to sunrise to sunset (i.e. from about 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.), but also abstaining from sexual intercourse, and they use it as means to devotedly contemplate their spiritual weakness and to correct it. However, the fast is not applied by children below fifteen, travelers who engage in long journeys, believers who are too old or sick, women who have babies at the breast and women who are in menstrual courses. As the researcher observed, Baha'is break the fast by saying the prayer for fasting, eating liquid foods first and followed by potluck dinner.

Moreover, Baha'is' families come together at the neighborhoods centre to celebrate the "Nineteen Day Feast" which occurs on the first day of every Baha'i month. The researcher has got two opportunities to observe the Nineteen Day Feasts. The Feast comprises three parts: spiritual, administrative and social. Hence, the feast begins with spiritual part consists of prayers, in which the community members including children read prayers from Baha'i prayer books, also hymns incorporated in this portion. Usually the host of the feasts selects prayer and readings from the writings to be read. In the administrative part, Baha'is share news, discuss about the Baha'i fund, make plans, and if any names of new believers will be read. Then, the consultation follows. Finally, the social part of the feast begins. In this portion, the researcher saw that everybody talks together, joking one another, and serves the foods collectively.

The researcher also noted that when times in which the first day of Baha'i month falls on week days, in consultation with the Local Spiritual Assembly, the community able to postpone the feast observance date to Saturday or Sunday due to suitability that everybody to attend the feast.

Next, figure 11 demonstrates a table which is shown by a key informant to the researcher that uses to refer to the Nineteen Day Feast observance dates with the Amharic keys.

Nineteen Day Feast FOR THE YEAR 1970-71			
19th Day Feast	Date	1970-71	1971-72
Baha (Splendour)	20, March	3:27-7:7	00:20.7- 11
Jaha (Gory)	8, April	0:7	00:20.7- 30
Jaha (Beauty)	27, April	0:07	07:50.7- 19
Azamat (Adventure)	16, May	7:47-7:7	7:30.7- 8
Nur (Light)	4, June	4:07	7:30.7- 27
Rahmat (Mercy)	23, June	7:02.7	0:7- 16
Kalimat (words)	12, July	4:7	0:7- 5
Kamal (Perfection)	31, July	6:07-7:7	0:7- 24
Asma (Names)	19, August	0:7	7:00.7- 13
Izzat (Might)	7, September	2:8	7:7- 2
Dashayyat (Will)	26, September	6:7	00:00.7- 10
Ilm (Knowledge)	15, October	0:7-7	7:7-7- 5
Qudrat (Power)	November	7:00.7	7:7-7- 24
Qud (Speech)	22, November	0:7-7	0:7- 13
Mas'ul (Questions)	11, December	7:7-7-7	7:00.7- 2
Sharaf (Honour)	30, December	7:00.7	7:00.7- 22
Sulthan (Sovereignty)	18, January	7:00.7	7:7- 10
Mulk (Dominion)	6, February	7:00.7	7:7- 20
Ala (Lolliness)	1, March	7:00.7-7:7	7:7-7- 22

Figure 11. A table which is shown by a key informant to the researcher that uses to refer to the Nineteen Day Feast observance dates (Photographed by the researcher, May 2016).

3.5 FAMILY CONSULTATION

No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation" (Light of Guidance, No. 577).

A key informant, Ato Belete explained that like in other walks of life, family consultation is a remedy for domestic conflict. He also disclosed that in his family, they exercise consultation after prayers together in the morning, during the dinner hour and at times when the need arises with open discussion, moderation and balance. In parallel with the Baha'i teachings, he further expressed:

Consultation is the lamp of guidance which leads the way to a better understanding. Of course, not every issue is subject to family consultation. Because, some decisions, such as major budgetary considerations, are the exclusive prerogative of the parents. Apparently, the success of a family consultation will be influenced by the prayerful attitude with which it is approached, the mutual respect among the husband, wife, and children, their earnest desire to devise a solution which will preserve unity and harmony among the family, and their willingness to make compromises and adjustments within the context of equality. Again, two spiritual conditions are prerequisite for consultation: absolute love and harmony amongst members, and turning to God to ask for aid. Later when deciding, moderation is called for, and majority opinion prevails; and if this does not happen, further discussion entails. Similarly, key to the entire process of consultation is the spiritual capacity of detachment, in which once an idea is expressed, it belongs to the group; thus, once a decision is reached, it is no longer simply a decision of the majority but of the whole group, and criticism is discouraged as well as everyone is obliged to help execute the collective decision.

Apart from family consultation, the researcher had chances to observe Baha'is applying for consultations especially during Ridván Holyday discussing on the message sent by The Universal House of Justice, in Nineteen Day Feasts and at devotional meetings.

However, few informants articulated that they are still imperfect to apply Baha'i consultation as the teachings dictate necessarily possessing to the spiritual capacity of detachment, moderation and balance.

3.6 MODERATION

Whatsoever passeth beyond the limits of moderation will cease to exert a beneficial influence (Baha'u'llah 1952: 216).

According to a youth informant, to experiment the fruits of moderation, does not need to be a Baha'i. She added:

Conspicuously, in all departments of life, being moderate is helpful. For instance, we Baha'is are not prohibited to listen to music, singing, and dancing, and I do so. But, I do check such listening may cause to transgress the bounds of decency and dignity, and not against the standard of modesty and chastity. In fact, in this time of modernity, in night clubs, where so much smoking and drinking and promiscuity goes on, it is difficult to preserve the standard of moderation, and I do not advice people to go such kinds of undeserving places, and I detach myself too. On the other hand, decent dances are not harmful, and I take pleasure in such enjoyments. Likewise, no harm to learn dance in school and no harm in taking part in dramas or in cinema acting, and I do not retreat back to engage in these activities; but the destructive thing is something the unfortunate corruption which may associate those engagements such as seducing someone through these involvements and the like. In such cases, I isolate myself from those unworthy performances.

The researcher also observed that most of the informants attempt to apply Baha'i standard of moderation into their actual lives. Especially in their utterances, almost in all conversation we have had, they tried to be careful for what they are speaking to, and always advise the researcher to compare and contrast what they said with Baha'i scriptures. Similarly, the researcher witnessed humble approach almost in all of the informants.

On the other hand, not few in number who explicated that as human being that engulfed with inherent feelings, sometimes they also experience realities which depart from the expected moderation be it in conduct, decisions, utterances, dressing styles and eating and drinking.

3.7 HOSPITALITY

Reminding the Old Testament, one informant told that:

The Sodom and Gomorrah case follows a typical theme to hospitality, in which the God send emissaries in the guise of strangers to investigate violence and corruption on earth. The strangers are ill treated by the population, except for an old couple who offer them hospitality and are rewarded while the rest of the population is destroyed. Lots also entertain the two Angeles and protect them from the cities' inhabitants, who try to abuse them. This leads to the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, but Lot and his family are rescued, except for Lot's wife who looks back and becomes a pillar of salt. Again, Abraham's hospitality is rewarded by the promise of Isaac's birth. We Baha'is also uphold the significance of hospitality. Especially, during the intercalary days which are between the eighteenth and nineteenth Baha'i months, we devote to hospitality to friends, the giving of presents, ministering to the poor and sick, and various forms of community involvement and social action.

Since the inception of this study, the researcher also received Baha'is' utmost hospitality with the expression of the universality of Baha'i teachings and human brotherhood. For instance, corresponding to a welcoming approach, they earnestly facilitated good research environment by participating the research discussions willingly, involving in lengthy interview sessions patiently, facilitating to observe different spiritual meetings and hosted the researcher courteously at home. Besides, Baha'is explained that the love they show others, the hospitality and understanding, and the willingness to help others are the very best advertisements of the Baha'i faith, because, others will want to hear about the Baha'i faith when they see these things in Baha'is lives and people will become interested in studying the religion. In particular, devotional gatherings and holyday celebrations prove Baha'is' hospitality.

3.8 DIETARY PREFERENCES

"In all circumstances they should conduct themselves with moderation; if the meal be only one course this is more pleasing in the sight of God; however, according to their means, they should seek to have this single dish be of good quality" (Baha'u'llah, cited in *Light of Guidance*, No. 1004).

Baha'u'llah advices: before taking a solid food, better to start with a liquid food; if various dishes are put on the table do not mix and be content with one of them; in the morning, a little food is preferable than heavy one; do not eat except in hungry; do not take food until the already taken one is digested completely; do not swallow until the already swallowed one is thoroughly masticated and a food which is difficult to masticate is forbidden; better to take fruits and grains than animal food, and fruits and grains would be the foods of the future; and exercise is good when the stomach is empty and it strengthens the muscles (see Star of the West 13, No 9, December 1922: 252).

On the other hand, as indicated by most of the informants, though they try to follow the aforementioned dietary advices, they are not persistent enough to apply for all the advices accordingly. For instance, a key informant Woizero Hana uttered:

Usually, I consume as my appetite wish. But, during the fast season, I break the fast regularly by saying of one of the prayer for fasting and then I eat liquid foods first, followed by other foods which are available in the house. In Baha'i holy days, as much as possible, we prepare known Ethiopian dishes which are basically cooked from a sheep, a goat, and/or an ox meat together with chicken in our home.

Similarly, most of the informants underlined that the uneasiness to apply for especially the advice of abstaining to mix various dishes at a time since the desire to take variety, and the socialization they brought up. The researcher also observed such a kind of leanings in the social portions of Nineteen Day Feasts and devotional meetings, and I myself was served with a variety of dishes in these occasions in Baha'is homes.

3.9 ALCHOLS AND DRUGS

Regarding the use of liquor: According to the text of the Book of Aqdas, both light and strong drinks are prohibited ('Abdu'l-Baha, cited in *Light of guidance*, No.1171).

Baha'is are refrain to alcohols. Interestingly, a key informant Kidus told his own experience as follows:

I sometimes organize programs for enjoyment at home, and I usually go to recreational sites with my friends including friends of other religious adherents. But, I always avoid drinking alcohols. Even, when such a kind of program is sponsored by myself, I abstain to pay for the alcohols which is consumed by my friends.

Moreover, most of the informants told the researcher about some practices which are operational in their ordinary lives such as drugs, narcotics or other intoxicants of any kind is not used except drugs as remedies in case of illness; they treat disease first of all through the diet, and medical treatment is applied when it is necessary; they do not use compound medicines if a single tablet is needed and they avoid medicine when the health is good; they try to refrain to smoke tobacco; and for medical and health requirements they apply blood transfusions and organ transplants.

3.10 CLEANLINESS

Baha'i writings place great emphasis on the importance of physical cleanliness and relate it closely to spiritual purity.

Although bodily cleanliness is a physical thing, it hath nevertheless, a powerful influence on the life of the spirit ('Abdu'l-Baha 1978:146-147).

In relation to Baha'i emphasis to cleanliness, a youth informant detailed the following:

In the *Synopsis and Codification of the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* several specific exhortations are outlined such as to wash one's feet; to perfume one's self; to bathe in clean water; to cut one's nails; to wash soiled things in clean water; to be stainless in one's dress; and to renew the furnishings of one's house. Coming to my customary practices, regularly I apply: showering once a day and I do not bathe in water that has already been used, brushing teeth, cutting finger and toe nails, cleaning ears, using deodorant, shining shoes, cleaning clothes and house and others. In doing so, I attempt to exemplify myself as manifestation of paradise on earth.

The researcher also did not trace a remarkable case which is in contrary with another Baha'is.

3.11 BURIAL SYSTEM

When a member of Baha'i family passed away, according to a key informant Ato Mulatu:

What Baha'is actually do is they placed the dead body in a grave within twenty-four hours after death and within an hour's journey from the place of death. These are intended to prevent from attaching excessive significance to the physical remains of the individual after the spirit has departed. For the same reason, the coffin of the departed remains closed during the funeral. Baha'is do not cremate the deceased but apply the washing and wrapping of the body prior to burial. The funeral consists earnest recitations of Baha'i prayers including an obligatory prayer for the dead, which represents the only occasion that Baha'is engage in a specifically prescribed congregational prayer. Baha'i cemetery is located next to the Saint Josef church compound in Addis Ababa.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMMUNITY BUILDING CORE ACTIVITIES

...the devotional character of the community; classes that nurture the tender hearts and minds of children; groups that channel the surging energies of junior youth; circles of study, open to all...it is to be expected, however, that the multiplication of these core activities would soon be sustained by human resources indigenous to the neighborhood or village...(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 2010).

As directed by the Universal House of Justice, Baha'is are engaged in a process of community building that primarily consists of four core activities: the education of children (children's classes); the spiritual empowerment of junior youth (junior youth spiritual empowerment programs); the strengthening of the devotional character of communities through prayer gatherings and collective worship (devotional meetings); and engagement in the institute process which serves both to deepen the understanding of the Baha'i teachings and to develop skills to carry out various acts of service (study circles).

At a Belete who takes part in the community building core activities devotedly, also accounted:

These four activities are described as core for a reason to emphasize their centrality to the community development process taking place in Baha'i, and because they make up the core of Baha'i community ordinary life. Therefore, we are involved in such processes to raise capacity within the community and to take charge of our own spiritual, social and intellectual development. In addition, although these community building core activities are inspired by Baha'is and signify characteristic of a Baha'is' community life, they are open to all religious backgrounds.

According to Ato Tamiru, who is actively involved in the community building core activities:

We Bahá'is are devoted to building up spiritual community in which principles such as the unity of humankind, the unity of religion, the equality of the sexes and the like become reality. We also are exerting much effort to apply these teachings in our own lives, and use community building core activities as tools to promote a new way of thinking, studying, acting, and to live a life of service to others. Correspondingly, through these plans and systematization of best practices, we hoping to replace the boom and bust cycles of community growth; and with this focus, we incorporate more active service, socio-economic development efforts, and became more focused on examining the needs of wider Non-Bahá'i communities, to see how our faith could aid them.



Figure 12 demonstrates a reflection meeting about the core activities by believers from different neighborhoods. (Courtesy to a youth key informant).

Next, the chapter presents the four community building core activities separately.

4.1 STUDY CIRCLES

As used by Baha'is, study circles are where participants gather to study spiritual subjects, and those aged fifteen and older of study circles trainees expected to employ what acquired to their individual and collective lives.

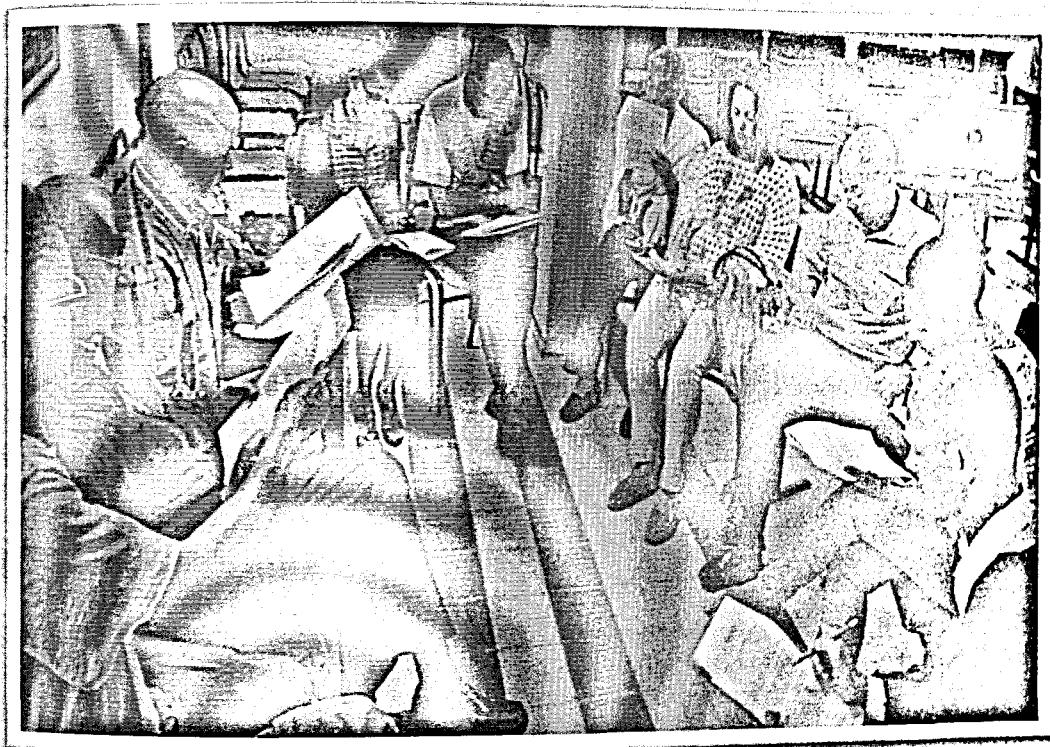


Figure 13. Believers from different neighborhoods are studying a Baha'i writing at the National Baha'i Center (Courtesy to a youth key informant).

As detailed by the believers, study circles have three components: group study, socializing, and community service; and service activities emerging from study circles include hosting devotional gatherings, conducting classes for the spiritual education and empowerment of children and junior youth, and engaging in social action for the benefit of the wider community. Each study circle involves a tutor or facilitator who serves to maintain the focus and pace, with generally 3-10 participants. Tutors apply the arts, music, games, and crafts. The frequency and duration of each study circle are set by the group; and the format is not rigid, so each gathering may be different from the other, and after studying one course, parts of the members of a study circle may stay together to go on to the next course, or some may drop out until they are ready and able to follow a subsequent course. Consequently, as friends move on to higher level courses, and other friends join at various activities, the membership of a study circle can gradually change. Study circles meet in homes and other informal settings, and the most commonly used material for study circles is the Ruhi curriculum which is developed by Baha'i educational institution based in Colombia.

Ato Belete, who passed through different Ruhi courses also said:

The Ruhi institute's main sequence of courses which also called books provides us insights to spiritual matters. The materials focus on the Baha'i writings by assisting participants to understand the texts on three different levels: to comprehend the meanings of the words, sentences and context of various quotes; application of the texts to various real world situations; and the implications of the various quotations on other aspects of Baha'i belief. There are currently seven books in the institute's main sequence of courses, with more courses in development. Each book is broken up into three units and each with many sections. Again, each book has one or more practices that can be done outside of the training.

All the workbooks use an interactive, question and answer format and Ruhi courses are provided sequentially. For instance, someone could not take Ruhi Book 3 until he or she took Book 1-2.

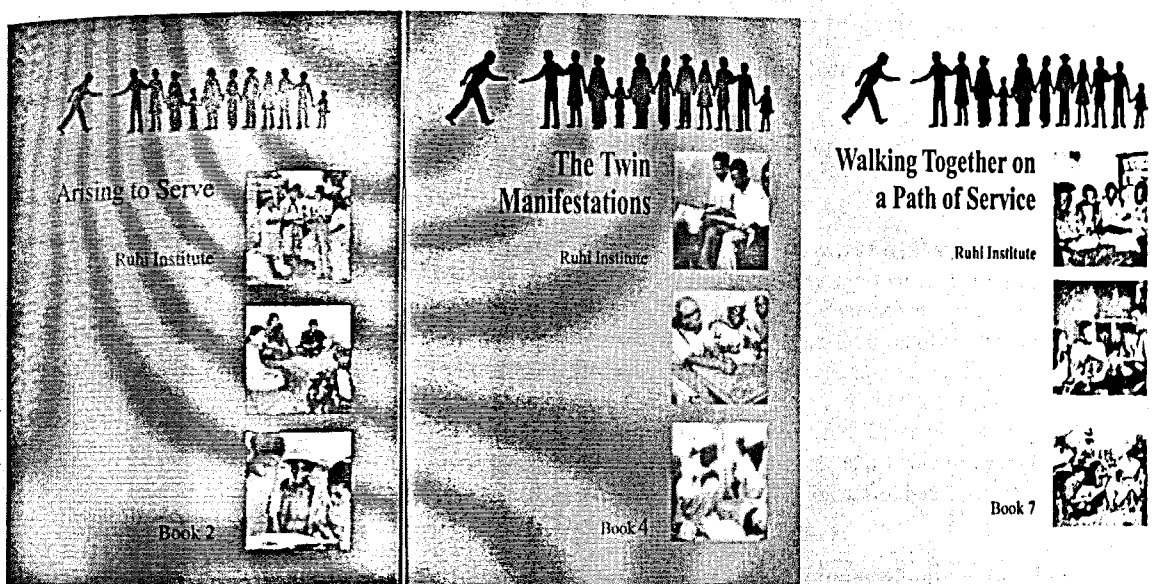


Figure 14 illustrates some of the Ruhi Books.

Just to provide a general insight about Ruhi materials, Ruhi Books 1-7 basic themes are summarized as follows. Book 1 is *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*. It focuses on understanding the Baha'i writings, prayer, and life and death. Book 2 is *Arising to Serve*. It emphasizes on the joy of teaching, deepening themes, and introducing Baha'i beliefs. Book 3 is *Teaching Children's Classes*. It trains about Baha'i children's class, how to conduct the class and some principles of Baha'i education. Book 4 is *The Twin Manifestations*. The Book reviews the importance of the Baha'i revelation, and retells the lives of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. Book 5 is *Releasing the Powers of Junior Youth*. It

trains individuals to facilitate junior youth spiritual empowerment groups. Book 6 is *Teaching the Cause*. It engages the spiritual nature of teaching, the qualities and attitudes of the teacher, and the act of teaching. Finally, Book 7 is *Walking Together on a Path of Service*. It involves the spiritual path, becoming a tutor of Book 1-6, and promoting the arts at the grassroots.

Proceeding to believers' experiences, Ato Mulatu shared the following about his study of Ruhi Book 1 *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*:

Reflections on the Life of the Spirit has three major units. In the first unit of understanding the Baha'i writings, I have learned how to read and meditate on the deep spiritual content of the Baha'i teachings and how to apply the principles in my daily lives. In the second section, on prayer, I developed the practice of daily prayer that lift up my thoughts than simply asking for my wishes to be granted. In the third unit of life and death, I comprehend that the life's true significance is found in the development of the soul. Moreover, during the course, I entertained a lot of exercises which build my spiritual consciousness. Correspondingly, I elevate the practice of memorizing passages from the Baha'i writings, and I able to upgrade my skill of memorization. The course consisted of weekly sessions almost two hours per day.

Here is an excerpt from Ruhi Book 1, Section 7 of Part 1 (Understanding the Baha'i Writings) which is showed by Ato Mulatu:

Study the quotations below and memorize them:

"... Backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul."

"Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner."

"Speak not evil, that thou mayest not hear it spoken unto thee, and magnify not the faults of others that thine own faults may not appear great ..." "O Son of Being! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me."

1. What effect does backbiting have on the one who backbites? -----
2. What should we be aware of before thinking about other people's sins? -----
3. What will happen to us if we magnify the faults of others? -----
4. What should we remember when we think of other people's faults? -----

Continuing with Ato Sisay, he also told his own experience of Ruhi Book 2-7 as follows.

From Book 2 *Arising to Serve*, I have explored the nature of a path of service and the way in which it is to be applied. Then, I have practiced visiting people in their homes and talking with them about spiritual themes. It helps me to acquire the skills and essential attributes needed to communicate with others. Book 3 *Teaching Children's Classes* equipped me with qualities necessary for spiritual education of children. From Book 4 *The Twin Manifestations, Powers of Junior Youth*, I have learned the life history of Baha'u'llah and the Bab; and from Book 5 *Releasing the Spirit of the Youth*, I have obtained some insights required to implement a program for the spiritual empowerment of junior youth. In Book 6 *Teaching the Cause*, I have investigated various notions about the nature of teaching in light of the Baha'i writings and how it should be approached. Book 7 *Walking Together on a Path of Service* raises my awareness about the spiritual dynamics along a path of service and it increases my understanding in connection with the forces at work. In addition, Book 7 provided me skills to train others who wish to study from Book 1-6. Over all, in studying the Ruhi courses, I trudged my way by discussing the concepts in depth, and challenging my preconceptions with new knowledge.

Reminding his experience of Book 1-7, Ato Belete added the following:

Book 1 develops my capacity to read the Baha'i writings and to meditate on their meaning in order to fulfill the obligation of studying the writings every day. It also helps me to understand the importance of daily prayer and to build up the required attitudes of prayer. In addition, it facilitates me to memorize prayers and understand their meaning. Furthermore, because of studying it, I am able to comprehend that life is not the changes and chances of this world and its true significance is found in the development of the soul; again, true life, the life of the soul, occurs in this world for a brief time and continues eternally in other worlds of God. Book 2 helps me in developing specific acts of service; trains me to maintain earnest connections among the friends in the community through home visits and sharing with them a number of deepening themes; it acquires me the ability to introduce Baha'i ideas into a conversation; and facilitates me to understand the joy of teaching as result of sharing the word of God with others. Book 3 enlarges my capacity to conduct Baha'i children's classes consisting of memorization of prayers and quotations, songs, stories, games and coloring; enhances my skills and abilities in managing the class with a great deal of love and understanding, at the same time, with the discipline necessary to create a proper learning environment. Book 4 trains me the art of storytelling and to share stories from the book with family and community members; assists me to gain spiritual insights into the significance of this day and the promises it holds for humanity; facilitates me to narrate others the story of the Bab's and Baha'u'llah's lives and gain an appreciation of the potency of their dramatic ministry. Book 5 acquires me the necessary skills and attitudes to conduct junior youth spiritual empowerment programs by exploring topics such as definition of a Baha'i youth; age of maturity; channeling capacities into service; kind of preparation needed; balanced approach to life; growth of individual/transformation of society; and, spiritual qualities needed for service. Book 6 imparts me that teaching is an act of particular spiritual significance and to appreciate that effective teaching involves both being and doing; aids me to understand that success in teaching can be developed if we approach it in a posture of learning, engaging in activity, reflecting on what we have said and done, and turning regularly to the writings for insights and guidance; helps me to become familiar with some of the approaches and methods of personal teaching endeavors and collective campaigns. Book 7 facilitates me increased awareness of the spiritual dynamics of advancing along a path of service; helps me to explore some of the concepts and to acquire some of the attitudes and

skills that contribute to the capability of helping a group of friends who go through Books 1-6; and enables me to appreciate the role of artistic endeavors in the activity of a study circle.

Once more, another informant described that passing through study circles, he often experience a new sense of direction in life, better relationships with family and friends, and a productive review of the contribution he can make to the wider community. He told:

For instance, by learning about spiritual reality and individual role in the progress of society through study circle, I have understood my purpose in life and the way to improve my own lives and the lives of those around myself. In the courses, I also learnt to teach values to children, to learn how to competently express my views, and to engage in serving the broader needs of society. In addition, I have learnt to assist and empower others to independently investigate spiritual truths. Clearly, each of us has a journey in which we seek the truth. In this journey, we may look for guidance, pray to God, read scriptures and consider reality. For me, an excellent way to begin search for truth is to attend a study circle; and a study circle is an opportunity to discover what the Baha'i writings mean to us.

Moreover, according to Ato Eyuel, he gained deep understandings to the word of God from study circle. He said:

Study circles provide me a systematic opportunity to deepen in the holy writings, to reflect upon and applying into my daily lives. They also transform my innermost feelings into compassion for others and inspiring me to superior intentions to service to others through actions. Again, study circles firmly build my capacity to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and greater good and lesser good. Moreover, since study circles are not only to Baha'is, they help me to discuss the quotations and the concepts with a group of people who have different beliefs and understandings. In short, through study circles I learn to worship God, respect all people, and create a surrounding I can pass on to my children with pride.

Likewise, as said by another informant:

Baha'i emphasizes transformation both in individual and society. Correspondingly, the process of my development is tied to the centering of my energy on the betterment of the community and serving the needs of the society. As I strive to apply the new insights through a process of action, reflection and consultation, the capacity to offer service to the communities is raised to new levels. Prayer and meditation, fighting my spiritual battles, living according to spiritual laws and teachings all are essential elements in fulfilling my life purpose. But, such efforts reach their fullest transformative effect when they are dedicated to service. Thus, I actively engaged in developing knowledge, skills, and spiritual insights which are vital to the integrated process of personal and social transformation through study circles.

With regard to tutoring study circles, Ato Belete, who experienced as tutor recounted that he reads each section which is going to cover before the discussion session, tries to identify key points which could be the end of section discussions, and prepares open ended questions on these key points to stimulate discussion. He further explained:

Mostly, I try to select and employ appropriate activities related to the quotations or topic being studied, and I try to apply the arts including music, games, and stories; and these assist by increasing the comfort level of the group. I also try to make notes for the points inadequately covered. Then, after the end of section discussion, an activity begins, and when it completed, I try to initiate a discussion on the activity and I check the points not covered previously are properly included in this portion. On the whole, I attempt to help the group to reach a deeper level of understanding of the topic to be studied. By the way, tutors do not hold any special status. They are simply those who are further along in their study of the materials.

On the other hand, as said by most of Baha'i believers, since Baha'i study circle is open to other religious backgrounds and the discussion is based on the Baha'i perspectives, study circle courses are not free from suspicion by some Non-Baha'is as tools to convert Non-Baha'is to the Baha'i faith.

Apart from the compilation format of study circle courses, nonetheless, Baha'is also study the full sacred text from which Ruhi books illustrate their excerpts, and they call it deepening to the faith. Nevertheless, deepening is a separate activity, which is not part of study circles and the four core community building activities as well.

During the fieldwork period, however, one study circle was in CMC neighborhood with four Baha'is, one study circle in Bole-Tana neighborhood with four Baha'is, and no study circle in Imperial neighborhood; and the researcher observed that even if a number of people worked their way through the Ruhi series, some have not yet completed it.

4.2 JUNIOR YOUTH SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS

"You who are at present in your teens, or twenties, must realize that tomorrow, to a large extent, the burden of the Cause will rest on your shoulders; you will have to be the administrators and teachers and scholars of the Faith. Now is the time to prepare yourselves for your future duties (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi cited in *Dawn of a New Day*, Messages to India, 1923-1957, Pp183).

As used by Baha'is the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program is a part of an educational process that seeks to raise capacity within a population to take charge of its own spiritual, social and intellectual development. This program is open to teenagers aged between twelve and fourteen. Defining the terms which associate with the junior youth spiritual empowerment program, a key informant Ato Belete detailed the following.

Junior youth refers to a special group with special needs as they are somewhat between childhood and youth. They experience rapid physical, intellectual, and emotional changes. Directing their new abilities towards selfless service to humanity is therefore needed at this age. Again, spiritual refers to moral concepts and relying on God for guidance and assistance. Empowerment means to assist young people to take ownership of their personal development and to build capacity for meaningful social action in their communities; and empowerment of junior youth results when they understand their own capacities to make a difference.

An adult or older youth trained volunteers, known as animators run the junior youth empowerment program and Ruhi workbook 5 is dedicated to train such animators. As a junior youth empowerment program animator informant pointed out, animators are co-learners, they create an atmosphere of friends who learn, serve, and have fun together, they form groups where the junior youth can express questions and doubts, and they share experiences and knowledge to the teenagers.

Again, as indicated by junior youth spiritual empowerment program animators, the program is divided into three main areas: study, recreation and service. Study consists of reading a series of books that present moral issues through stories and questions for

discussion. Recreation implies group led activities that range from sport and games to arts and crafts. Service consists of a change project where the junior youth identify issues facing their community and work towards solving them.

Proceeding to the training materials, usually, five books are in use for study by the junior youth groups: *Breezes of Confirmation* and *Glimmerings of Hope* for 12 year olds; *Walking the Straight Path* and *Learning about Excellence* for 13 year olds; *Drawing on the Power of the Word* for 14 year olds. Just to provide a general insight about some of those books, *Breezes of Confirmation* tells the story of a young girl who has just turned 13, and her older cousin, who has come to visit for the school holidays. A theme that runs throughout the story is that of making an effort and receiving God's confirmations. In *Walking the Straight Path*, the stories are followed by a series of exercises designed to further comprehension, build vocabulary, and enhance moral reasoning. Short quotations for memorization are also provided. *Drawing on the Power of the Word* seeks to enhance the power of expression and explore the moral implications of speech and action. It consists of a number of readings, each of which is complemented by exercises in language skills.

Next, figure 15 illustrates junior youths are studying a book entitled *Breezes of Confirmation*, and the books entitled *Breezes of Confirmation* and *Walking the Straight Path* in Amharic.

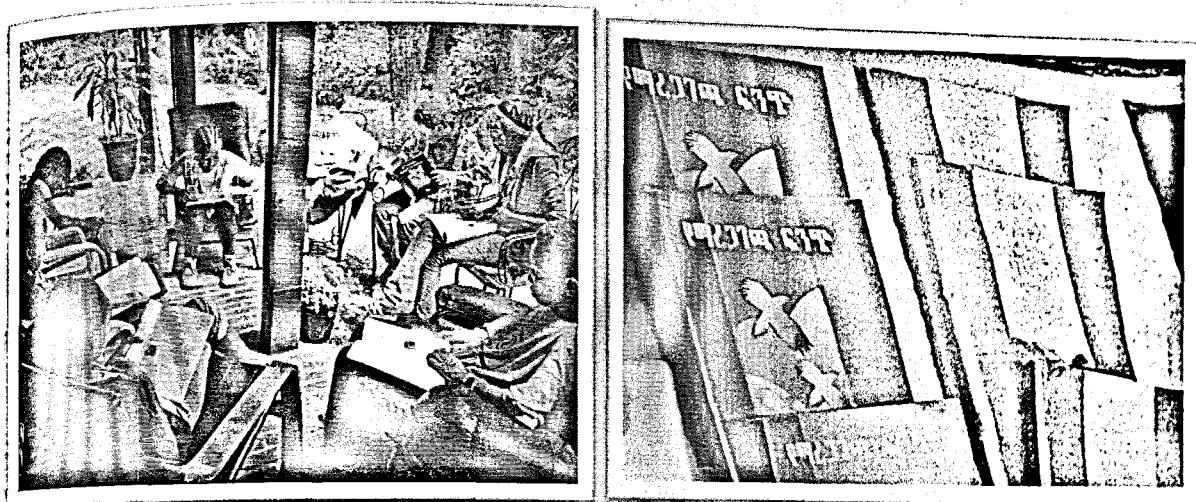


Figure 15 shows junior youths are studying a book entitled *Breezes of Confirmation* (left), and the books entitled *Breezes of Confirmation* and *Walking the Straight Path* in Amharic (right) (Courtesy to a youth key informant).

Proceeding to the junior youth spiritual empowerment program participant experiences, recalling a story from “*Walking the Straight Path*”, a teenage informant explained:

I learned from the book that I have to continually make an effort. Consequently, if I am trying to do something, I do not drop it and go straight home. Instead, I complete the task and only then come back.

Another teenage also refers her experience of before and after taking “*Breezes of Confirmation*” as follows:

Previously, I did not do any work in the home and did not listen to my mother and father’s counsels. I also did not like and did not pay attention in my studies. When I joined this class and how the characters depicted in the book study and how they live with their mother and father, my heart was attracted and I have changed my inappropriate behaviour. At that time I gained the insight that before studying we have to choose a goal for what we want to become after studying.

In addition, the researcher has got an opportunity to interview junior youth group trainees who are Orthodox Christians and Muslims. An orthodox teenage described that:

I have had great experience from the junior youth empowerment program of the service project. It was good, fun, creative, amazing, thoughtful and stimulating. It enables me to enhance the power of expression, to cultivate the concept of service, and to explore and develop my talents. All in all, through the programs I participated in able to learn essential moral and ethical teachings, which are helpful to be responsible and productive citizens in the future.

A Muslim trainee on her part explained:

The junior youth empowerment program of the service project improves our abilities in reading and writing. We also trained: to respect others by showing fairness and kindness; to use courtesy words such as "please" and "thank you"; to respect and maintain the integrity of the family; to celebrate one another's accomplishments; to encourage one another when we are feeling down due to failure, disappointment and illness; to respect one another's property; not to borrow someone else property without asking first; after making a purchase to return all of the change to mother or father without being asked; to recycle the environment; to put things away where they belong after we use them or when we see something out of place; to clean up any mess that we make; to avoid lying; to obey parents and to serve elders. In the group, we all trainees established bonds of friendship and love.

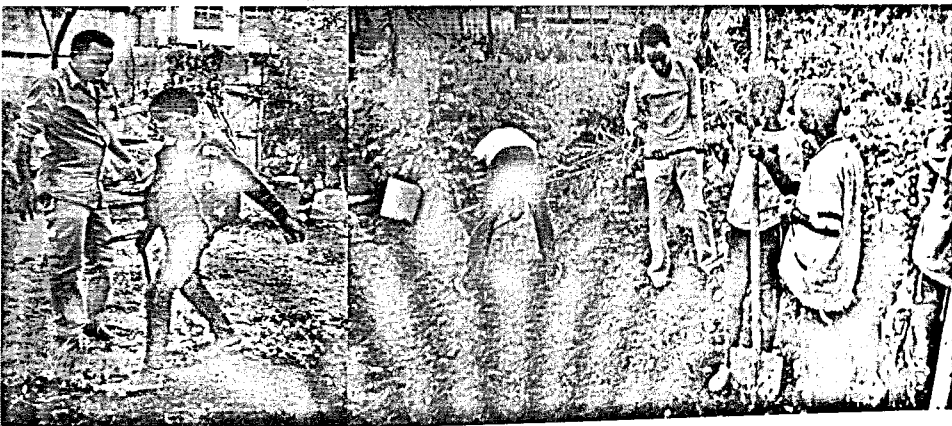


Figure 16. Baha'i youths and junior youth program trainees in beautifying the neighborhood and planting (Courtesy to a junior youth animator).

Based on her experience, a junior youth spiritual empowerment program animator Melat expresses:

As a trainee and as animator as well, I have great attachment to the junior youth spiritual empowerment program. The program assists: to enhance the power of expression, to make positive decisions and to express those decisions through clear speech and meaningful action, to reinforce a moral structure, to cultivate the concept of service, to engage in different acts of community service, to build the capacity to serve others, to explore and develop talents, to recognize the difference between true beauty and the beauty that must die, and how to work together for the common good. Furthermore, it improves abilities in reading and writing; comprehension; and aids to create a peer group that is encouraging and free of ridicule. With these skills, therefore, it would be simple to analyze the constructive and destructive forces in society and learn how to channel energies toward improving the conditions of the community. In the group, bonds of friendship, love and a sense of a common goal are established. The program uses action-reflection method, and explores themes from a Baha'i perspective. Usually, the junior youth empowerment program participants meet together once in a week.

Another animator also recounts:

My own spiritual journey began when I was fairly young. Then, I made a personal decision to continue life as a Baha'i based on my belief in Baha'u'llah as the Messenger of God for our age, and in His teachings as the solution to the problems of the world today. I personally enjoy helping people explore spiritual themes, and I am constantly amazed at the profound insights young people are able to offer and at their keenness to be of service to others. Coming to the junior youth programs, I am currently involving as animator and train junior youths to think in new ways, to look at themselves as God looks at them: as powerful agents for growth, as promoters of standards of excellence, and to be a part of the spiritual solution to problems surround themselves by learning to seek God's confirmations in their lives. The program also helps junior youths to analyze hope and despair, to distinguish between flattery and praise, to strive for excellence and to translate the principles of Baha'u'llah into direct action.

According to most of Baha'i believers, like study circles, the junior youth spiritual empowerment program also viewed as an instrument to change Non-Baha'is to the Baha'i religion by some Non-Baha'is, because the program is open to other religious backgrounds and the training is based on the Baha'i views. Again, few Baha'i believers told that some other Non-Baha'is perceive the Baha'i faith as nongovernmental organization which provides financial and material assistance for the needy.

Conversely, the informants also explained that through times, few Non-Baha'is are becoming interested to send their children to Baha'i junior youth spiritual empowerment programs aimed to cultivate the concept of service to their children and to reinforce the moral structure of their kids.

Apart from all the suspicions, however, the informants further expressed that before starting the program, animators communicate different Non-Baha'is junior youth parents who live in the neighborhood, and after they agreed upon, their kids join to the program. Again, while the program is in progress, animators articulated that they visit teenagers' parents to ask what parents think of the programs. According to the animators, considering before and after joining the program, parents usually appreciate that the junior youth spiritual empowerment programs train young adolescents virtues, serve to others, and to practice spiritual qualities in their daily lives.

In the fieldwork, the researcher also observed different activities such as drama, music and dancing, drawings, and question and answer contestation which are performed by teenagers who participated in the junior youth empowerment program.

Next, figure 17 demonstrates giving of certificates to question and answer contestants that is organized by Imperial and Gerji neighborhoods junior youth service project trainees.

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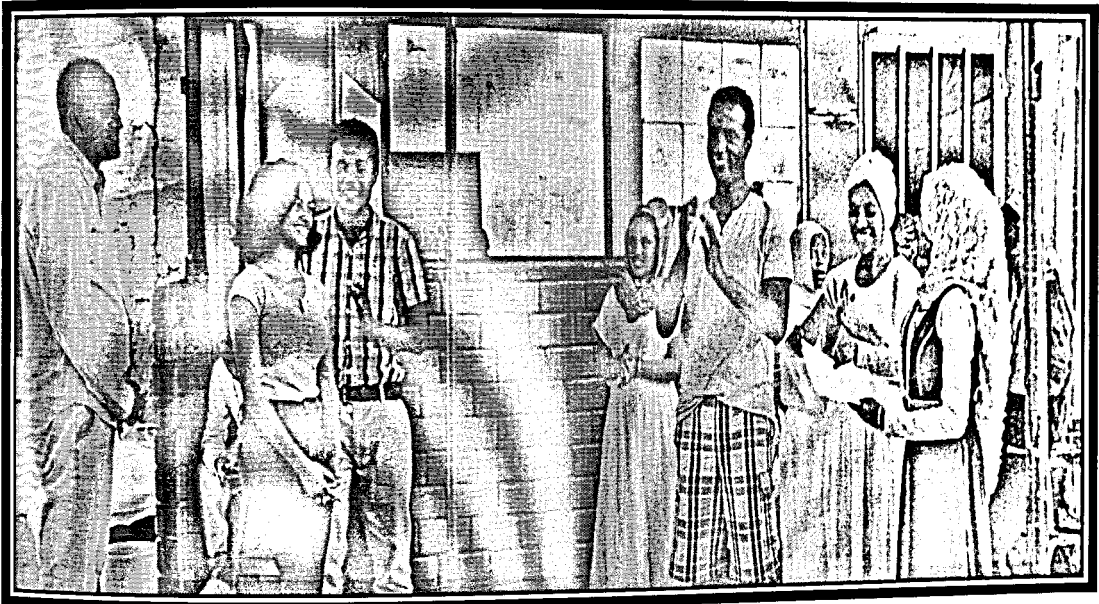


Figure 17. Giving of certificates to question and answer contestants (Photographed by the researcher, May 2016).

During the fieldwork period, one junior youth group was in Imperial neighborhood with twenty junior adolescents, two junior youth groups in CMC neighborhood with twenty-one participants, and no junior youth group in Bole-Tana neighborhood.

4.3 CHILDREN'S CLASSES

Among the greatest of all services that can possibly be rendered by man to Almighty God is the education and training of children ('Abdu'l-Baha 1978: 133-134).

As described by a Baha'i children's class teacher, Baha'i children's class emphasizes on children learn to think, to reflect and to apply spiritual principles to their own lives and to the lives of those around them. He also uttered:

Proper education of children is of great impact to the advancement of humans, and the heart and necessary foundation of all education is spiritual and moral training. Children's classes provide spiritual and moral education to children, usually from ages 5 to 11 in a way to nurture the tender hearts and minds of children. Therefore, children learn about spiritual qualities that will shape their lives and guide their choices through stories, games, arts and music. Besides, Baha'i children's class is a process of education that able to hold simply at one's home, and the parents and residents of a local neighborhood take ownership in order to achieve the aforementioned goals. Lessons in children's classes generally include: Unity; A pure, kindly and radiant heart; Justice; Love; Service; Truthfulness; Steadfastness; Humility; Preferring others before ourselves; Honesty; Generosity; Kindness; Obedience; Love for God, and Trust in God. Again, each lesson is repeated about two to three times and each lesson has components that help the children learn: Memorizing prayers and quotations; Songs; Stories; Cooperative games; and Coloring. At the beginning of each class prayer is recite since it brings the blessings and assistance of God to the children; then, because songs fill the hearts of the children with happiness and children love to sing, teaching songs is another method to use in children's classes. Storytelling is also a main activity that is carried out in a children's class for the reason that stories and narratives help to clarify thoughts by giving example of principles, spiritual qualities, show how to apply them, and explain the rewards for good deeds and the consequences of bad behavior. In addition, through games children learn to cooperate, to pay attention, to obey rules; and basically cooperative games such as games we observe in circus groups help children to develop attitudes which are necessary for cooperation. Moreover, since children frequently to look forward to test their artistic capacities and develop their concepts of beauty, coloring pictures methods also in use.

The above-mentioned informant also added his experience of conducting children class as follows.

In opening prayer, first, I remind the children how to behave when prayers are being said in a way to still and listen quietly and attentively. Then, I give an opportunity to one of the students to say an opening prayer. For your information, let me read you one prayer which is frequently in use in children's classes: *O Thou peerless Lord! Let this suckling babe be nursed from the breast of Thy loving-kindness, guard it within the cradle of Thy safety and protection and grant that it be reared in the arms of Thy tender affection* ('Abdu'l-Baha in *Baha'i Prayers* 2006:65). Next, I try to review what I taught in the previous class and ask questions to children for recalling. After the review, the children enjoy singing and playing games. Hereafter, new lesson, story or memorization, drawing and coloring pictures, and closing prayer continues. Nevertheless, at the end of each class, I remind to children what they have learned and ask them to do something at home. For instance, to think about what they learned, to tell the story from class to their family, or to practice the prayer they are memorizing. In fact, if a person being to teach, it is not to mean that he or she knows a great deal about theories of education, but what matters is desire and dedication.

Here is an excerpt from children's class lesson 1, which is showed by children's class teacher.

Lesson 1

Unity

- Welcome & enroll children (children have a drink/cookie while parents sign them in – use enrolment form)
- Introduce each other (name, age, favourite colour/food/music...)
- Settle into lesson
- Prayers "O God, guide me..." & sing "O God! Educate these children..."
- Quote – read, explain and memorise it
Do actions with the words: powerful, light, unity, illumine, whole earth
- Song / Drama: Unity song "Unity is you and me, together we can all agree..." or, We are drops, of one ocean
- Craft – unity candle holders: Use tealights, stick them into centre of cardboard star, decorate it, write quote on it. Or, Use empty clean glass jars, decorate them with tissue paper bits that have been dipped in glue, cover the whole outside of the glass, let dry – stick tealight inside and light, enjoy the beautiful glowing colours!
- Story: *'Abdu'l-Baha and the charcoal*
- Colour in lesson picture: Scanned images from Ruhi book attached or use other templates, attached use colour pencils or paint

According to another key informant who has been experiencing to teach children's classes:

Drama is a common activity in children's classes and children express themselves with their voice, their faces and their bodies, through movement, acting and improvisation. During these exercises, nevertheless, we teachers instruct children not to try portraying the Central Figures of the faith: The Bab, Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi out of respect. Again, stories are narrated in children's classes. As 'Abdu'l-Baha is the perfect example for Baha'is to follow, many of the stories retell anecdotes from his life that children learn to model the behavior after his example. The following accounts demonstrate the influence the example of 'Abdu'l-Baha has had upon a five year-old boy. One day, the father of this little boy said: *I was talking to my wife about some matters. My wife responded in a loud voice and so did I. But suddenly I heard a voice coming from below. It was my little boy appealing to me. Looking frightened because of the loud voice and he thought we were quarreling. Then, my boy told me, "Dad, you shouldn't speak so loud. This will not please 'Abdu'l-Baha. 'Abdu'l-Baha doesn't like people to speak loud."*

Once more, a teenage who passed through children's classes, read the following story from A.A Furutan *Baha'i education for children: Book 1*. As he explained, he first heard it at children's classes and the story helps to instill parental love to children.

A very poor mother had a small baby boy. One night when the weather is very cold and raining hard, she was sitting in her small house with its windows covered with paper instead of glass. She was shivering from cold and had no firewood to heat the room. As the mother looked at her baby, she was afraid that her innocent child might die of the cold during the night, and her heart beat faster, she tried to think what to do but she could not think of anything. Her tears started to roll down her cold face. Finally, she took off her clothes, wrapped her baby in them, and held him tight in her arms for the whole night. In the morning, when the neighbors came to see the poor woman, she was very sick with a terrible cold, but the baby was warm in her arms. She recovered after a few days, and continued with her life and enjoyed her baby (Furutan 2004:28).

Moreover, paper and pencil based activities, which include word searches, crosswords, mazes, and vocabulary builders are used in children's class. Crafts which are creating things manually also part of children's class.

Here is a song entitled *O God Educate These Children*, which is frequently used by children at children's classes from *Compilation of Baha'i Songs* (2005: 2).

O God! Educate these children.

These children are the plants

of thine orchard,

the flowers of Thy meadow,

the roses of Thy garden.

Let Thy rain fall upon them;

let the Sun of Reality

shine upon them with Thy love.

Let Thy breeze refresh them

in order that they may be trained,

grow and develop, and appear

in the utmost beauty.

Thou art the Giver.

Thou art the Compassionate.

As indicated by children's class teacher, especially for Non-Baha'i kids', children's class teachers first communicate to parents and check the willingness of the children to join the class. After agreed upon, children attend the class. Then, children also invite their parents to the class to show what they to learn. He further expressed that children's class teachers usually visit the Non-Baha'i children parents to ask what parents think of the classes later. As said by the informant, by and large, parents appreciate that the

Baha'i children's class teaches the children to understand and practice spiritual qualities in their daily lives.

However, during the fieldwork period, one children's class was in Bole-Tana neighborhood (two Baha'is and one Non-Baha'i are participated), one in Imperial neighborhood (three Baha'is) and no children's class in CMC neighborhood. As seen by the researcher, children who participated in children's classes are happier for the games, stories and songs which are performed in the class; and they serve snacks which are provided by the neighborhood's Baha'i believers. Few Baha'is described that Baha'i children's class is also viewed as a means to attract Non-Baha'i kids to the Baha'i religion by some Non-Baha'is, since it is open to other religions followers and the class is conducted based on the Baha'i perspectives.

4.4 DEVOTIONAL GATHERINGS

Baha'is host devotional gatherings in homes and community centers through prayer and the reading of scriptures. According to a key informant Woizero Hana, devotional gatherings help to capture the attitude of prayer and enhance community life. She further detailed:

Devotional meetings are simple. One simply sits, pray and meditates, and then enjoys the spiritual atmosphere, or takes a more active role. Yet, elements such as music and food are parts of devotional gatherings. In our experience thus far, keep the focus on prayer, the reading of scripture and discourse all in the light of gaining new spiritual insights and building the spiritual fabric of the community. Refreshment also is one part. In the social part of devotional meetings, however, we do not involve in contentious argument and the discussion of political affairs, gossips and back biting because all are despised not only during devotional but also in the entire Baha'is' life. Since devotional meetings are open to all, they create a unique opportunity to practice collective worship with people of different faiths.

Devotional gatherings are scheduled regularly, often once a week as 'Abdu'l-Baha dictates, "Once in every week, gather ye the steadfast friends together in a meeting place, and there let them engage in praising and glorifying the Lord" ('Abdu'l-Baha 1976: 6). In relation to beforehand activities and the components of devotional meetings, a key informant Ato Samuel uttered:

We prepare devotional gatherings with care and special attention. We usually pick a theme each week for the devotional meeting and choose readings accordingly; and those who will be read scripture or prayers have previous access to them. Participants are encouraged to bring their prayer books or favourite passages from the scriptures to share, and they invited to bring an inspirational quote, prayer, psalm, or song. Again, to create spiritual atmosphere, we clean the place and decorate with plants, flowers, candles, and objects of art something that is sacred. Moreover, refreshment is part of our devotionals. Besides, spiritually inspired music or music with the sounds of nature is also in use. As Abdu'l-Baha says: *The art of music is divine and effective. It is the food of the soul and spirit. Through the power and charm of music the spirit of man is uplifted* (1982: 52).

The researcher also seen that in calm and attractive spiritual gatherings, participants in devotional meetings take turns to read aloud from prayer books, while the others listen in reverent silence, and when saying such a devotional prayer, one does not need to face the Qiblih. In addition, as indicated above by a key informant, after a prayer, it is common to serve refreshments and then everyone enjoy one another. As told by most of the informants, however, the refreshments can be sponsored by the host of that devotional gathering, or collectively sponsored by the participants.

Furthermore, as illustrated in the next figure, the researcher also observed that prayers in devotional meetings include different topics such as communion with God, unity, justice and others.

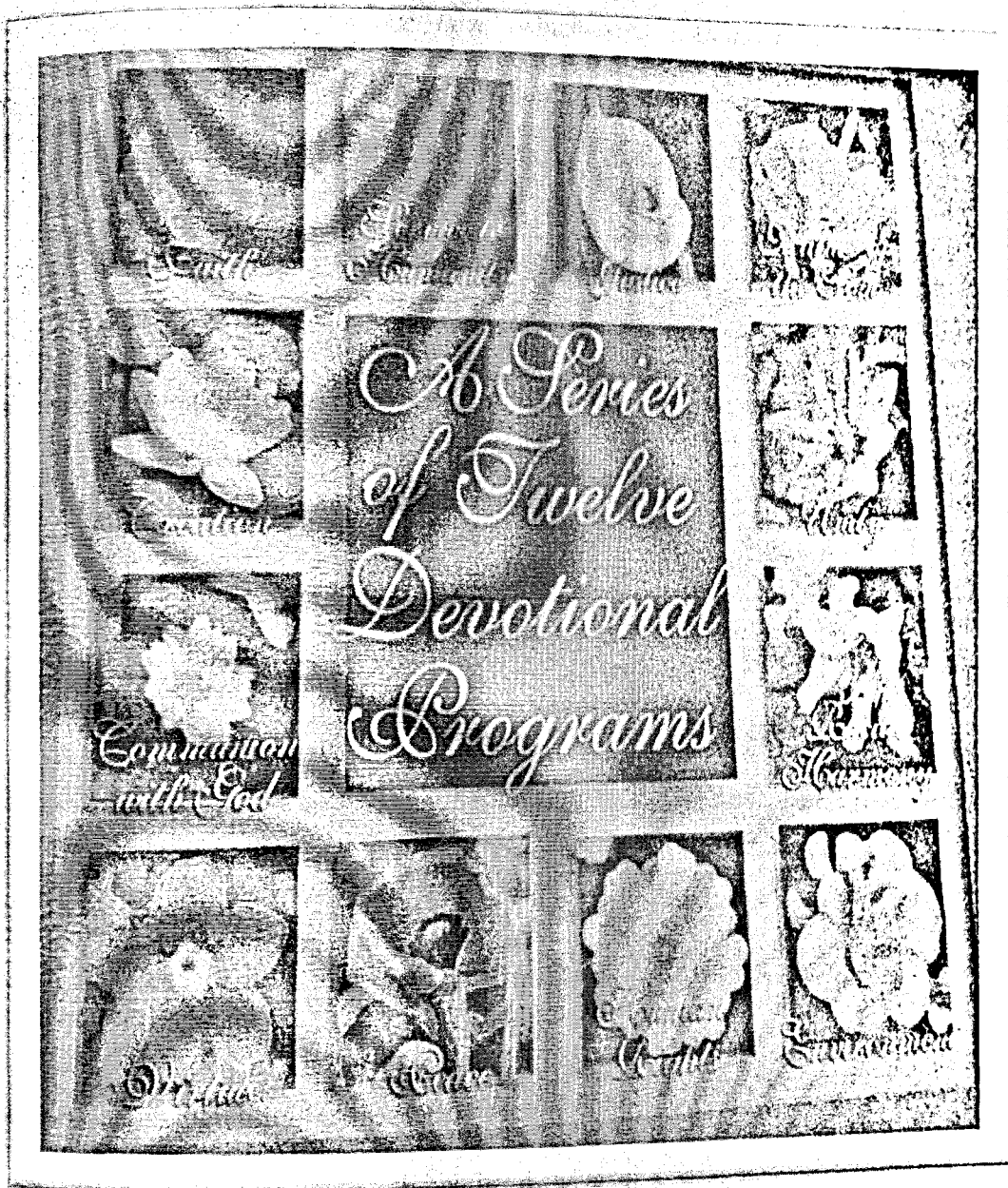


Figure 18. A form of devotional meeting catalogue which is shown by a key informant to the researcher and that demonstrates topics in series of twelve devotional programs (Photographed by the researcher, May 2016).

The researcher also encountered Baha'i hymens in devotional gatherings. Here is a Baha'i song entitled "Love, Love, Love" which is taken from *Compilation of Baha'i Songs* (2005:22). Baha'is sing it especially for "love" session of devotional gatherings:

Love, love, love, love,

Love your fellow man.

Love, love, love is how the world began.

God loved creation so He created thee to

Love, love, love Him and humanity.

Love, love, love the everlasting good,

Love, love, love the seed of brotherhood.

Love, all creation for He created you to

Love, love, love, Him and humanity.

Love, God's creatures be they near or far.

See each human as a shining star.

Love, all creation for He created you to

Love, love, love Him and humanity.

Up to the beginning of June 2016, four devotional meetings were in Bole-Tana neighborhood, one in Imperial neighborhood and six in CMC neighborhood.

CONCLUSIONS

In *Religion: An Anthropological View*, Anthony Wallace (1966) proposed thirteen minimal categories of religious behavior that serve as building blocks for religion including: Prayer; Music and dancing and singing; Physiological exercises together with the physical manipulation of psychological state and efforts to induce such a state; Exhortation (i.e. addressing another human being such as shamans and priests); Reciting the Code (e.g. mythology, morality, and other aspects of the belief system); Simulation; Mana or the power one gets from contact with powerful objects; Taboo, or the prohibition from contact with certain things; Feasts; Sacrifice; Congregation or group activity; Inspiration, such as hallucination and mysticism; and Symbols.

Likewise, Malcolm Hamilton (2001) noted the following religious attributes as a tentative and probably incomplete list: a central concern with godlike beings and men's relation with them; a dichotomization of elements of the world into sacred and profane, and a central concern to the sacred; an orientation towards salvation from the ordinary conditions of worldly existence; ritual practices; beliefs which are neither logically nor empirically demonstrable or highly probable, but must be held on the basis of faiths 'mystical notions' but without the requirement that they be false; an ethical code, supported by such beliefs; supernatural sanctions on infringements of the code; a mythology; a body of scripture, or similarly exalted oral traditions; a priesthood or similar specialist religious elite; association with moral community, a church (in Durkheim's sense); and association with an ethnic or similar group.

In Baha'i, however, the believers basically believe a single God who is the creator of all things in the universe. They understand that God is seen as conscious of creation, with a will and purpose that is expressed through messengers termed Manifestations of God. In addition, doctrines, a body of authoritative scripture, prayers, hymns, and meditations are parts of religious behaviour in Baha'i. Feasts, the regular gatherings of the Baha'i community also occur on the first day of each Baha'i month. Moreover, Baha'i believers observe a Baha'i fast during the nineteenth month of each Baha'i year. Similarly, they commemorate important events in the history of the faith or the lives of its founders. Conversely, there is no clergy in Baha'i. Instead, the Baha'i community is led by elected spiritual assembly of nine representatives who serve in administrative, rather than sacerdotal capacity. Furthermore, no sacrament in Baha'i; and Baha'i renounces the emphasis on rituals characteristic of many other religious traditions. Therefore, the rituals and ceremonies of Baha'is are relatively simple and not having rites prescribed for public worship; and they are not regarded as imbued with any magical or spiritual potency of their own, but rather serve primarily as a symbolic expression of devotion to the religious principles and central figures of the faith. Baha'i fundamental teachings also make a particular claim to universality and modernity by embracing all of the world's major religions and upholding the standards of reason and science.

On the other hand, taking as case three Baha'i neighborhoods in Bole sub city of Addis Ababa; the researcher able to understand that Baha'i family life, which is originated from Baha'i marriage, is best expressed in terms of the position of each individual member to each other. Another distinctive Baha'i element of family life is the critical importance of educating daughters which is more necessary than that of sons if Baha'i

parents cannot provide education for both a boy and a girl at a time. In addition, Baha'i mothers chief responsibility to educate their children spiritually in early ages; age of maturity and applying to both parents religious practices up to the age of maturity by Baha'i and Non-Baha'i spouse children; the three private obligatory prayers; daily vigilances of action; spiritually guided family consultation; moderation; and coming together at the neighborhood centre to celebrate the Nineteen Day Feast are other notable features in Baha'i family.

Proceeding to another theme of this study which is Baha'i community building core activities, the researcher has apprehended that study circles guide Baha'is who have little familiarity with primary texts to a systematic introduction to basic Baha'i beliefs and reading of scriptures, and introduce learning methods that will complement an individual reading of scriptures including participatory learning and memorization. The link to service projects is also a welcome aspect of study circles and key elements for junior youth empowerment programs. Moreover, children's classes provide spiritual and moral education to children; and Baha'is socialize on a more regular basis in devotional gatherings than the occasional Feast or Holy Day activity. Since Baha'i community building core activities are open to other religious backgrounds and they are conducted based on Baha'i perspectives, however, they are not free from suspicion to attract new converts to Baha'i religion.

Yet, this thesis is by no means complete, instead, it provides a remarkable account for further research on Baha'i adherents' ordinary lives discussing with some aspects of Baha'is' family life and, Baha'i community building core activities.

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources used for the thesis have been acknowledged.

Signature

Confirmation

I confirm that this thesis can be submitted for defense

Signature

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

**ANTHROPOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF
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