

## letter from the ebbf board an exploration of the concept of service

Dear ebbf community,

A core ebbf value is “service.” The ebbf website articulates this core value in the following way:

### **ebbf core value: Service**

The highest station is service to all humanity and to the common good, a principle that applies equally to the individual, to government and to private enterprise. Service is principles put into action. **How can service to society become the central purpose of every business undertaking?**

In our contemporary society, engaging in service—for example, volunteering for charitable activities—is often seen as a pastime activity, as an add-on when one has satisfied all other needs. However, we view service as in reality an over-arching principle and as a general attitude which should be employed in every action, including in our work/professional pursuits. In this spirit, we offer the below thoughts.

### **The Concept of “Selfless” Service**

*“I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.”*  
-Rabindranath Tagore

As a core value of ebbf, service can be considered a key dimension in each person’s engagement in ebbf and its activities. It is both a guiding idea and an active practice enabling the transcendence of passive consumer approaches. It is, likewise, an opportunity to transcend our self-perceived limitations, in pursuit of a higher cause. It is hoped that giving of one’s talents and abilities—and developing new ones—through acts of service, are an integral part of ebbf membership. Service can be offered in the form of time, energy and expertise, or in terms of donating funds that can be used for ebbf core operations, youth scholarships and (international) expansion.

Service, in the Baha’i writings, is the means to “subordinate our lower nature and its desires to the more [...] noble side of ourselves” and is considered “the highest and noblest goal in this life.”

## **The Implementation of Selfless Service**

In moving towards a practice of selfless service, we should not be held back unduly by conscious limitations or fears that we are not worthy. Everyone has something to give, and possesses talents and abilities, both developed and as yet un-tapped. We are each encouraged to have confidence that, if offered in the correct spirit and with persistence and effort, our actions will have a significant effect.

We should remember that all tasks are important. No task is too small (or too large). Everyone should “choose for himself any avenue of work in which he conscientiously feels he can render the greatest amount of service.” Engaging in service means that one has a willingness to share—and develop—one’s own unique skills, abilities, capacities and resources. We might be best fitted to certain types of service, for example contributing money / funds if we are short on time, or, for example, contributing our technical skills in a certain area as these professional skills could be rare or valuable.

We should keep in mind a notion of “excellence in all things” and striving in our service, and endeavour to be as consistent and reliable as possible in our commitments. And, “[w]hatever the particular field of service you may choose... the essential is for you to persevere.”

At ebbf, service should be done in a community of support and accompaniment. Our efforts should be offered “joyously and actively” and “fully and conscientiously,” as we know our collective exertions are done in service of the highest values for business and society.

## **The Consequences of Selfless Service**

Selfless service, if done correctly, unlocks the capacity / potential of each individual. It enables the transcendence of focus on oneself only and lifts one above individual worries and cares. Service for others and for society “enables you to banish every sense of dissatisfaction, and of unworthiness which may linger in your heart.” It attracts genuine appreciation from others. Service may lead to unexpected / unpredictable rewards; the benefits of selfless service are not always linear, but follow their own logic. Engagement with selfless service towards a higher purpose is an engagement with the “mystery of sacrifice,” which purifies and glorifies our true self.

One of the main arguments in favour of competition in current business environments is that it forces the players (economic or political) to innovate and to improve the quality of their products to their customers / constituencies. The concept of service, when joined with the principle of excellence in all things, will make such an approach superfluous. ebbf-related selfless service enables us to participate in a triple moral purpose—self-betterment, the

betterment of companies and other organisations, and the betterment of society; all contributing to the building of a new civilization.

1 The quotations in this document are excerpted from the Bahá'í writings. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 10, 1947: *Living the Life*, p. 14.

2. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 30, 1939.

3. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 6, 1939.

4. See compilation of Bahá'í writings on "Excellence in All Things" available at: [http://bahai-library.com/compilation\\_excellence\\_all\\_things](http://bahai-library.com/compilation_excellence_all_things).

5. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 6, 1939.

6. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 30, 1939.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá*, Vol. I, p. 65.