

TÁHIRIH, THE PURE, IRÁN'S GREATEST WOMAN

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TO

BAHÍYÍH KHANUM
THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF,
this work is reverently, tenderly dedicated.

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Introduction

To understand the story of Táhirih, Irán's premier woman, one should know something of the Irán of her time, should be cognizant of that phenomenal quickening of religion known as the Bahá'í Faith which had its rise in that land in the middle of the nineteenth century. Until then women were in a state of more or less subjection, now women - and they constitute one-half of the whole human race - after centuries of somnolence are wide awake to their new position, and are stirring to new ideas. It should be of thrilling interest to them to know, ex oriente lux¹, that the first woman suffrage martyr was not a Westerner at all, but a young woman poet, Táhirih, sometimes known as Qurratu'l-'Ayn, of Qazvin, Irán.

'Abdu'l Bahá expressed eloquent tribute to her, I remember so well His words to us in the West: "Amongst the women of our own age is Qurratu'l-'Ayn, the daughter of a Muhammadan priest. At the time of the appearance of the Báb she showed such tremendous courage and power that all who heard her were astonished. She threw aside her veil despite the immemorial custom of the women of Irán, and although it was considered impolite to speak with men, this heroic woman carried on controversies with the most learned men, and in every meeting she vanquished them. The Iránian Government took her prisoner; she was stoned in the streets, anathematized, exiled from town to town, threatened with death, but she never failed in her determination to work for the freedom of her sisters. She bore persecution and suffering with the greatest heroism; even in prison she gained believers. To a Minister of Irán, in whose house she was imprisoned, she said; 'You can kill me as soon as you like but you cannot stop the emancipation of women.' At last the end of her tragic life came; she was carried into a garden and strangled. However, she put on her very best robes as if she were going to join a

¹ ex oriente lux - "From the east comes light" (literally, as in the sun rising in the east, or spiritually) [DM]

bridal party. With such magnanimity and courage she gave her life, startling and enchanting all who saw her. She was truly a great heroine. Today, in Irán, among the Bahá'is, there are women who also show unflinching courage and who are endowed with poetic insight. They are most fluent and speak before large gatherings of people."

Táhirih's courageous deathless personality forever will stand out against the background of eternity, for she gave her life for her sister women. The sweet perfume of her heroic selflessness is diffused in the whole five continents. People of all religions and of none, all races, all classes, all human humanity to this day cherish the attar of her deeds, and weep tears of love and longing when her great poems are chanted. Through her fearless stand the balance is shifting, man and woman are becoming more equal - Force, the old standard, is losing its dominance, and intuition, insight, glimpses of cosmic consciousness and the spiritual qualities of love and service in which woman is strong are gaining ascendancy. And you see that this new epoch is an age in which masculine and feminine elements of civilisation are becoming more evenly adjusted. Man and woman are as the two wings of the bird of humanity and this bird cannot attain its highest flight until these two wings are equally strong and equally poised. One of the important teachings of the Bahá'í Faith is that women should be regarded as the equals of men and should enjoy equal rights and privileges, equal education and equal opportunities. Táhirih had to die for these great ideals but today our task is to live for them.

Dear readers, no words of mine could portray nearly as well the times in the Irán of the nineteenth century when Táhirih lived as the illuminating searchlight picture of that age which Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith in Haifa, Palestine, has presented in his masterly introduction to his historic book Nabil's Narrative - "The Dawn-Breakers."²

So with his most gracious permission I shall use excerpts from his preface :

"The Bahá'í Movement is now well known throughout the world, and the time has now come when Nabil's unique narrative of its beginnings in darkest Irán will interest many readers... The main features of the narrative (the saintly heroic figure of the Báb, a leader so mild and so serene, yet eager, resolute, and dominant; the devotion of his followers facing oppression with unbroken courage and often with ecstasy; the rage of a jealous priesthood inflaming for its own purpose the passions of a bloodthirsty populace)... these speak a language which all may understand. But it is not easy to follow the narrative in its details, or to appreciate how stupendous was the task undertaken by Bahá'u'lláh and His Forerunner, without some knowledge of the condition of church and state in Irán, and of the customs and mental outlook of the people and their masters...

"There exists in English, however, a literature about Irán in the nineteenth century which will give readers ample information on the subject. From Persian writings which have already been translated, or from books of European travellers like Lord Curzon, Sir J. Malcolm, and others not a few, he will find a lifelike and vivid if unlovely picture of the Augean³ conditions

² "The Dawn-Breakers" published at Kingsport Press, Inc. Kingsport, Tennessee, U.S.A., and on sale at the Bahá'í Publishing Company, P. O. Box 348, Grand Central Station Annex, New York, N. Y.; also at Bahá'í Hall, Deepchand Ojha Road, Karachi, India.

³ Augean - Difficult and unpleasant; resembling the Augean stables in filthiness and degradation. [DM]

which the Báb had to confront when He inaugurated the Movement in the middle of the nineteenth century.

"All observers agree in representing Irán as a feeble and backward nation divided against itself by corrupt practices and ferocious bigotries. Inefficiency and wretchedness, the fruit of moral decay, filled the land. From the highest to the lowest there appeared neither the capacity to carry out methods of reform nor even the will seriously to institute them. National conceit preached a grandiose self-content. A pall of immobility lay over all things, and a general paralysis of mind made any development impossible.

"To a student of history the degeneracy of a nation once so powerful and so illustrious seems pitiful in the extreme. 'Abdu'l Bahá, who in spite of the cruelties heaped on Bahá'u'lláh, on the Báb and on Himself, yet loved His country, called their degradation, 'the tragedy of a people', and in that work, "The Mysterious Forces of Civilization," in which He sought to stir the hearts of His compatriots to undertake radical reforms, He uttered a poignant lament over the present fate of a people who once had extended their conquests East and West, and had led the civilisation of mankind. 'In former times', He writes, 'Persia was verily the heart of the world and shone among the nations like a lighted taper. Her glory and prosperity broke from the horizon of humanity like the true dawn disseminating the light of knowledge and illumining the nations of the East and West. The fame of her victorious kings reached the ears of the dwellers at the poles of the earth. The majesty of her kings humbled the monarchs of Greece and Rome. Her governing wisdom filled the sages with awe, and the rulers of the continents fashioned their laws upon her polity. The Persians being distinguished among the nations of the earth as a people of conquerors, and justly admired for their civilisation and learning, their country became the glorious centre of all the sciences and arts, the mine of culture and a fount of virtues... How is it that this excellent country now, by reason of our sloth, vanity and indifference, from the lack of knowledge and organisation, from the poverty of the zeal and ambition of her people, has suffered the rays of her prosperity to be darkened and well nigh extinguished?'

"Other writers describe fully those unhappy conditions to which 'Abdu'l Bahá refers.

"At the time when the Báb declared His Mission, the government of the country was, in Lord Curzon's phrase, 'a Church-State'. Venal, cruel, and immoral as it was, it was formally religious. Muslim orthodoxy was its basis and permeated to the core both it and the social lives of the people. But otherwise there were no laws, statutes, or characters to guide the direction of public affairs. There was no House of Lords, nor Privy Council, no synod, no Parliament. The Sháh was despot, and his arbitrary rule was reflected all down the official scale through every minister and governor down to the lowliest clerk or remotest headman. No civil tribunal existed to check or modify the power of the monarch or the authority which he might choose to delegate to his subordinates. If there was a law, it was his word. He could do as he pleased...

"Even when a Sháh wished to make a just and wise decision in any case that might be brought before him for judgment, he found it difficult to do so, because he could not rely on the information given him. Critical facts would be withheld, or the facts given would be distorted by the influence of interested witnesses or venal ministers. The system of corruption had been carried so far in Irán that it had become a recognised institution which Lord Curzon well described as follows:

'Before I quit the subject of Persian Law and its administration,

let me add a few words upon the subject of penalties and prisons. Nothing is more shocking to the European reader, in pursuing his way through the crime-stained and bloody pages of Persian history during the last and, in a happily less degree, during the present century, than the record of savage punishments and abominable tortures, testifying alternately to the callousness of the brute and ingenuity of the fiend. The Persian character has ever been fertile in device and indifferent to suffering; and in the field of judicial executions it has found ample scope for the exercise of both attainments. Up till quite a recent period, well within the borders of the present reign, condemned criminals have been crucified, blown from guns, buried alive, impaled, shod like horses, torn asunder by being bound to the heads of two trees bent together and then allowed to spring back to their natural position, converted into human torches, flayed while living.'

"From the beginning the Báb must have divined the reception which would be accorded by His countrymen to his teachings, and the fate which awaited Him at the hands of mullás. But He did not allow personal misgivings to affect the frank enunciation of His claims nor the open presentation of His Cause. The innovations which He proclaimed, though purely religious, were drastic; the announcement of His own identity startling and tremendous. He made Himself known as the Qá'im, the High Prophet or Messiah so long promised, so eagerly expected by the Muhammadan world. He added to this the declaration that He was also the Gate (that is, the Báb) through whom a greater Manifestation than Himself was to enter the human realm...

"He was the Qá'im; but the Qá'im, though a High Prophet, stood in relation to a succeeding and greater Manifestation as did John the Baptist to the Christ. He was the Forerunner of One yet more mighty than Himself. He was to decrease; that Mighty One was to increase. And as John the Baptist had been the Herald or Gate of the Christ, so was the Báb the Herald or Gate of Bahá'u'lláh...

"The cause of the rejection and persecution of the Báb was in its essence the same as the rejection and persecution of the Christ. If Jesus had not brought a New Book, if He had not only reiterated the spiritual principles taught by Moses but had continued Moses' rules and regulations too, He might as a merely moral reformer have escaped the vengeance of the Scribes and Pharisees. But to claim that any part of the Mosaic law, even such material ordinances as those that dealt with divorce and the keeping of the Sabbath, could be altered - and altered by an unordained preacher from the village of Nazareth - this was to threaten the interest of the Scribes and Pharisees themselves, and since they were the representatives of Moses and of God, it was blasphemy against the Most High. As soon as the position of Jesus was understood His persecution began. As He refused to desist, He was put to death.

"For reasons exactly parallel, the Báb was from the beginning opposed by the vested interests of the dominant Church as an uprooter of the Faith. Yet, even in that dark and fanatical country, the mullás (like the Scribes in Palestine eighteen centuries before) did not find it very easy to put forward a plausible pretext for destroying Him whom they thought their enemy...

"The Bábis were overwhelmed by numbers. The Báb Himself was taken from His cell and executed. Of His chief disciples who avowed their belief in Him, not one soul was left alive save Bahá'u'lláh, who with His family and a handful of devoted followers was driven destitute into exile and prison in a foreign land.

"But the fire, though smothered, was not quenched. It burned in the hearts of the exiles who carried it from one country to another as they travelled. Even in the homeland of Irán it had penetrated too deeply to be extinguished by physical violence, and still smouldered in the people's hearts, needing only a breath from the spirit to be fanned into an all-consuming conflagration.

"The Second and Greater Manifestation of God was proclaimed in accordance with the prophecy of the Báb at the date which He had foretold. Nine years after the beginning of the Bábi Dispensation - that is, in 1853 - Bahá'u'lláh, in certain of His odes, alluded to His identity, and His Mission and ten years later, while resident in Baghdád, declared Himself as the Promised One to His companions.

"Now the great Movement for which the Báb had prepared the way began to show the full range and magnificence of its power. Though Bahá'u'lláh Himself lived and died an exile and a prisoner and was known to few Europeans, His epistles proclaiming the new Advent were borne to the great rulers of both hemispheres; from the Sháh of Persia to the Pope and to the President of the United States. After His passing, His son 'Abdu'l Bahá carried the tidings in person into Egypt and far through the Western world. 'Abdu'l Bahá visited England, France, Switzerland, Germany and America announcing everywhere that once again the heavens had opened and that a new Dispensation had come to bless the sons of men. He died in November, 1921; and today the fire that once seemed to have been put out forever, burns again in every part of Irán; has established itself on the American continent, and has laid hold of every country in the world.

"Around the sacred writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the authoritative exposition of 'Abdu'l Bahá there is growing a large volume of literature in comment or in witness. The humanitarian and spiritual principles enunciated decades ago in the darkest East by Bahá'u'lláh and moulded by Him into a coherent scheme are one after the other being taken by a world unconscious of their source as the marks of progressive civilisation; and the sense that mankind has broken with the past and that the old guidance will not carry it through the emergencies of the present has filled with uncertainty and dismay all thoughtful men save those who have learned to find in the story of Bahá'u'lláh the meaning of all the prodigies and portents of our time."

Bahá'u'lláh's Tribute to the Báb and His Chief Disciples.

Paragraphs from The Kitab-I-Iqán.

"Though young and tender of age, and though the Cause He revealed was contrary to the desire of all the peoples of the earth, both high and low, rich and poor, exalted and abased, king and subject yet He arose and steadfastly proclaimed it. All have known and heard this. He feared no one; He was reckless of consequences. Could such a thing be made manifest except through the power of a Divine Revelation, and the potency of God's invincible Will? By the righteousness of God! Were any one to entertain so great a Revelation in his heart, the thought of such a declaration would alone confound him! Were the hearts of all men to be crowded into his heart, he would still hesitate to venture upon so awful an enterprise. He could achieve it only by the permission of God, only if the channel of his heart were to be linked with the Source of Divine grace, and his soul be assured of the unfailing sustenance of the Almighty. To what, We wonder, do they ascribe so great a daring? Do they accuse Him of madness as they accused the Prophets of old? Or do they maintain that His

motive was none other than leadership and the acquisition of earthly riches?

"Gracious God! In His Book, which He hath entitled 'Qayyúmu'l-Asma' - the first, the greatest, and mightiest of all books - He prophesied His own martyrdom. In it is this passage: 'O Thou Remnant of God! I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee; I have accepted curses for Thy sake; and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love. Sufficient Witness unto me is God the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days!'

"...Could the Revealer of such utterance be regarded as walking in any other way than the way of God, and as having yearned for aught else except His good pleasure? In this very verse there lieth concealed a breath of detachment for which, if it were breathed upon the world, all beings would renounce their life, and sacrifice their soul.

"...And now consider how this Sadrih⁴ of the Ridván⁵ of God hath, in the prime of youth, risen to proclaim the Cause of God. Behold, what steadfastness He, the Beauty of God, hath revealed! The whole world rose to hinder Him, yet it utterly failed! The more severe the persecutions they inflicted on that Sadrih of Blessedness, the more His fervor increased, and the brighter burned the flame of His love. All this is evident, and none disputeth its truth. Finally, He surrendered His soul, and winged His flight unto the realms above.

"...No sooner had that eternal Beauty revealed Himself in Shiráz, in the year sixty (1260 A.H., 1844 A.D.) and rent asunder the veil of concealment than the signs of the ascendancy, the might, the sovereignty, and power emanating from that Essence of Essences and Sea of Seas, were manifest in every land. So much so, that from every city there appeared the signs, the evidences, the tokens, testimonies of that Divine Luminary. How many were those pure and kindly hearts which faithfully reflected the light of that eternal Sun! And how manifold the emanations of knowledge from that Ocean of Divine Wisdom which encompassed all beings! In every city, all the divines and nobles rose to hinder and repress them, and girded up the loins of malice, of envy, and tyranny for their suppression. How great the number of those holy souls, those essences of justice, who, accused of tyranny, were put to death! And how many embodiments of purity, who showed forth naught but true knowledge and stainless deeds, suffered an agonising death! Notwithstanding all this, each of these holy beings, up to his last moment, breathed the name of God and soared in the realm of submission and resignation. Such was the potency and transmuting influence which He exercised over them, that they ceased to cherish any desire but His Will, and wedded their souls to His remembrance.

"Do thou ponder these momentous happenings in thine heart, so that thou mayest apprehend the greatness of this Revelation and perceive its stupendous glory."

Chapter I. Early History of Táhirih's Life

Hadrat-i-Táhirih "Her Highness the Pure One", well known also by the name Qurratu'l-Ayn, is the most celebrated woman in Iránian history; she will remain forever immortal. As I have travelled in the five continents, I have seen how her life has influenced women and men too, throughout the world. I have observed how her poetry is sought by scholars in every land, and I know that among Bahá'is the life of Táhirih is an ideal

⁴ Sadrih - Branch [DM]

⁵ Ridván - Paradise [DM]

that every one yearns to comprehend and attain; though from the time she first heard of the Coming of the Báb to the time she was martyred for the love of His Truth, was a little less than nine years, still every day since then, her glorious life has been to us like a "living teacher".

Picture in your mind one of the most beautiful young women in Irán, a genius, a poet, the most learned scholar of the Qu'rán and the traditions; think of her as the daughter of a jurist family of letters, daughter of the greatest high priest of her province and very rich, enjoying high rank, living in an artistic palace, and distinguished among her young friends for her boundless, immeasurable courage. Picture what it must mean for a young woman like this, still in her twenties, to arise as the first woman disciple of a Prophet, then you will be able to understand this narrative.

The "Journal Asiatic" of 1866, tome 7, page 474, presents even a more graphic view of Táhirih, the English translation of which is as follows: "How a woman, a creature so weak in Irán, and above all in a city like Qazvin, where the clergy possess such a powerful influence, where the 'ulamás because of their number and importance and power hold the attention of the government officials and of the people, how can it be that in such a country and district and under such unfavorable conditions, that a woman could have organized such a powerful party of heretics? That is the important question which has puzzled many and even the historian of Irán, Sipih; it was as a matter of fact unparalleled in the past."

Presenting to you the true history of this great young woman, I give you first the titles by which she is known to the world, Bahá'u'lláh gave her the name of Táhirih which means the Pure One; her teacher in Karbilá, Siyyid Kázim Rashti called her Qurratu'l-'Ayn which means Consolation of the Eyes; other names by which she is known are Zarrin-Taj which signifies one crowned with gold; and she was also addressed as Nuqtih which means The Point. The name her father had given her is never used in history which shows how powerful was the spiritual nature of her life!

This young Persian woman had very deep intuition, that gift of insight called "second sight." How often I have observed in history that the saints of God are able to foresee events! Sometimes I have asked myself: "Was Táhirih great enough instantly to say, "O God, I give my life to establish this Faith among mankind," or did she too, need to be trained by the Infinite God to long to give her life as a martyr to serve this new universal Revelation? Certainly we know that early in her dazzlingly spiritual career she felt the responsibility of being a follower of the Báb. She writes in one of her earlier poems: "At the gate of my heart I behold the feet and the tents of calamity!" I feel she did know long before and gave radiant acquiescence to her future martyrdom. Viewed in this light, one can understand her chaste spirit, her matchless courage not only in the danger to her life but in her being the first woman in the Eastern Muslim world to dare to lay aside the veil even in brief moments, and in being courageous enough to go to the Badasht Conference to consult with this group of men-followers of the Báb. Fátimih did not do more to help her father Muhammad than did Táhirih⁶ to assist in bringing into reality the Aim of the Báb.

One can almost hear her words as she addressed this group in Badasht where they had come to consult: first, how to free the Báb from prison, and second, to decide once and for all whether they were to follow the old Muhammadan laws, or if the Báb, had introduced new laws; or if they, as

representatives of the organization of the Báb, were to institute new laws suited to the new epoch. She may have said, as she addressed them with uncovered face: "That sound of the trumpet which ushers in the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection, is my call to you now! Rise, brothers, the Qu'rán is fulfilled and a new era has begun! Am I not your sister and you my brother? Can you not look upon me as a real friend? If you cannot put out of your mind evil thoughts - because it was unheard of in that age for the woman not to hide her face behind a heavy veil - how will you be able to give your lives for a great Cause? Are you aware that this old custom of veiling the face was not enjoined by Muhammad so rigorously as you seem to observe? Have you never heard that the wives of the Prophet Himself, on their journeys, had their faces exposed? Do you not remember that in some matters, Muhammad was wont to tell His Disciples to go and ask His wife? But even if this were not the law of Muhammad, today a great Light has come which changes all! This is the Hour of Resurrection. Let us fill the souls of men with the glory of the Revealed Word. Let us emancipate our women and reform our society, Let us arise out of our graves of superstition and self, and pronounce that the Day of Judgment is at hand; then shall the whole earth respond to freedom of conscience and new life! The blast of this trumpet of the Resurrection, it is!"

Did Jan Hüs or Martin Luther have a harder task than this? No! On the slender shoulders of the mighty and pure Báb and His few Disciples fell the task of breaking down an old order of age-long superstitions and customs. This had to be done before the new spiritual civilization could be built upon a firm foundation. Thus it has ever been in the evolution of religion since time immemorial.

Coming from Baghdád to Qazvin, Irán, in January, 1930, over the same caravan route which this remarkable heroine of God, Táhirih, had once traversed and entering the city where she was reared, my soul thrilled to understand her! I expressed a wish to see the home in Qazvin where she was born, but friends said it would be impossible. Her relatives are Muslims, and because formerly they were so cruelly angry with her and with the religion inaugurated by the Báb, the world has taken it for granted that this hatred of the Bahá'í Faith still exists.

The owner of the Grand Hotel where I was a guest, standing in his doorway, saw a relative of Táhirih passing. He invited him in, gave him tea and said jokingly: "Your family ought to be ashamed of yourselves. You are like the black mud out from which the white narcissus sprang! Your ancestor Táhirih is loved in every country of the world, but you people do nothing to show a sign of appreciation. I have an American guest in my hotel who is just longing to see even the house when she once lived." The relative replied: "If she wishes to see Táhirih's home, I'll show it to her!" "Oh, no you couldn't," said the hotel owner. "Yes, I can and I will!" responded the relative; and so it was arranged, and I went with this hotel owner and the Muslim relative out to the ancient home of this famous young woman. It was a large old place with lovely, intricate lattice work; in its time it must have been one of the finest residences of that part of Irán. This relative showed me the women's wing of the palace where Táhirih had been born, then he took me to a quaint artistic library on the second floor where the little girl sat and studied, the girl who later became a poet and the first woman martyr in Central Asia for the education and equality of women and laying aside the veil! He showed me the prison, the cellar of the imposing mansion where her father had imprisoned his daughter; but the relative sympathetically explained that Táhirih's father truly loved his gifted daughter even though he clashed violently with her in religious beliefs, he had incarcerated her in his own home trying to protect her

⁶ Her birth name was Fatima [DM]

from the savagery of those who were ready to brand her with hot irons because she belonged to the despised Bābi Faith, but even he could not save her, they came and carried her away to the city prison.

When I kneeled to kiss the floor of her room and to pray, the relatives all came and stood silently. They were reverent and friendly. As I stepped out from her dear room, this relative said to me: "You are the first Bahá'í who has ever come from the West to ask about Táhirih and see her descendants and her home. I replied: "No one came because he had not the courage! I tell you the truth, we were very afraid of you all! This good relative though, with tears in his eyes after the prayer said: "I am not against Táhirih, I feel it is an honor to be a descendant of such a noble family. My mother was the little sister of Táhirih." He came back with me to the hotel and we had a long talk, and on that day was begun a true friendship between a descendant of Táhirih and a Bahá'í from the West; in the tender, holy memories of Irán it is sweet to me to see this splendid kindly lawyer, the relative of Táhirih, standing with the Bahá'ís saying "Alláh-u-Abhá!" to me as I motored out from Irán; spiritually as well as physically he seemed to be standing with them and in that instant as though a symbol of the perfect unity, a rainbow gorgeous and bright came into the sky above us!

Remembering many Incidents that this relative told me about Táhirih and having carefully written what descendants of early Bahá'ís told me about her, I present the following sketch. Details differ but all accounts show the same shining glory of this first Bahá'í woman, Her Highness the Pure One! Táhirih was born about 1819 or 1820. The book with the birth records was burned together with her other books and her clothing the day after her tragic death, so I heard; but the consensus of historians and descendants of people who knew her agree that she was born sometime between 1817 and 1820.⁷

As a child she was so intelligent so eager for knowledge and so quickly grasped her lessons that her father, one of the most learned mullás of all Irán taught her himself and later had a teacher for her. This was most unusual, for girls in her day had no educational opportunities. She outdistanced her brothers in her progress and passed brilliant examinations in all theological studies; few men in her day knew the Qu'rán and its meanings and the traditions and Islámic Law as well as she. Because she was a woman they would not give her a degree. Her father said what a pity she had not been born a son, for then she could have followed in his career as a famous mullá of the Empire.

Her father's name was Háji Mullá Sálih. He had two brothers, the elder was Háji Mullá Muhammad Taqi, a bitter enemy of the Báb, and the younger Háji Mullá 'Ali who became a devoted follower of the Báb. Táhirih was married to her cousin Mullá Muhammad, son of Mullá Taqi, when she was quite young, some historians state that she was thirteen when she married. Her grandson in Tihrán also told me she was thirteen years of age when she was married and that she had three children, two sons and one daughter. He also said that sometime after the death of their mother these children ran away from home because their father was not good to them; one son went to Najaf and the other came and lived near Tihrán, the girl died not long after the passing of her mother.

Táhirih from her earliest youth was a deep student of religion.

⁷ According to "The Dawn-Breakers" Táhirih was born 1233 A.H., (1817-18 A.D.) the very year which witnessed the birth of Bahá'u'lláh. Thus she would be thirty-six years of age when she suffered martyrdom in Tihran.

One day when she was visiting in the home of Mullá Javád's nephew she discovered some books in the library written by two eminent scholars, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsá'i and his pupil Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashti. She was profoundly interested in these books and asked to take them home to study them. Some of the relatives of Táhirih told me that she lived most of her life in her father's home and even after her marriage she was almost always with her mother until her journeys began. She had a room in her husband's house and a few manuscripts and papers there, and these were not burned after her death. Her host, the cousin, was very loath to loan her the books that day, for he told her that her father seeing her read them at home, would be very displeased, as he was opposed to these modern progressive thinkers. However, she persuaded her cousin-host and took the books to her father's house where she studied them carefully.

I digress a little to explain some of Shaykh Ahsá'i's teachings because they radically affected the orthodox tenets of Islám which Táhirih had been taught at home. She compared them with the inner principles of the Qu'rán and felt that they were sound. One of the tenets of the Shaykh was regarding the belief about the resurrection of the body; he taught that the body will not rise but disintegrate, while the spirit will ascend to heaven and dwell in the presence of God. The second doctrine was that God, in the past had always sent Teachers or Educators to His people to lead them to His Kingdom, and that this Divine Bounty had not ceased.

Another doctrine of the Shaykh related to the common belief among the Shi'ih Muhammadans that there was One hidden for a thousand years who would come as a great Teacher. Regarding⁸ this belief, the Shaykh said that the promised One would not appear like that, but that he would be born of woman and would manifest Himself very shortly in the world. This last was very important and created a great furor, because for one thousand years the Muslims had been expecting that invisible Person, who, as they believed, had been in hiding, but they are now suddenly told by the Shaykh that He would be born of woman and would come soon!

The mission of Shaykh Ahsá'i was to announce the glad tidings that a Báb will come, although he had never seen him. He also mentioned certain signs of the Coming, all of which could be recognised after the appearance of the Báb. A fuller account of these Shaykhis and their doctrines can be found in "A Traveller's Narrative," Volume II, translated and published by the late Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University, Cambridge, England.⁹ Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsá'i was born about 1745. He had left his native place Ahsá and gone to Karbilá and Najaf to teach and diffuse spiritual knowledge; here he later had many followers and attained such fame that Fath-'Ali Sháh of Irán invited him to come to Tihrán. During this journey in Irán he stopped in Qazvin. Here he paid a visit to Háji Mullá Muhammad Taqi. The men had a discussion about the resurrection: the Qazvin Mullá called him a heretic showing such open hostility that Shaykh Ahsá'i was compelled to leave the city.¹⁰ Táhirih was only a child then, but afterwards, when she used to hear her father and her uncle denounce the doctrines of Shaykh Ahsá'i she was heard to say: "The Shaykh

⁸ Anent, in the original [DM]

⁹ There is also an American edition of "A Traveller's Narrative" published in New York, since I wrote this book.

¹⁰ According to "The Dawn-Breakers" which has been published since I wrote this account in Irán in 1930, Shaykh Ahmad passed on in 1827 at the age of eighty one years, and is laid to rest in Medina.

is in the right and my father and uncle are in the wrong." They said to her even in those early days: "Read our books and writings, we know better than Shaykh Ahsá'i."

Táhirih drew all the books she could find about Shaykh Ahmad's teachings from her cousin's library, and she also asked for and studied the works of Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashti,¹¹ the disciple who became the head of the Shaykhi School after Shaykh Ahmad. It is important to know something of these two great leaders of thought in that period, for just as John the Baptist announced the coming of Jesus Christ, so Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim foretold the coming of a Báb in the very near future.

Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University writes that Siyyid Kázim when a boy of twelve and living in Ardibil, 'Iráq, had had a dream in which he was told to put himself under the spiritual guidance of Shaykh Ahsá'i who was then residing in Yazd. He went and studied with him, and as I said in the preceding paragraph, became Shaykh Ahmad's successor. Siyyid Kázim wrote more than three hundred books. He died at Karbilá in 1843, just after his return from Kázimayn. Just before the end he said to some of his disciples: "The time of my sojourn in this world has come to an end, and this is my last journey. Why are ye grieved and troubled because of my death? Do you not then desire that I should go and the true One should appear?" Or as "The Dawn Breakers" states it: "Is not your love for me for the sake of that true One whose advent we all await? Would you not wish me to die that the promised One may be revealed?"

This spiritual young woman of Qazvin, Táhirih, had been corresponding with Siyyid Kázim Rashti for some time, asking him many deep questions about religion, and because of her great perception and beauty of character, it was he who had given her the name Qurratu'l-'Ayn which means "Consolation of the eyes"¹² : The letters had been sent and replies received through Táhirih's younger uncle, Háji Mullá 'Alí.

This student of religion tried to present these new teachings to her father, but he only rebuked her. She said that she had found many meanings in these writings and that all were based on the sayings of the Qu'rán and the traditions of the Imáms. She at last said to her father: "I see none of these virtues in you and in Uncle Taqi. She tried to show him the truth about resurrection, ascension, divine promises and the manifestation of the promised One, but he only spoke against them all. One evening, Táhirih to support her claim mentioned one of the traditions of Imám Ja'far. When the father heard this he was very angry and began to ridicule that tradition. She said to him: "Father, you are criticizing the saying of the Imám!" After that she ceased to speak about religion to her father, but asked her questions, by letters, to Siyyid Kázim Rashti in Karbilá.

She had a great longing to go to Karbilá to study with Siyyid Kázim and her uncle, Háji Mullá 'Ali, helped her and her sister to get the permission from the family to make this pilgrimage to the sacred shrines at Karbilá and Najaf; but her real

intention was, in addition to making the pilgrimage, to visit her teacher. Perhaps it was easier to get the consent of her father, husband and her father-in-law because they might think that the pilgrimage would bring her back to orthodoxy! Anyway, it is related that these two young women went on a pilgrimage to Karbilá, that both were exceedingly beautiful and ranked among the most noble. Both were rich. There is a village about fifteen miles from Qazvin which Táhirih's father had given her just as one gift to her; it is called, and the name was chosen by her, Bihjat Abád, which means "Abode of Happiness."

This journey was made in 1843, when Táhirih was twenty-three years old or as some say, twenty six, and the mother of two sons and one daughter.

Her fame had been well established as one of the most learned young woman of the age and one of the most lovely. The only picture one can have of Táhirih is a spiritual one, for no photograph or painting of her was ever made; her relatives told me this. Artists have drawn pictures of her, but they are not from life, they are only imaginary.

During those days she thought only of the coming of the new Teacher into the world and had told her uncle she wished to be the first woman to serve Him, when He appeared. No one realized more than she did the abasement of Irán and the ignorance of woman due to the great fanaticism. She said to her uncle, Mullá 'Ali, "Oh, when will the day come when new laws will be revealed on the earth! I shall be the first to follow these new Teachings and to give my life for my sisters!"

Karbilá, and Najaf which is near to it in 'Iráq, are the two greatest places for Muhammadan pilgrimage, except of course Mecca and Medina in Arabia. However Táhirih went straight to the house of her teacher Siyyid Kázim Rashti in Karbilá; great was her grief that he had passed out from this world ten days before her arrival. She stayed in his home and through the courtesy of the other members of the household, she had access to his many writings some of which had never been published. She studied them eagerly and said to his students: "Consider how much Shaykh Ahsá'i and Siyyid Kázim Rashti have left us, they have bequeathed to us an ocean of instructions!"

Friends in Baghdád told me that Táhirih remained for three years in Karbilá. Some writers say that she took Siyyid Kázim's place and began to teach his students. She sat always behind a curtain, for women were not expected to appear without the veil. It was even a remarkable innovation for a woman to permit her voice to be heard outside the harem, the women's quarters. The world knows all too little about the great women who later were so renowned in Irán, women who had their training in part from their close association with Táhirih in Karbilá and in travelling with her later to other cities. In this group among her students was Shamsu'd-Duhá, this was a title, her real name was Kurshid Bagum of Isfáhán, she was or became the mother of the wife of the King of Martyrs in Isfáhán and the grandmother of Mirza Jalál who married 'Abdu'l Bahá's daughter Rúhá Khánum of Haifa, Palestine. Other friends were the mother and sister of Mullá Husayn Bushrú'i known as the Bábu'l-Báb because he was the first to accept the Báb. (The title means "the gate of the Gate.")

'Abdu'l Bahá, in His "Memorials of the Faithful," published in the Persian language, has written a short chapter about Táhirih, which is the truest, best account of her life. A devoted Bahá'i in Tihiran Mr. Valiollah Varqa, courteously read this book aloud to me, translating most of it; among other points I remember 'Abdu'l Bahá said that some of the disciples of Siyyid Kázim Rashti, after the passing of their teacher, went to the Mosque of Kúfih where they were fasting, praying,

¹¹ Siyyid Kazim, according to "The Dawn-Breakers" was born in Rasht in the Province of Gilan in 1793. He had memorized the Qu'ran before he was twelve years old; in 1806 he lived in Ardibil; later he went to find Shaykh Ahmad and studied with the latter in Yazd; in 1817 both were together in Tihiran. Siyyid Kázim went to Karbilá in 1822 and taught there until his passing on in 1843.

¹² Her father had bestowed on her the name of Umm-i-Salmih [mother of Salmih] but she is never spoken of by this name.

meditating for forty days. Mullá Husayn Bushrú'í and Mullá Aliy-i-Bastámi were among these. Others were waiting in Karbilá and Táhirih was one of these. She kept the fast and meditations during the day, and in the evenings she used to pray and study the religious books. One night, she saw in a dream a young Siyyid standing in the air, then he knelt and prayed. She heard these prayers and learned one by heart, which she quickly wrote down when she awoke.

Some narrators, for example Professor Edward G. Browne in "The New History of the Báb" ("Tarikh-i-Jadid"), related that after the season of prayers by the followers many of them started out in quest of the promised Báb. Mullá Husayn-i-Busrú'í was leaving for Shiráz. Táhirih told him he would see the promised One and requested her spiritual brother to give the new Teacher her devotion and the letter which she had prepared.

When Mullá Bushrú'í met Mirzá 'Ali Muhammad in Shiráz Who announced Himself as the Báb, he became a convert. He gave His Holiness the Báb the letter and message from Táhirih, and then and there the Báb made her one of His Disciples, one of the Eighteen Letters of the Living (and He called Himself the Nineteenth Letter.) Thus Táhirih was the first woman to become a believer in the new Faith. "The Kashfu'l-Ghitá" announced that Táhirih was informed of the Message of the Báb by Mullá 'Aliy-i-Bastámi who visited Karbilá in the year 1844 A.D. (1260 A.H.) after his return from Shiráz.

However, the account from the Nabil Narrative "The Dawn-Breakers" (page 81), surely is accurate and so beautiful that I quote it. "It was Táhirih who, having learned of the intended departure of her sister's husband, Mirzá Muhammad-'Alí from Qazvin, entrusted him with a sealed letter requesting that he deliver it to that promised One whom she said he was sure to meet in the course of his journey. Say to Him, from me, she added: 'The effulgence of Thy face flashed forth, and the rays of Thy visage arose on high. Then speak the word, "Am I not your Lord?" and 'Thou art, Thou art!' we will all reply."

Mirzá Muhammad 'Ali eventually met and recognized the Báb and conveyed to him both the letter and the message of Táhirih. The Báb forthwith declared her one of the Letters of the Living. She is the only one of those eighteen Disciples, those "Letters of the Living" who never attained the Presence of the Báb but her inner sight had glimpsed Him first!

Mullá Bushrú'í, it is said, searched out his companion Mullá 'Aliy-i Bastámi who had also come to Shiráz to look for the promised One - the followers from Karbilá had gone in different directions throughout Irán and 'Iráq but all were seeking the new Teacher - Mullá 'Aliy-i-Bastámi too, accepted the Báb and then he was sent back to Karbilá to carry the Glad Tidings; he took with him one of the Báb's Writings called "The Best of Stories" ("Ahsanu'l-Qisas"), and when Táhirih read this she found in its pages the prayer she had seen in her vision. She was in a state of ecstasy, for now she was quite sure that Mirzá 'Ali-Muhammad in Shiráz was the new Báb, the Manifestation. She studied the book profoundly, sent for Mullá 'Aliy-i-Bastámi and asked him much about the Báb. She believed and at once began translating into Persian and making comments on this first Book. She also wrote some books in Persian and composed poems about the Báb. She was devotedly carrying out all her divine duties.

When people ask if the Bahá'í Faith arose from Muhammadanism, there is only one answer, yes. Just as Christianity sprang from the Jewish religion so you can see that all the first followers of the Báb were Muslims, many of them were mullás and the Báb Himself was a direct descendant of Muhammad. However, His Teachings were

NEW, otherwise over three hundred of the greatest mullás in Irán would not have been martyred for this Cause during the first ten years. He called Himself only the Gate of Knowledge to announce "Him whom God shall make manifest." Bahá'u'lláh came just as the Báb foretold, and it was Bahá'u'lláh who revealed to this universal cycle the Bahá'í Revelation, a universal religion. It is the greatest truth to know about on the earth today, for it is the master key to this world and the Next; and it is the Plan for a new divine civilization.

No thinking man or woman wishes to die without having done something for humanity and for the future generations. Others built for us, surely we are not so indifferent as to fail to look into the most dynamic Plan for the new spiritual development of mankind. Let us study the Teachings for ourselves to see their claims, PROVE them true or false! The finest trait in Táhirih, or at least the one that helped the world most, was her fidelity in searching for the truth! She began as a little girl and continued until the day of her passing from this world.

The 'ulamás, hearing that she had become an ardent believer in the Báb and was teaching this Truth in the very center of Islamic life, - for it is in Karbilá and Najaf where many of the world renowned 'ulamás live, - of course they complained to the government. Officials in searching for her, arrested instead, Kurshid Bagum. As soon as Táhirih learned this she wrote to the governor saying that she was the one they were looking for, and to release her friend. The governor put Táhirih's house under surveillance, so that no one could come or go; and he wrote to the Baghdád Government asking for instructions. Guards watched this house for three months, so that no one could have access to it. When no word came from Baghdád, Táhirih wrote to the Karbilá Governor that she was going on to Baghdad and wait there for instructions from the Baghdád or Constantinople authorities, for at that time 'Iráq belonged to Turkey. The governor granted permission and Táhirih, Kurshid Bagum and both the mother and sister of the Báb-u-'l-Báb with many others started for Baghdad, Táhirih was stoned as she was leaving Karbilá.

Reaching Baghdád, the party came to the home of Shaykh Muhammad-ibn-Shiblu'l-'Iráqi, the father of Muhammad Mustafá Baghdádi, (Muhammad Mustafá Baghdádi was the father of Dr. Zia Baghdádi who lived in Chicago, United States, for a number of years.) Every day, now, she was teaching the Cause. She spoke with such power and eloquence that those who had seen and heard her before were amazed and said: "This is not the woman we knew before." Her lectures began to attract very great audiences; she aroused in her hearers a keen desire to investigate these Truths. Within a short time her extraordinary eloquence, deep learning and convincing proofs won for her many followers, and a large number of her students in Karbilá came on to Baghdád to attend her classes. As her addresses struck at the very root of the supremacy of the 'ulamás, naturally the mullás were wildly alarmed; many of them rose up against her and against all who believed in these Teachings of the Báb.

Here in Baghdád, just as in Karbilá, she challenged the clergy - through the governor - to come to a public discussion of these new religious questions. She was also corresponding with the mullás in Kázimayn. They made excuses, refused and there was such an outcry from these 'ulamás that the government was obliged to send Táhirih with the other ladies, to the house of the Mufti (Judge) of Baghdád, his name was Ibn-i-Alusi, and he was the son of Siyyid Mahmúd Alusi. This was the year 1263 A.H., which is 1847. She stayed there for three months, and all this time they were waiting for instructions from the sultans as to what should be done with Táhirih. The mufti each day asked questions along scientific lines, and he did not

show any amazement at Táhirih's answers. It is reported that he said: "O Táhirih! I swear by God that I share in thy belief, but I am apprehensive of the swords of the family of 'Uthman." Then she went to the house of the Chief Mufti and there defended her Faith.

During these days in Baghdád many people continued to come to hear about the Teachings. While in Tihrán I heard from Dr. Aristoo Hakim how his grandfather, Dr. Hakim Masih, physician to the Sháhansháh¹³ came with His Majesty on a pilgrimage to Karbilá. En route in Baghdad this devout Jew, Dr. Hakim Masih, so loved by the Royal Family, saw a large group of very learned people most of them 'ulamás listening to a lecture and later discussing with a lady sitting behind a curtain. He went to listen. She was arguing with these mullás. Her speech was so logical, she conquered them and they were not able to answer her proofs. He was very astonished, but soon he too was convinced she was right, and he believed! He had not heard of the Báb and he thought this lady must be the promised One. He listened to her lectures three times, continued his pilgrimage with the Sháh and returned to Tihrán. He offered his services to go to the prison to see a very sick man, Mullá Asdaq, imprisoned in Tihrán dungeon for being a Bábi, and from that man learned about Táhirih and the Báb. The many hundreds of Bahá'i Jews in Tihrán and Hamadán today are the fruits of his teaching the Jews. His son continued his work, and his grandchildren most of whom are physicians, are among the most cultured, capable, faithful Bahá'i workers of Tihrán today. One grandson Dr. Lotfullah Hakim spent some time with 'Abdu'l Bahá in Haifa and was there when the latter ascended on November 28, 1921. To Dr. Lotfullah Hakim we are indebted for the photographs when 'Abdu'l Bahá was knighted, His last days in the gardens and His funeral cortege. Oh, how the Hakim family has served this holy Cause since its earliest days!

It is attributed to this mufti who entertained Táhirih in Baghdád (at the request of the governor), that he wrote a book in Arabic which is widely read in the West, and in it he speaks of Táhirih during her stay in his home. He said that every morning in the early dawn she would arise and engage in prayer and meditation. She fasted frequently. He stated that he had never seen a woman more virtuous, more devoted, nor any man more learned or more courageous than she was.

One evening the mufti's father came to call upon his son. He did not even greet Táhirih, but began to rebuke his son. The father also said that a message had just arrived from Constantinople in which the Sultan gives Táhirih her freedom but commands her not to stay in Turkish territory. "Make preparations, to leave 'Iráq tomorrow," he said.

Immediately Táhirih and the ladies left the mufti's house and prepared for their journey to Irán. My friends in Baghdád said that this son of Álusi admired Táhirih for her learning. They told me that he said: "I see in her such knowledge, education, politeness and good character as I have not seen in any great men of this century." The Baghdád friends said that when his father entered the house and began cursing Táhirih, because he felt she had changed the religion of Muhammad, his son was ashamed and came to ask Táhirih's pardon begging her to forgive the fault of his father; it was he himself, the mufti who came to tell her: "You are free, but now you must arrange your things for travelling to Irán for the sultan commands it."

A large group of friends, more than thirty in all, went with her on her journey, for they loved her and realized the dangers ahead. The Mufti of Baghdád graciously sent ten horsemen

under the command of a general who with great honor and respect escorted her with her friends from Baghdád to Khaniqin and to the Persian frontier. With her exalted Highness Táhirih were Kurshid Bagum, and the mother of Mirzá Hádiyí-Nahri; others were Siyyid Ahmad Yazdi, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Báyigani, Siyyid Muhsin-i-Kázimi, Mullá Ibráhim Mahalláti, among the Persians; and among the Arabs were Shaykh Muhammad-i-Shibi who arranged everything for her journey, hiring the mules and the places to sit, ordering the food and he paid all the expenses for the group as far as Kirmánsháh, Others from 'Iráq were his son Muhammad-Mustafá, Shaykh Sálih Karimi, Shaykh Sultán-i-Karbilá'i, Dervish Makú'i, Javád, 'Abdu'l Hádi Zahrawi, Husayn Hallawi, Siyyid Jabbáni and others.

When Táhirih and her friends reached Kirmánsháh the women were given one house and the men another. As soon as the inhabitants heard of their arrival they rushed to hear about the Teachings. The 'ulemás created an uproar and caused their expulsion; the Mayor of Kirmánsháh permitted the mob to attack their houses and loot everything the Bábis possessed. Then these followers of the Báb were put into a coach drawn by horses, and they were driven out into the desert; there they were put out. The coach was left but the horses were taken back to the city, These travellers were in a miserable condition, they had no food, no change of clothing, no rugs. Táhirih wrote to the Governor of Kirmánsháh, explaining what the mayor had done, and she added: "We were your guests in Kirmánsháh, do you think it was kind to treat us like this?" One of the group walked to Kirmánsháh to take this message.

When the governor received her letter he was very surprised, for he had known nothing about this injustice. He found that all had been done at the instigation of the 'ulamás, and at once commanded the mayor to return all pillaged property to these people, to take the horses back to them and see that they could go safely on to Hamadán. He even invited them to return to Kirmánsháh, but this Táhirih declined to do. According to "The Dawn Breakers," an enthusiastic reception was accorded her on her arrival in Kirmánsháh. Princes, 'ulamás and government officials hastened to visit her, and were greatly impressed by her eloquence, her fearlessness, her extensive knowledge and the force of her character. The commentary on the Surih of Kawthar, revealed by the Báb, was publicly read and translated. The wife of the Amir, the Governor of Kirmánsháh, "was among the ladies who met Táhirih and heard her expound the sacred Teachings. The Amir¹⁴ himself, together with his family, acknowledged the truth of the Cause and all testified to their admiration and love for Táhirih. According to Muhammad Mustafá in "The Dawn Breakers" p. 272, Táhirih tarried two days in the village of "Sahnih" on her way to Hamadán, where she was accorded a reception no less enthusiastic than the one which had greeted her in the village of Karand. The inhabitants of the village begged to be allowed to gather together the members of their community and to join hands with the body of her followers for the spread and promotion of the Cause. She advised them, however, to remain; she extolled and blessed their efforts, and proceeded to Hamadán.

So the journey was continued and along the way especially at Sahnih, chiefs of tribes welcomed her. When they reached Hamadán all were very happy, they were given a reception of welcome. The governor came to visit her and to hear about the Teachings; princesses and other notable women came to listen to her.

¹³ Sháhansháh - Shah of shahs (King of kings). [DM]

¹⁴ Amir - Prince. [DM]

No wonder they were eager to speak with her for she brought the Truth, and as the late Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University, England, said: "The appearance of such a woman as Táhirih in any country and in any age, is a rare phenomenon, but in such a country as Irán it is a prodigy... nay; almost a miracle. Alike in virtue of her marvelous beauty, her rare intellectual gifts, her fervid eloquence, her fearless devotion, and her glorious martyrdom, she stands incomparable and immortal amidst her countrywomen. Had the religion of the Báb no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient that it produced a heroine like Qurratu'l-'Ayn, (Táhirih)."

One of the leading mullás of Hamadán however, was very opposed to Táhirih and would have urged the people to kill her, but he feared the government. She wrote him a long letter explaining the Teachings of the Báb and sent this to him by one of the faithful disciples, Mullá Ibráhim Mahalláti. He brought it just at an hour when several 'ulemás had met to decide what they could do against Táhirih. This letter was like a red flag to a bull, they fell upon its bearer, Mullá Ibráhim, and beat him until he became unconscious. When he was brought back to Táhirih, she did not weep as the princesses feared she would do, but she astonished them all by saying: "Come, get up Mullá Ibráhim; happiness and peace be upon you that you have suffered in the path of your Beloved! Rise up, and continue to work for Him!" When he opened his eyes, Táhirih smiled at him and said: "O Mullá Ibráhim, for one beating you became unconscious; this is the time we are ready to give our lives, did not the Disciples of Christ do it, and the Disciples of Muhammad?" And Mullá Ibráhim actually arose from his faint and began to serve again!

Táhirih was planning to go to Tihrán to try and meet His Imperial Majesty Muhammad Sháh and tell him about these new Teachings, but one of the mullás, who had refused to meet her and discuss the new religion when she was in Kirmánsháh had secretly written to her father to tell him that his daughter was disgracing the reputation of the mullás. Her father at once sent his son and some of the other relatives to Hamadán to welcome her but to urge her to return home. Intuitively she knew they were on the way, and she said to her followers: "They are coming for us, so we shall start back to Qazvin before they reach here." She sent a number of her devoted followers back to 'Iráq; she left some in Hamadán, and a few others accompanied her. Among the latter were Kurshid Bagum, Shaykh Sálih Karimi, and Mullá Ibráhim of Mahallát. They met the mounted men, her relatives, who had come to find her; these wished to take her alone to her father's house. She refused their offer saying: "I am not alone, these are my friends and they must come with me," so they all came together. It was bad weather and a very disagreeable journey of one week.

Chapter II. Events in Qazvin and Tihrán

Arriving in Qazvin, Táhirih went to her father's home, and the Arabs took a place in a caravanserai. That first night there was a family council, and her father, her husband and her uncle who was also her father-in-law reproached her. In the excitement her father said: "If you, with all the learning, scholarship and intelligence which you possess, were to claim to be the Báb or even more than that, I would readily admit and allow your claim; but what can I do, when you choose to follow this Shirázi lad?" The book "Tárikh-i-Jadid" has the following: "Great heavens! Such is the arrogance and prejudice of this family that the imagination can scarcely conceive these developments! Here was one who saw his daughter,

notwithstanding her talents and accomplishments, regarded herself but as the dust in comparison with that Sun of Truth and publicly said: 'With the knowledge which I possess, it is impossible that I should be mistaken in the recognition of Him who is the Lord of the Worlds, whom all peoples anxiously expect: I have duly recognized Him by the proofs of reason and the evidences of knowledge; though this knowledge and these attainments of mine are but a minute drop beside that vast and all-embracing ocean or as an insignificant speck¹⁵ beside that mighty and radiant luminary'; yet notwithstanding this, her father answered: 'Though you regard your excellence and learning of such small account in comparison with the virtues of the Shirázi lad, still, had you been my son (instead of my daughter) and had you put forward this claim (of being the Báb), I would have accepted it.'

Her Uncle Taqi who, as I said was her father-in-law, cursed the Báb and in his violent anger struck her several blows. With her quick intuition she uttered those fatal words of foresight which later almost caused her to be branded with hot irons. She said: "O Uncle, I see your mouth fill with blood!"

The question of her returning to her husband arose, and this she absolutely refused to do. Try, as they might, she would not consent to be reconciled with her husband Mullá Muhammad. She gave as her reason: "He, in that he rejects God's religion is unclean; between us there can be naught in common." Or as "The Dawn-Breakers" states it, Táhirih had replied to his request: "If you desire and really wish to be a faithful mate and companion to me, you would have hastened to meet me in Karbilá and would on foot have guided my howdah (a stretcher carried by a mule for travelling purposes) all the way to Qazvin; I would while journeying with you, have aroused you from your sleep and heedlessness and would have showed you the way of truth. But this was not to be. Three years have elapsed since our separation..." This marriage had not been of Táhirih's choosing. Parents in those days arranged the betrothals and marriages. Her husband a few weeks later divorced her. His father and he pronounced her a heretic and strove day and night to undermine her position.

During the first few days after her return, Táhirih used to go to a kinsman's house, where she could meet the wives of distinguished men and speak with them frankly about the Teachings of the Báb. Her brother-in-law and sister were believer. According to Samandar who was one of the early believers of Qazvin, and whose descendants I met and spoke with often during my stay in Qazvin, Táhirih's sister, Mardiyih, was the wife of Mirzá Muhammad-'Ali, one of the Letters of the Living; he later suffered martyrdom at Shaykh Tabarsi. Mardiyih recognised and embraced the Message of the Báb, Mirzá Muhammad-'Ali was the son of Hájji Mullá Abdu'l-Vahhab to whom the Báb addressed a Tablet while in the neighbourhood of Qazvin.

Táhirih and Mardiyih's Uncle Taqi was an Imám-Jum'ih which means that he was the chief of the mullás and led in prayer on Fridays in the mosque. Suddenly one hears that Mullá Taqi has been murdered in the mosque. Instantly his son and all the family recalled¹⁶ Táhirih's words: "I see your mouth fill with blood!", and they accused her of instigating the murder or at least of knowing all about it. Yet her mother said: "How could one know so exactly about anyone's death, if she did not get it through vision?" Her mother felt that her daughter was innocent, and this mother and daughter had always been

¹⁵ Speck - 'Mote' in the original. [DM]

¹⁶ The date of this murder was sometime between August 18-September 1847 A.D., as it was 1263 A.H.

close to each other; relatives of the family told me so.

Here I give you a few paragraphs from Jináb-i-Samandar Qazvini, the old and great Bahá'í who wrote it especially for Dr. Susan I. Moody in Tíhrán: She had been asked to send something about Táhirih to Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, President of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance for their Congress in Budapest, Hungary, in June, 1913, and later to be published in a book about notable women. It was not received in time by Dr. Moody and thus nothing was sent to Budapest, but this part about the murder is significant because it is an account by one who was a little boy in Qazvin at that time and remembered the event vividly:

"A certain Mullá 'Abdul'lláh Sálíh of Shiráz, who according to his own statement was not a convinced believer in Báb, but was a fervent admirer of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim, at that time having heard Háji Mullá Taqi often abuse his friends, went one night to the mosque¹⁷ of Taqi and concealed himself there until morning. When Mullá Taqi came in the morning to pray, this man struck him in the mouth with a stiletto¹⁸, and then hid the stiletto under a bridge near the mosque and ran away: in that moment no one else save God knew of this. When the people gathered for prayer, they understood that Taqi had been attacked and killed. They informed his son and others relatives and bore the body home. God is my witness of what happened that day in Qazvin.

"Because the people thought that Táhirih and the believers had brought about this death, the officers of the government were commanded to arrest prominent believers, and a crowd of theological students entered the house of Háji Siyyid Asadu'lláh.¹⁹ He and his nephew Aqá Mihdi who were in the house were arrested and taken to prison."

"The mob plundered the houses of every one known to be a relative of the believers, I was a very small child but I remember well the time that Siyyid Muhsin, known as a persecutor and murderer of Bábis, accompanied by many officers and executioners knocked at our door. No one opened it so they climbed over the wall and entered, investigating and wishing to break into some rooms that were locked. The master of the house opened the doors, while all the family were shaking with fear on account of the horrible actions of these men. This Siyyid Muhsin would say to the women: 'Your husband has left his religion and you can be married to any one whom you wish.'

"Acting on the suspicion that Táhirih had contrived with Háji Siyyid Asadu'lláh to bring about the death of Mullá Taqi, his son Mullá Muhammad who was the husband of Táhirih induced the governor to bring her for trial. Her father refused to let her go, but later they took her by force and with her the maid-servant Káfíyih and other women. They were questioned at Government House but replied: 'This deed has been perpetrated without our knowledge.' Mullá Muhammad kept urging the governor to punish them severely. Acting on this hint, the governor gave the executioner an order to bring in the irons for branding. In order to terrorize Táhirih they proceeded to put the hands of Káfíyih under a sliding door, intending to brand them from the other side. Her Highness Táhirih under these terrible conditions, realizing that God was their only refuge, turned her uncovered face towards the prison of the

¹⁷ Mosque - masjid in original. [DM]

¹⁸ A short dagger with a blade thick in proportion to its width. [DM]

¹⁹ Siyyid Asadu'lláh was a faithful believer, and his daughter was a sister-in-law of Táhirih.

Báb at Máh-kú, and began to pray and supplicate, at that moment the situation was beyond words.

"Then on the air outside a voice arose, crying: 'The murderer is found! This turned the attention of all. Who is the murderer and where was he found? No branding was done, and it was learned that the murderer was that same Mullá Sálíh-i-Shirázi, who, when he beheld the wild commotion in the city and saw the arrest of the innocent, fled on his own feet to Government House and confessed his crime saying: 'I was the one who thrust the dagger into his mouth. I had no accomplice and you have arrested people of God without cause.'

"They asked him: 'Why did you kill such a learned man?' He answered: 'He was not a learned man, he that only stole a little bunch of grapes from a cultural garden. Had he been a wise man he would not have used bad words in the pulpit against my teachers Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsá'i and Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashti and for that reason only have I killed him.' Then they brought him into the High Court of Justice face to face with Mullá Muhammad and Háji Mullá Sálíh, husband and father of Táhirih. He was examined and put to trial and with great eloquence he made his confession. He/said: 'He is lying.' Then he added: 'The stiletto with which I struck him in the mouth is hidden under the bridge near the mosque!'

"A messenger was sent who found and brought the stiletto. Mullá Muhammad then said angrily: 'This man is not worthy to be the murderer of my father.' Mirzá Sálíh replied: 'Bring a suit of fine clothes for me so that your father's murderer may appear worthy;' and with heavy chains about his neck he was then taken to prison. The people of the city were coming in groups to peer at him through the windows of the prison. Among them was the afore-mentioned Siyyid Muhsin, who as he neared the prison door began abusing him with vile words. Quickly the brave lion sprang toward him, throwing the spike of his chain at him. The Siyyid turned and fled. During this time and while her husband was persecuting the believers and demanding many lives in retribution for his father's life, Her Highness Táhirih was closely confined in her father's house and was entirely prevented from communicating with the world outside.

"Mullá Muhammad her husband, and another cousin intended to poison her but they did not succeed. None of the friends could go to the house except Khatún-Jan the eldest daughter of Háji Asadu'lláh. This devoted and faithful friend was ingenious in excuses to go to the house. Sometimes she would get in under the pretence of rinsing clothes, and thus obtain news or carry food, since Táhirih was often obliged to refuse the food prepared in the house, and thus was sustaining life under great difficulties and hardship. Aqá Muhammad-Hádi the husband of this loyal friend was the eldest brother²⁰ of Her Highness and I have been told by Jináb-i-Aqá Muhammad Jawád-i-Farahádi, familiarly known to all Bahá'ís as Amu-Ján that this brother Aqá Hádi had secretly left Qazvin at the time of the murder of Mullá Taqi, that he went to Tíhrán and entered the presence of Bahá'u'lláh who sent him back to Qazvin to help Táhirih and to bring her to Tíhrán. He carried a holy letter to her from Bahá'u'lláh, which his wife delivered to her using the same strategy as before.

"After reading the letter Táhirih said: 'You go and I shall follow.' And within the hour she started. They took her to the house of a carpenter where no one would think of looking for her. However her absence was soon discovered and at once the

²⁰ According to "The Dawn-Breakers" Mirza Hadi was the son of Mirza 'Abdu'l-Vahhab-i-Qazvini (page 80) and Mirza 'Abdu'l-Vahhab was Táhirih's own brother. (Page 285.)

city was in an uproar and the house of Háji Asadu'lláh was looted and sacked. During that same night Aqá Hádi with the assistance of Aqá Qali, a servant and a devoted believer, took her to the city wall near the gate called SháhzádiH Husayn. They succeeded in passing over the wall and went to a slaughter house outside the city where horses were waiting; mounting them they started for Tihrán going by way of the villages Kuldarih and Ishtihárd. When they reached the Shrine of the Imám Zádih Hasan four miles from Tihrán they stopped for the first time. Aqá Quli cared for the horses while Her Highness was resting and Aqá Hádi went into Tihrán to make known her arrival. A believer named Karbilá'i Hasan went out to the garden to see her, but as Aqá Quli did not know him he refused to let him enter. He smilingly persisted and Aqá Quli gave him two hard blows on the chest; Her Highness here came to the rescue and brought the guest fruit and baggali, species of bean, and conversed with him until a party of horsemen came and took them to the house of Bahá'u'lláh.²¹

The next day she was taken to a village where there were many believers. Aqá Quli was rewarded abundantly for his faithfulness; he prospered in all his affairs, later becoming a high official in the government. He also made a pilgrimage to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh but of this I have not the detailed account, neither do I know by what means Her Highness was later brought back to Tihrán nor the actual facts of her martyrdom. Signed - Samandar."

Mirzá Sálíh-i-Shirázi the murderer of Mullá Taqi was put in chains and sent to Tihrán. After reaching Tihrán - and some historians say it was before he left Qazvin - he learned that although he had confessed his crime in order to save the believers they were not released, so one night he escaped from his prison and took refuge at the house of Ridá Khán, the son of the Master of Stable of Muhammad Sháh. Ridá Khán was a believer; after a few days with his host Mirzá Sálíh, who by now had become very attracted to the Cause of the Báb, fled to the fortress of Tabarasi in Mazindarán. Mounted police were sent out from Tihrán to search for him, but he reached the fortress in safety.²²

Some of the other Bábi prisoners were sent back to Qazvin and put to death. The "Tárikh-i-Jadid" states: "Those innocent persons remained in prison, but though the son of Háji Mullá Muhammad-Taqi made the most strenuous efforts to obtain from the administration of the Sacred Law in Tihrán an order for the execution of one of the prisoners, he was not successful. Then he accused the believers in the Báb's Teachings of this and that; and his Majesty Muhammad Sháh ordered the learned mujtahid Aqá Mahmúd of Tihrán to investigate and ascertain their tenets. So they brought the prisoners before him, and when he had met and conversed much with them the falsity of Mullá Muhammad's assertions concerning the Bábis became evident. Finally Mullá Muhammad went before His Majesty the Sháh and rent his shirt, and began to weep, saying: "They have slain Háji Mullá Muhammad Taqi, and shall no one's blood be shed in atonement?" The Sháh answered: "The murderer, who has himself confessed, has escaped from prison. If thou desirest the lawful application of the lex talionis²³, then no

²¹ Some historians say that Bahá'u'lláh Himself came with a large escort and brought her into the city. An excellent account of her journey to Tihrán is given in "The Dawn- Breakers" pp. 283-287.

²² Both these young men, Ridá Khan and Mirza Salih, were martyred in 1849 when this fort was overcome.

²³ Lex talionis - Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth - justice

administrator of the Sacred Law will sentence an innocent man to suffer death instead of the escaped murderer. But if thou seekest for illegal retaliation, then why dost thou introduce the name of law? Go, kill one of them." So they took Shaykh Sálíh the Arab, a godly man, endowed, as was proved in several ways, with a pure heart and consummated his martyrdom by blowing him from a gun.

"Then Mullá Muhammad prayed that he might be permitted some other prisoners (one of whom was Chief Secretary to his Imperial Majesty the Sháhinsháh. I saw Bahá'u'lláh's home in Tihrán, it showed that he must have been very rich for it was like seven great residences all connected. Also he had a summer home outside the city on the Elburz Mountain slope. He had become a follower of the Báb, soon after the Bábu'l-Báb, in 1844. He never saw the Báb. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh corresponded with each other from the time when Bahá'u'lláh accepted the Báb's Cause.

Táhirih, who, as I stated in the beginning, never had seen the Báb, longed to go to Máh-ku to meet Him. Bahá'u'lláh explained to her how impossible this would be.

The believers had been given permission by the Báb and urged to visit Khurásán if possible, to learn from and honor the Bábu'l-Báb. Táhirih decided to do this, but in the days she remained in Tihrán she quickly saw the great station, spiritually, of Bahá'u'lláh and consulted Him in all matters. To me it was strange, but certainly when I was in Tihrán and spoke with a descendant of Táhirih, he said, that she had told the Sháhinsháh she believed in Bahá'u'lláh, and was commanded by Bahá'u'lláh, to proclaim the New Day of God. I repeated my question, asking if he did not mean the Báb, and the second time he answered: "No, it was Bahá'u'lláh!" Certainly with her deep insight she recognized Bahá'u'lláh's part in this great Universal religion, and every act of her life after this visit proved it.

She was very devoted to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, then a little boy three or four years old. She used to hold him a great deal. One day Siyyid Yahyá-y i-Dárábi surnamed Vahid came to call upon her. He was one of those early believers who later was martyred in Nayriz. He waited a long time and friends said to Táhirih: "Should you not leave the child and go and speak with him?" She is said to have replied as she drew the little one closer to herself: "Shall I leave thee, Protector of the Cause, and go and see one of followers of the Cause?" Those who heard this were amazed, because at that time even the father of this little boy had not announced His Own Mission. Perhaps in their private talks Bahá'u'lláh had told her something of His work.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in his book "Memorials of the Faithful" also speaks of this visit of Siyyid Yahyá-y i-Dárábi, also called Vahid. He said: "I was sitting on the knee of Jináb-i-Táhirih, and Siyyid Yahyá was reciting some of the traditions of the Imáms regarding the new Manifestation. Suddenly Táhirih interrupted him and said: "O Yahyá, bring forth an act if you have the real knowledge! To-day is not the time for reciting traditions, but to-day is the time for steadfastness, of tearing away the veils of superstition, of uplifting the Word of God, of sacrificing our lives in the Path of God. Indeed we must support our talks with real acts."

The next and a very significant event of this history of the Cause was the Conference at Badasht. Perhaps you ask, where is Badasht? It is situated between Tihrán and Mázindarán, an out-of-the-way summer-place, full of gardens and pastures with a few dwelling-houses. It used to be a

matching the crime. [DM]

summer resort for the nobility. Nothing is more natural than that Bahá'u'lláh should choose it for the Council of the Báb's followers, for it was quiet and had beautiful gardens just outside the place; the three gardens they occupied had a great court or square in the center. There they could consult freely; it was far too dangerous to attempt such a gathering in Tihrán. Probably the believers were going to stop in this hamlet, en route to Khurasan.

Bahá'u'lláh sent Táhirih to Badasht with servants and preparations and money for the expenses of all her party. A few days later, He Himself went, and Quddús also came. Bahá'u'lláh rented three gardens, one of which He assigned exclusively to Quddús; another He set apart for Táhirih and her attendants, and reserved the third for Himself; the tents of the believers were pitched in the court in the center. Bahá'u'lláh's tent was that of a Vazirian family, for he was the son of Vazir. Táhirih's words to one of the servants show the solemn import of this gathering. When she saw that he wondered that she, a woman, was there consulting and addressing - even from behind a curtain - in that first day so many men, she called him to her and said: "Our talk is about God, about religion, about spiritual matters, and above all about surrendering our lives in the path of Truth. Know that every step we take is in the path of God. Are you prepared to follow us?" Each day one of their number gave a talk on the cause of the Báb.

I quote from "The Dawn-Breakers" the following account: "Those who had gathered at Badasht were eighty-one in number, all of whom, from the time of their arrival to the day of their dispersion, were the guests of Bahá'u'lláh. Every day He revealed a Tablet which Mirzá Sulaymán-i-Núri chanted in the presence of the assembled believers. Upon each He bestowed a new Name, He Himself was henceforth designated by the name of Bahá; upon the Last Letter of the Living was conferred the appellation of Quddús, and to Qurratu'l-'Ayn was given the title of Táhirih. To each of those who convened at Badasht a special Tablet was subsequently revealed by the Báb, each of whom He addressed by the name recently conferred upon him. When, at a later time, a number of the more rigid and conservative among her fellow-disciples chose to accuse Táhirih of indiscreetly rejecting the time-honored traditions of the past, the Báb, to whom these complaints had been addressed, replied in the following terms: 'what am I to say regarding her whom the Tongue of Power and Glory has named Táhirih, (the Pure One)?' Each day of that memorable gathering witnessed the abrogation of a new law and the repudiation of a long-established tradition."

Monsieur A. L. M. Nicolas, the French historian, described this meeting and says it continued for several days. The discussion related mainly to the change from the old religion to the new Teachings of the Báb.

According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's account in the "Memorials of the Faithful", at the time this meeting was held in Badasht, the Báb had not yet proclaimed the final stage of his Manifestation which was that of Qá'im. He had first declared himself to be the Báb, but by Qá'im is meant the promised Imám. Bahá'u'lláh, Quddús and Táhirih here at Badasht made necessary arrangements for the general proclamation of the Báb and the abrogation of certain formal rights and traditions. Then on a certain day. Bahá'u'lláh was ill with fever in his tent, and indeed there was a wisdom in this. Jináb-i-Quddús came out of his own garden and went to see Bahá'u'lláh. Táhirih sent word and asked Quddús to come to her. When he did not comply with this request, Táhirih herself came out to the garden of Bahá'u'lláh without her veil, saying to them that the New Revelation had become manifest. At the sight of this woman, all the believers present were astonished and

disturbed realizing the Proclamation of the Cause and the cancellation of some of the old laws. There was so much excitement about this unprecedented action²⁴ that Bahá'u'lláh told one of the believers to read aloud the chapter of the Qu'rán called Váqi'ih about the Resurrection. In this it states that something unusual would happen on the Promised Day. When the believers witnessed this happening they all fled away; afterwards some did not object to it, and some others came again into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh to ask about this matter. Some say that when the matter of Badasht was referred to the Báb, He wrote telling the believers to follow Táhirih's instructions, and speaks of her using the title Hadrat-i-Táhirih, 'Abdu'l-Bahá uses this name instead of Qurratu'l-'Ayn in his book "Memorials of the Faithful". Háji Jáni in his narrative speaks of Qurratu'l-'Ayn as the "Mother of the world".

The Conference in Badasht was in session only a short period. It is recorded that Bahá'u'lláh's sojourn there was twenty-two days. The exciting discussions attracted a number of inhabitants to the place and they soon plundered the Bábís, who did not resist or fight. Thus the Conference was broken up in disorder, in this "Land of the Plain of Innovation", as Mirza Jáni had fancifully called Badasht at this time.

Until "The Dawn-Breakers" was published in 1932, one might well wonder why the Bábu'l-Báb (Mullá Husayn-i-Bushrú'i) was not present at this Council; Chapter XVI makes it very evident. He did not know about the Conference, and most of the believers gathered there were on their way to him in Máshhad, Also, in the narrative of Mirzá Jáni, one finds a reason. The Bábu'l-Báb had intended to start from Máshhad for Mázindarán several days earlier than he actually did set out, for on the day of his intended departure from that city he visited the Shrine of Imám Ridá in company with seventy of his followers.

A disturbance ending in riot took place between his followers and the townfolk, therefore Prince Hamzih Mirzá sent for the Bábu'l-Báb and detained him for a number of days in his, the prince's camp. As soon as the Bábu'l-Báb was released, he gathered his party and started. Just as he was near Bárfurúsh news was received of the death of Muhammad Sháh. This caused very disturbed conditions in the country and the Bábu'l-Báb and his followers - because they were believers in the Báb's Teachings - were attacked and ensnared at the Tomb of Shaykh Tabarsi. They could only defend themselves there, it was impossible for them to make their escape. They had not come there to make a fort or to fight against the Muslims or the government, God forbid! They were hemmed in by a great beleaguering force, first composed of religious enemies and quickly strengthened by soldiers of the Sháh. Now as Quddús had already sometime before this, written a letter called the "eternal witness" in which he foretold the circumstances of his own and of the Bábu'l-Báb's martyrdoms, the reader can understand what follows next in this narrative.

After the Conference in Badasht had been halted and the believers plundered and cruelly dispersed, while some were still at Niyálá en route news came of the Bábu'l-Báb's calamity at Tabarsi Tomb. Quddús had already reached his home in

²⁴ "Her unruffled serenity sharply contrasted with the affrighted countenances of those who were gazing upon her face. Fear, anger, and bewilderment stirred the depths of their souls. That sudden revelation seemed to have stunned their faculties. Abdu'l-Khaliq-i-Isfahani was so gravely shaken that he cut his throat with his own hands. Covered with blood and shrieking with excitement, he fled away from the face of Tahirih." (Dawnbreakers) [DM]

Bárfurúsh when he received the word. As soon he could get away he hurried to the Bábu'l-Báb and began to help organize the fort to be ready for the siege.²⁵ Fortunately for them this was possible, because in that moment most of the officials had gone down to Tihrán to the Coronation of his Imperial Majesty Násiri'd-Din-Sháh on October 20, 1848. During this time, the men caught at Tábarsi made this place into what came to be known as Fort Tabarsi.

As soon as believers heard of this serious catastrophe which had befallen the Bábu'l-Báb and his followers they set out even from the most distant provinces of Irán and even from 'Iráq to try and reach this fatal spot. They must have all known for a surety that in a little while every member of that devoted band at Fort Tabarsi would fall before the guns of the foe. What had the hastening Bábis seen in their visions! Or had they remembered the "eternal witness", the prediction of the coming death written of Quddús! Anyway, none of you, O readers, can doubt the loyalty and devotion of these followers, for what they suffered is almost beyond human endurance.

It is said that Táhirih, when she heard of the Bábu'l-Báb's plight, determined to go in the disguise of a man into the fortress to help them. Bahá'u'lláh persuaded her not to do this. He said that first of all she could never succeed in entering, and moreover, war and strife are not desirable for any one, above all for women; and besides this new Light had come to do away with war.

So one can see that even before Bahá'u'lláh declared His Mission he had laid down the principle against war. As soon as Bahá'u'lláh did proclaim His Cause²⁶, He forbade the taking of revenge or of killing to protect one's self, and such was the power of the Creative word that from that time forward no Bahá'is have ever killed others to save their own lives or to take revenge. The world cannot show a more wonderful record of submissiveness than the long list of Bahá'í martyrs reveals. The heroism, the sweetness, the gentleness, the joy with which the followers gave their lives is one of the great proofs that this Bahá'í Revelation is the Word of God to mankind in this universal cycle.

The Bábis in those first six years only knew the old way of self defence, they had had so little opportunity to learn from the Báb! Yet they did glimpse the new Ideal, for they flung away their lives whole heartedly not for themselves but for the Cause. They had had no time to learn from the Báb, for he had been in prison and away from them all, ever since His Declaration, except for those few short months in Isfáhán. Who knows! Perhaps it all had to be like this. The Báb's task was to uproot the old order. Those early believers in the Báb's Teachings, only by their never-to-be-forgotten martyrdoms, could compel the sleeping, negligent world to become aware that again a Manifestation of God, a World Teacher will come!

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in this same book, "Memorials of the Faithful" says that Táhirih was intercepted on her way to Tihrán from Badasht and the captors sent her to the capital under the escort of certain low-class ruffians, and then later she was imprisoned in the house of Mahmúd Khan the Kalántar.²⁷

²⁵ According to "The Dawn Breakers" pp. 347-349, Bahá'u'lláh visited Fort Tabarsi and His coming, brought rapture and good counsel to Mullá Husayn, the Bábu'l-Báb. It was Bahá'u'lláh who urged that Quddús be sought, for the latter was in captivity and Bahá'u'lláh told them how Quddús could be freed.

²⁶ In Baghdat in 1863

²⁷ The word kalántar means Mayor. [DM]

Háji Mirzá Jáni writes that Bahá'u'lláh, Mirzá Jáni himself and several others tried to reach Fort Tabarsi and to bring relief. They had with them four thousand túmans, about four thousand dollars, as well as goods and chattels. According to "The Dawn-Breakers", in the beginning of December 1848 A.H. (Muharram 1265 A.H.), Bahá'u'lláh faithful to the promise He had given to the Bábu'l-Báb set out from Núr with a number of His friends to go to Fort Tabarsi. His intention was to reach that spot at night, allowing no halt in their journey; but His companions urged Him to seek a few hours' rest. Although He knew this delay would involve great risk of being surprised by the enemy, He yielded to their earnest request and they were all captured. Another account reads that when they were within six miles of Tabarsi they were captured by the royalist officers, stripped and taken to camp to be put to death. As Bahá'u'lláh belonged to such a noble, distinguished family of Mázindarán, certain of the royalist officers accorded Him their protection, and sent Him on to Bárfurúsh where he suffered such afflictions as the pen is loath to portray. Two merchants of Káshán, the home city of Mirzá Jáni bought the latter's liberty with money. Friends in Tihrán had tried to dissuade Mirzá Jáni from going to Tabarsi, but he had replied to them: "I shall suffer martyrdom in Tihrán Fort, and though on this journey I shall be taken captive I shall be released. Yet that I may have no cause for shame in not going, and that I may to the full accomplish my endeavor, I will go!"²⁸

'Abdu'l Bahá, in his account in the "Memorials of the Faithful", says that Bahá'u'lláh's intention was to go to Niyálá and thence to Fort Tabarsi; but the Governor of Amul heard of this and came to Niyálá with seven hundred riflemen, surrounded Bahá'u'lláh and sent Him guarded by eleven mounted police to Amul. While at Amul, He was bastinadoed and then sent on to the capital.

I feel I cannot close the Badasht paragraphs without telling you of one more believer who was present at the Badasht Conference - this first Bahá'í Conference ever convened - Háji Mullá Ismá'il of Qum, a divine of Karbilá who later in 1852, in Tihrán, was martyred. When he with the other Bábí prisoners were told to renounce their Faith or suffer death, he said to his companions: "I, for my part, am resolved to confess my Faith and lay down my life; for if we fail to proclaim the advent of the Qá'im, who will proclaim it? And if we fail to direct men in the right way, to tear asunder the veils of heedlessness, to arouse them from the slumber of sloth, to demonstrate to them the worthlessness of this transitory world, and to give active testimony to the truth of this most high and ineffable Faith, who else will do so? Let every one, then, who is able to acquit himself of this obligation, come forth in all steadfastness and bear me company!" Seven of these faithful lovers and loyal friends, according to the "Tarikh-i-Jadid" gave themselves up to martyrdom, in Tihrán. One of the group was Háji Mirzá Siyyid 'Ali, the maternal Uncle of the Báb who had brought him up from childhood and had always been one of his most loyal followers. The Seven Martyrs of Tihrán are historic, and perhaps some of the inspiration to this unsurpassed loyalty came from that gathering in Badasht! So these believers who had gathered at Badasht did PROCLAIM THE QÁ'IM WITH THEIR VERY LIVES!

Quddús (Mullá Muhammad-'Ali) had encouraged his men on New Year's Day, 1849, at Tabarsi, reciting to them after the

²⁸ He was martyred in Tihrán September 15th, 1852. He was a merchant, a plain devoted Bábí, and he wrote a book about what he saw and heard from 1844 to 1852. He had promised to write more in detail about Táhirih, but his martyrdom prevented this.

bombardment: "We vouchsafe affliction to none until we have inscribed him among the saints. This affliction is the jewel of our treasure-house; we do not bestow jewels on every one!"

Then those besiegers of the Fort Tabarsi, finding that they could not take it, finding they could not tear down the "Black Standards" the emblems of the faithful believers, nor withstand the attacks of those valiant souls who rode forth from the gate of the fort raising the cry of "Yá Sáhibu'z-Zamán!" - "[O] The Lord of the Age!" - committed a very base and treacherous act. Their leader promised the believers freedom and safe journey to their homes if they would surrender: he wrote upon the margin of a leaf of the sacred Qu'rán his confirmation statement: "I swear by this most holy Book, by the righteousness of God who has revealed it, and the Mission of Him who was inspired by its Verses that I cherish no other purpose than to promote peace and friendliness. Come forth from your stronghold and rest assured that no hand will be stretched forth against you..."

Quddús received this Qu'rán from the hands of the messenger; kissing it reverently he prayed and bade his men prepare to leave the fort. "By our response to their invitation," he said "we shall enable them to demonstrate the sincerity of their intentions." "The Dawn-Breakers" gives a marvelous account of that exit. Quddús put on the green turban which the Bááb had sent to him at the same time He sent the one to the Bábu'l-Bááb, and the latter too had worn his on the day of his martyrdom. Two hundred and two believers went out together from that Shrine Tabarsi Fort; of this number a few became separated from the larger group with Quddús, through a false report given from their enemies, thus this small number was made captive and later sold into slavery. It is from the words of these few men that we know about the historic siege of Fort Tabarsi. All the others were tortured and put to death.

Quddús in his own home Bárfurúsh where they took him, suffered such atrocious cruelty that no pen can describe it. He was stripped of his clothes, his turban which had been his gift from the Bááb was trampled in the mud; bareheaded, barefooted and loaded with chains he was paraded through the streets followed and scorned by the population, people who had known him from childhood and had seen the purity of his life. He was reviled and spit upon by the scum of the town, his body was pierced and mutilated by the howling mob. In the midst of these torments the voice of Quddús was heard in prayer: "Forgive O my God, the trespasses of this people. Deal with them in Thy mercy, for they know not what we have already discovered and cherish. I have striven to show them the path that leads to their salvation; behold how they have risen to overwhelm and kill me. Show them, God, the way of Truth and turn their ignorance into faith!"

When the procession reached the public square, where the execution was to take place, Quddús, this youth of only twenty seven years, cried out: "Would that my mother were with me, and could see with her own eyes the splendor of my nuptials!" As these words were being spoken the wild multitude fell upon him, tearing him limb from limb and throwing the scattered pieces into a fire which they had kindled for that purpose. Another account states that the Sa'idu'l-Ulamá had himself cut off Quddús' ears and struck him on the head with an axe.

The Bábu'l-Bááb at the age of thirty six years had met his heroic death a little earlier.

Let no one think that I speak of these frightful crimes in order to criticise the fanatical Muhammadans who perpetrated them in the name of God. No! I understand they belonged to the old epoch; likewise I do not forget that great atrocities have been committed in our Western world in the name of religion. I

mention these historical incidents because they prove with what travail the Word of God is brought to the world from age to age. Shall we never learn from the past religious cycles to INVESTIGATE TRUTH before we kill the Prophets and their first followers!

So let us leave Fort Tabarsi, but as we are turning away, we take this last glimpse: the conquerors are looting the dead victims, and from the pocket of one brave very young martyr they are drawing out - what? A little roasted horse-flesh which had become too hard for him to eat!²⁹ Surely hearts are moved at the courage and the sufferings of these first followers of the pure and holy Bááb!

Chapter III.

Táhirih's Martyrdom and the Aftermath

NOW I shall present to you all that I have been able to learn about Táhirih's communication with His Imperial Majesty Násiri'd-Din Sháh. When she was brought into his presence, after being brought back from Badasht on seeing her he said: "I like her looks: leave her, and let her be." It is related that His Imperial Majesty sent her a letter to the kalántar's house, the resume of which was that he urges her to deny the Bááb and again become a true Muslim. If she will do this, then he will give her an exalted place, the guardian of the ladies of his household: he will make her his bride. She wrote a reply in verse on the back of his letter and had it returned to the Sháhinsháh. The English translation which can not do justice to the beauty of the original poem is about as follows:

"Kingdom, wealth and ruling be for thee,

Wandering, becoming a poor dervish and calamity be for me.

If that station is good, let it be for thee,

And if this station is bad, I long for it, let it be for me!"

After the Sháh read this, he commented on her wonderful spirit and her courage, His words were: "So far history has not shown such a woman to us."

The relative of Táhirih in Qazvin told me that the day before her martyrdom she was called to the presence of His Imperial Majesty Násiri'd-Din Sháh. He said to her that day: "Why should you be a believer in the Bááb?" She replied not with her own words, but from the Qu'rán which was about as follows, that I do not worship whom you worship, and you do not worship whom I worship. I shall never worship whom you worship and you will never worship whom I worship. Therefore, permit that I worship whom I wish and you worship whom you wish.³⁰

His Majesty bent his head in silence for some time and then arose and left the room without saying anything. However, I heard that the eunuch and others around the Sháh were determined she should be killed, and the next day they had her murdered without the Sháh's knowledge; and he was very grieved when he learned of it.

During her imprisonment in the kalántar's house she was kept first, in a little room outside where there were no stairs, a ladder had to be put up each time she wished to descend. One of the princesses who was a poet came and walked past this little house, hoping to see Táhirih. She did see her and later in one of her books this princess tells how radiantly happy

²⁹ Even dead horses were dug up from the ground to eat, such was their hunger as they lived off grass and boot leather. [DM]

³⁰ Qu'ran 109:1-6 [DM]

Táhirih was. Everywhere, in every history, and all who have spoken of her, tell of her joy in her religion. She was always bright and enthusiastic and even when in greatest danger herself, she was ever inspiring others with courage. She was not only a martyr, but she was a smiling, joyful young woman. I say young woman, for she was only about thirty-two years old or at most, thirty-six years old when she was put to death in August, 1852.

There have been different accounts of her death, and they differ as to how the deed was done, but one and all agree that she knew beforehand, through insight, that she had to die and she met her murder with unsurpassed bravery. First, I quote what 'Abdu'l-Bahá said of her and of her death. Once He wrote: "Among the women of our time is Táhirih, the daughter of a Muhammadan priest. At the time of the appearance of the Báb, she showed such tremendous courage and power, that all who heard her were astonished. She threw aside her veil, despite the immemorial custom of the Persians, and although it was considered impolitic to speak with men, this heroic woman carried on conversations with the most learned men, and in every meeting she vanquished them: When imprisoned she said: 'You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women!'"

He says of Táhirih in His "Memorials of the Faithful" that she was imprisoned in the kalántar's home³¹. Once there was a great festivity in this home. It was the betrothal of the kalántar's son. Many ladies of the aristocracy were present, princesses, wives of ministers and other notables. It was a brilliant and distinguished gathering. Music and dancing were features and everybody was gay. Jináb-i-Táhirih entered and soon began conversing about the Teaching of the Báb; all were so interested and impressed that they left dancing to gather about her and to hear her inspired word. They almost forgot about the betrothal-entertainment.

Thus she lived in the house of the kalántar until a certain foolish and ignorant Bábi - and some historians say that he had two or three accomplices - crazed by the martyrdom of his Beloved³², committed the crime of trying to kill the Sháh on August 15, 1852. The Sháh was not hurt and was able to hold his usual reception the next day, but this Bábi's horrible deed has blackened the page of Bábi history throughout the civilized world. On the other hand, never in the history of nations has such a punishment been meted out to innocent people as Násiri'd-Din Sháh and his government hurled upon all the believers in the Báb. Though they had known nothing of this plot, they were searched out and on September 15, 1852, nearly eighty were put to death in the most fiendish, horrible ways that could be devised. The Sháh, the Prime minister, the Chief of the Farráshes, the whole government became so alarmed and wrought up in their hatred that it reacted upon themselves. They became afraid and therefore they decreed that each class of society should share in the bloodshed and each be made responsible for the execution of one or more of these believers. The machiavellian cruelty of each class would

³¹ I read in one history that only at first was Táhirih put into the little house outside, for the ladies of the kalántar's household loved her so much, they asked that she come and live in the home, and she had a room with a balcony on the second floor of the house. She must have been there for three years or more, and as the imprisonment was not too rigid, she did meet many people who came, under various pretexts, to listen to her conversations.

³² The Báb was executed on 9 July 1850, by public suspension before a vast firing squad. [DM]

be an indication of its loyalty to the Sháh! This account has only to do with the martyrdom of Táhirih, and to tell you what happened to Bahá'u'lláh, but the others you can read about in "The Dawn-Breakers," "A Traveller's Narrative" and in "Tarikh-i-Jadid."

The day after the attempt on the Sháh's life, Bahá'u'lláh rode forth into Niyávarán, which was the abode of the Royal Train and the station of the Imperial Camp. He was arrested and brought in chains to Tihrán. I saw the underground prison where they had placed Him (but now this loathsome hole has been made over into a tobacco place). I saw the court where they took Him, put His feet into stocks and gave Him fifteen lashes. He had done nothing, none of them had. They were innocent and were just as shocked at this terrible crime as was the government itself. There might have been no deliverance from death for Bahá'u'lláh had not His Majesty ordered His particular case investigated and examined by means of the Ministers of the Imperial Court. His innocence was fully established. Therefore He was not killed, but His confiscated estates were not returned to Him, neither was He set free, but four months later He was exiled to Baghdad. Perhaps because of His high station in Tihrán, He escaped death, but we who are Bahá'is know that He continued to live because it was God's Will for the establishment of this universal cycle.

Efforts were made by some of the European representatives at the Iránian Court to induce the Sháh to execute the condemned without subjecting them to tortures which there was every reason to apprehend would be superadded to the death penalty. These efforts, however, were fruitless.

Táhirih living a prisoner in the kalántar's house, certainly had had no part in this attempt on the Sháh's life; yet because she was a believer in the Báb's Teachings, she was doomed. Officials came, according to the "Memorials of the Faithful", and took her from the kalántar's home on the pretext that she was to be taken to the house of the prime minister. She herself, that morning had taken an elaborate bath, used rose water, dressed herself in her best white robes, said good bye to everybody in the house announcing to them that in the evening she was going on a long journey, her prophetic soul had made her aware. She was ready and went with them when they came for her that night. They took her to a garden. The executioners hesitated for a while to carry out the orders issued for her death and even refused to do it. Then they found a negro³³ slave who was drunk; he put a handkerchief into Táhirih's mouth and strangled her. Afterwards they threw her down into a well in the garden, and threw stones and rubbish on her. "But to the last moment of her life," said 'Abdu'l Bahá, "Her Highness Táhirih was glad and happy, and was looking forward to the Bounties of the Abhá Kingdom. In this manner she sacrificed her precious life. May her soul be happy and joyful in the Abhá Kingdom!"

There is a difference of opinion about the way she was put to death. Dr. Jakob Polak, an Austrian, formerly physician to the Sháh of Irán and Professor in the Medical College of Tihrán, wrote a book in 1865, "Persien Das land und Seine Bewohner", in which he said he witnessed Táhirih's execution and that she endured her lingering death with "superhuman fortitude."

M. le Comte de Gobineau of Paris, in his book "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale", published in 1865, states that Táhirih was burned, but that the executioners first

³³ A more neutral term at the time, than it has become today. [DM]

strangled her. Another account says she was strangled with a bow-string. They tried to force her to take off her veil; she would not, and they drew the bow-string around her throat over the veil and thus strangled her. Then they threw her, while she was still living, into a dry well and filled it up with earth and stones.

While I was in Tihrán in the year 1930, Dr. Susan I Moody gave me an account of Táhirih's martyrdom that had been given to her by Jináb-i-Adib, an old and famous Bahá'i teacher who had visited Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká. Formerly Jináb-i-Adib had been a university professor and later he founded the Tarbiyat School For Boys in Tihrán. His father had been a teacher in the family of Fath 'Ali Sháh. The following is written under the signature of Jináb-i-Adib, and he states he was an intimate friend of Quli who came with Táhirih to Tihrán, I only quote the part about Táhirih's martyrdom:

"... in every meeting held in Tihrán, both women and men were speaking in Táhirih's praise and honor. Many high-born, loving women came to her and were filled with joy because of her hopeful words. All were attracted by her eloquence and people of all classes, even the royalty and ministers of state on entering her presence humbly bowed before her. Her speeches and explanations were spread all over Irán, and no one had the least doubt about her erudition and scientific knowledge.

"While a youth I used to study philosophy with Mirzá 'Abdu'l-Vahháb, a brother of Táhirih. When I had any doubts or made errors, I used to ask his help. One day in summer I went to him in his private court. He was alone and as it was a hot day he wore a loose, light garment. After sitting a little and finding a good opportunity, I said: 'I wanted to ask you some questions but I have hesitated, now if you will permit me, I shall ask you. He gave permission and I continued: 'Both the learning and perfection of Táhirih are so spread among the people that minds are amazed. No one knows better than you and I want to know from you the truth or falsity of this matter.'

"Then he sighed and responded: 'You only hear the word of Táhirih alas, you have not seen her! Know verily, that in a meeting where she sat neither I nor any one else could say a word.

It was as if all the former and future books were with her. She used to explain a subject by bringing forth demonstrations and proofs from the learned books, page by page, so that no one had the power to deny. Háji Mullá Taqi who was assassinated was heard to say many times: 'When the signs of the promised One appear, the Zandiq [Heretic] of Qazvin will also appear and the words of the Zandiq will be the words of woman's religion!' Now this woman and her religion have appeared. In fact her talks and explanations are the true witnesses for her."

"Since then the clergy have prevented all women from studying lest they should become believers like Táhirih.

About this time, in 1852, some fanatical Bábis fired shots at Násiri'd-Din Sháh and all the people believing in the Báb's Teachings were in danger.

...Mahmúd Khán the Kalántar informed the Sháh and the Grand Vazir that Táhirih was in his house, but they feared to sentence her to death without a trial, knowing that she was intimate with and sincerely loved by the most honorable women of high degree, who would raise a clamor which no one could suppress. Let me relate one incident to show her influence: two ladies who were acquainted with the family of the kalántar have told me that during her imprisonment in his house the kalántar made preparations for the betrothal of his son. These festivities last several days and invitations are

given out day by day to people of various degrees of social standing. During all this preparation and merry-making Táhirih ceased not from delivering her message, and so eloquently that the people deserted their days of pleasure; they were so filled with wonder and dazed by her explanations and eloquence that all sources of pleasure provided for their enjoyment were forgotten and forsaken. They were as if enchanted by her talks and actions, and were seeking to know why she had become an infidel, for so she seemed to them.

"Wishing to accomplish her downfall, the chiefs of the government commanded Háji Mullá Kani and Háji Mullá Muhammad Andirmáni, two of the most learned and famous clergymen of Tihrán, to discuss with her and declared that whatever these two Muslim divines decided upon should be done.³⁴

"Accordingly discussions were held in the home of Mahmúd Khán, the Kalántar. In every meeting she debated with them and they were defeated; still they remained unconvinced and finally wrote a sentence as follows: 'This woman is astray and a leader astray of others; therefore, her death is necessary and expedient.' The government accepted this, added some false charges to it and spread it broadcast among men and women. Thus all were anticipating her death. However, notwithstanding the proclamation, through fear they killed her secretly by night.

"As this mortal one (Adib), sleeping or waking was greedily searching to discover the truth of the Bahá'i Cause which at this time was not clear to me, I desired to investigate for myself, and accordingly I went to one of the relatives who was intimate and confidential with me, a man older than myself, a mullá and inclined toward the sect of the Súfis, and I asked him: 'What do you know about this occurrence?' He replied: 'I have no exact information, but it is easy to obtain it for the eldest son of the kalántar who is my intimate friend, belongs to the Súfis. On a certain day I shall invite him to be my guest; you will also be present and we can question him.'

"Meeting together on the day appointed, I said that I had heard various versions of the facts concerning the fate of Táhirih, but since Her Highness was imprisoned in your home you certainly know better than any one else, all the circumstances. He replied: 'On the day that she was secretly assassinated by night, like one who had been informed she bathed and changed all of her clothing and came down stairs. One by one she asked pardon of the household for having troubled them. She was like a traveller, with the utmost pleasure and joy taking leave before starting on a journey. Near sunset, according to her usual habit she was slowly walking to and fro on the upper veranda. She conversed with no one, but was secretly whispering to herself. This continued until three hours after sunset. A strict command had been given that on that night, no one should leave his apartment, otherwise he would be punished.'

"My father came to me and said: 'I have attended all

³⁴ The grandson of Táhirih who lives in Tihrán told me in March, 1930: "I heard from my own father that Nasiri'd-Din Shah asked three important Mullás to come and speak with Táhirih. At this discussion they asked her, 'what are the proofs of your Faith?' From the Qu'ran she proved it. The mullás tried their best to go against her, but they were not able to answer her. The Sháh wished a second discussion to be arranged, but in the second meeting the Mullás did not permit Táhirih to come. Rather with great haste they begged the government to have her put to death. Nasiri'd-Din Sháh did not wish Táhirih to be persecuted."

necessary precautions and have commanded all the watchmen to be very alert at the crossroads lest there might arise some disturbance; now I want you with the utmost caution to take this woman with the servants to the garden Ilkháni and deliver her to Sardár-i-Kull, 'Aziz Khán, and you are to stay there until the case is settled, then come back and report to me, so that I may go and inform the Sháh. After that he arose and told me to come with him, and we went upstairs together. As we reached the door of the upper room, we saw that she was ready. My father said to her: 'Let us start immediately, you must go to another place.' Without hesitating she came. As we reached the outer door we found my father's own horse ready; she mounted and my father put on her his own cloak so that no one should recognize the rider as a woman. Then with a large guard of bold servants we started, going in a round-about-way until we reached the garden where she was dismounted and put into a servant's room on the ground floor.

'I went upstairs and entered the presence of the sardár who was alone and awaiting us. I gave him my father's salutations and message. He asked: 'No one recognized you on the way?' I replied: 'No one.' He then called in a servant, greeted him in a friendly way inquiring about his health and then said: 'Have you received a gift for any of your people on this journey?' He said no. Then the sardár presented him with a handful of one túmán gold pieces saying: 'Well, take this now and send it to them and later I shall compensate you.' Then he added: 'Take this silk handkerchief and go and twist it around the neck of this Bábi woman and choke her, for she is the cause of leading the people astray.' The servant left the room and I accompanied him. He went ahead and I stood at the door. When he approached Táhirih, she looked at him and uttered some words. Suddenly I saw him coming back, hanging his head and talking softly to himself in Turkish as he went out of the door. I returned to the sardár and explained the whole proceeding.

'He called for coffee. After reflecting for a while, he asked for his butler and said: 'I once dismissed a colored servant who used to do such evil things. Where is he?' The butler replied that this servant was now serving in the kitchen. The sardár said: 'Tell him to come here.' Shortly after a dirty man with a very evil countenance came in. The master said to him: 'Do you not see into what a condition you have fallen? If you repent and stop your evil deeds, I will restore you to your former position, and you may spend your time in pleasure.' The man answered: 'Hereafter I will never disobey you.' His master said: 'Very well. I am sure you have not taken anything to drink (literal translation "serpent's poison"). Go to the other room and take a cup full, then return and I will give your tools and clothing.' He went and returned. The sardár said: 'You are such a brave man, can you choke a woman who is downstairs?' He said yes, and went out and I went with him.

"As soon as he reached her, he quickly wrapped the thing around her throat so tightly that she became unconscious and fell down. He kicked her in the side and chest, and then a farrásh (guard) came and they carried her in her own garments and threw her into a well which was at the lower end of the garden, afterwards filling up the well with stones and dirt. I returned home and gave my father a full account of this affair.³⁵

³⁵ Retribution overtook this kalántar. Nine years later the Sháh seeing one of his deeds, ordered an executioner to prepare ropes and twist them around the neck of Mahmúd Khán and choke him instantly. He then ordered the kalántar's body to be hung on the gallows.

"The Dawn-Breakers," page 621, also speaks of the kalántar's son and that he accompanied Táhirih to the garden where she was put to death. I quote a few passages: "Táhirih's stay in Tihrán was marked by many proofs of the warm affection and high esteem in which she was held by the leading women of the capital. She had reached, indeed, the high-water mark of her popularity. The house where she was imprisoned was besieged by her women admirers, who thronged her doors eager to enter her presence and to seek the benefit of her knowledge. Among these ladies, the wife of the kalántar himself distinguished herself by the extreme reverence she showed to Táhirih. Acting as her hostess, she introduced into her presence the flower of womanhood in Tihrán, served her with extraordinary enthusiasm, and never failed to contribute her share in deepening her influence among her womenfolk.

Persons with whom the wife of the kalántar was intimately connected have heard her relate the following: 'One night, whilst Táhirih was staying in my home, I was summoned to her presence and found her fully adorned, dressed in a gown of snow-white silk. Her room was redolent with the choicest perfume. I expressed to her my surprise at so unusual a sight. 'I am preparing to meet my Beloved,' she said, 'and wish to free you from the cares and anxieties of my imprisonment.' I was much startled at first, and wept at the thought of separation from her. 'Weep not,' she sought to reassure me, 'the time of your lamentation is not yet come. I wish to share with you my last wishes, for the hour when I shall be arrested and condemned to suffer martyrdom is fast approaching. I would request you to allow your son to accompany me to the scene of my death and to ensure that the guards and executioner into whose hands I shall be delivered will not compel me to divest myself of this attire. It is also my wish that my body be thrown into a pit, and that that pit be filled with earth and stones.

"Three days after my death a woman will come and visit you, to whom you will give this package which I now deliver into your hands. My last request is that you permit no one henceforth to enter my chamber. From now until the time when I shall be summoned to leave this house, let no one be allowed to disturb my devotions. This day I intend to fast - a fast which I shall not break until I am brought face to face with my Beloved."

"...That day and night, I several times, unable to contain myself, arose and stole away to the threshold of that room and stood silently at her door, eager to listen to whatever might be falling from her lips. I was enchanted by the melody of that voice which intoned the praise of her Beloved. Four hours after sunset, I heard a knocking at the door. I hastened immediately to my son, and acquainted him with the wishes of Táhirih. He pledged his word that he would fulfil every instruction she had given me. My son, who opened the door, informed me that the farráshes of 'Aziz Khán-i-Sardár were standing at the gate, demanding that Táhirih be immediately delivered into their hands. I was struck with terror by the news, and, as I tottered to her door and with trembling hands unlocked it, found her veiled and prepared to leave her apartment. She was pacing the floor when I entered, and was chanting a litany expressive of both grief and triumph. She placed in my hand the key to her chest, in which she said she had left for me a few trivial things as a remembrance of her stay in my house. 'Whenever you open this chest,' she said, 'and behold the things it contains, you will, I hope, remember me and rejoice in my gladness.'

"With these words she bade me her last farewell, and, accompanied by my son, disappeared from before my eyes.

"Three hours later my son returned, his face drenched with

tears, hurling imprecations at the sardár and his abject lieutenants.'

"...May future generations be enabled to present a worthy account of a life which her contemporaries have failed adequately to recognize. May future historians perceive the full measure of her influence and record the unique services this great woman has rendered to her land and its people. May the followers of the Faith which she served so well strive to follow her example, recount her deeds, collect her writings, unfold the secret of her talents, and establish her, for all time, in the memory and affections of the peoples and kindreds of the earth."

Táhirih's Fame and Its Effects in the World

We are grateful to the Oriental scholars who have written about her great life. There resided in Tihrán, in the years 1855-1858, a French diplomat, le Comte de Gobineau, a brilliant writer who studied the Bábi Movement and he has written about Táhirih in his classical book, "Les Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," Pages 136, 137.

Lord Curzon, in his book "Persia and the Persian Question", Volume I, states: "Beauty and the female sex also lent their consecration to the new creed, and the heroism of the lovely but ill-fated poetess of Qazvin, Zarrin-Taj (Crown of Gold) or Qurratu'l-'Ayn (Solace of the Eyes), who throwing off the veil, carried the missionary torch far and wide, is one of the most affecting episodes in modern history."

Valentine Chirol in "The Middle Eastern Question", page 124, comments: "No memory is more deeply venerated or kindles greater enthusiasm than hers, (Táhirih's) and the influence which she wielded in her lifetime still inures to her sex."

Sir Francis Younghusband in his book "The Gleam", pages 202, 203, comments. "Almost the most remarkable figure in the whole Movement was the poetess, Qurratu'l-'Ayn. She was known for her virtue, piety and learning, and had been finally converted on reading some of the verses and exhortations of the Báb. So strong in her Faith did she become that although she was both rich and noble she gave up wealth, children, name, position for her Master's service and set herself to proclaim and establish His doctrine... The beauty of her speech was such as to draw guests from a marriage feast rather than listen to the music provided by the host."

Dr. T. K. Cheyne in his book "The Reconciliation of Races and Religions" pages 114, 115, also pays tribute: "The harvest sown in Islámic lands by Qurratu'l-'Ayn is now beginning to appear. A letter addressed to the 'Christian Commonwealth' last June informs us that forty Turkish suffragettes are being deported from Constantinople to 'Akká (so long the prison of Bahá'u'lláh): 'During the last few years suffrage ideas have been spreading quietly behind in the harems. The men were ignorant of it; everybody was ignorant of it; and now suddenly the flood gate is opened and the men of Constantinople have thought it necessary to resort to drastic measures. Suffrage clubs have been organized, intelligent memorials incorporating the women's demands have been drafted and circulated; women's journals and magazines have sprung up, publishing excellent articles; and public meetings were held. Then, one day, the members of these clubs - four hundred of them - cast away their veils. The staid, fossilised class of society were shocked, the good Musalmans were alarmed, and the Government forced into action. These four hundred liberty loving women were divided into several groups. One group composed of forty have been exiled to 'Akká, and will arrive in a few days. Everybody is talking about it and it is

really surprising to see how numerous are those in favor of removing the veils from the faces of the women. Many men with whom I have talked think the custom not only archaic, but thought-stifling. The Turkish authorities, thinking to extinguish this light of liberty, have greatly added to its flame."

This much I have learned from many sources, some from published works, some from manuscripts, much by word of mouth of the friends and relatives of Táhirih.

However, before I went to Irán, I had seen the influence of Táhirih in all the five continents I had visited. As I stood beside the well in a little garden in the heart of Tihrán where her dear body was cast, I thought of the lines in the beautiful drama, "God's Heroes", written by Mrs. Laura Dreyfus-Barney of Paris in which she has told the story of this great Eastern sister so marvelously:

"Cease your profanations!... weak of purpose! Do you think you can bury her there? She will reappear, and be ever before you all! You have rendered her immortal in the minds of men and her spirit of love will be transmitted to millions of living hearts. You have undone your work and have established her fame. Forever after Táhirih will inspire courage and sincerity and truth!"

And I agree with Sulaymán Názim Big, the great author and poet of Turkey who said in his book "Násiri'd-Din Sháh and the Bábis": "O Táhirih, you are worth a thousand Násiri'd-Din Sháhs!"

Travelling throughout the world, I find that they know about Táhirih everywhere. Mrs. Marianna Hainisch of Vienna, Austria, mother of the President of Austria when I visited her in 1925, said to me: "The greatest ideal of womanhood all my life has been Táhirih (Qurratu'l-'Ayn) of Qazvin, Irán. I was only seventeen years old when I heard of her life and her martyrdom, but I said: "I shall try to do for the women of Austria what Táhirih gave her life to do for women of Persia." No woman in Austria has done so much for freedom and education for women as has Mrs Hainisch.

Mrs. Hainisch's most loved girl friend was Miss Marie von Najmajer and Miss von Najmajer wrote a great epic poem "Qurratu'l-'Ayn" which is one of the charming classics in the German language.

Professor G. Weil of the Staatsbibliothek of Berlin, which is considered to be one of the three greatest libraries in the world, asked me for the loan of "God's Heroes", the story of Táhirih. The next day when he returned it he said: "I am delighted with this beautiful book, we shall order it today. We wish to buy every book we can get on the Bahá'i Faith."

Students from Irán, studying in Berlin and in Paris said to me that at home, fathers who wish their daughters to progress, often say to them: "Be a Táhirih, be a Qurratu'l-'Ayn!"

One great Iránian Prince at the League of Nations in 1927, said to me: "I was only a young man when I heard of the martyrdom of the gifted poetess Táhirih (Qurratu'l-'Ayn) in Tihrán, and I tell you I wept for three days."

The late Arminius Vambery of Budapest, Hungary, in his book, "Meine Wanderungen und Erlebnisse in Persien" ("My Migrations and What I Saw in Persia in 1867"), speaks of the Báb and His followers. Later in 1913, he met 'Abdu'l Bahá when the latter visited Budapest, and he became a Bahá'i. His grandson, George Vambery, a youth twenty years old when I visited Budapest in 1926, was very interested in the study of Táhirih's life.

Nawab Sir Amin Jung Bahadur, Minister-in-Waiting upon His Exalted Highness the great Nizam of Hyderabad, Deccan,

India, is a Muslim, but he has read much about the Bahá'í Faith. When I was invited to his fine library which he calls his "Treasury", he said to me in June 1930, that what had attracted him most to this Bahá'í Religion was the wonderful life of Táhirih. He wished so much to get her poems in the Persian language.

Mrs. Sarojina Naidu also of Hyderabad, Deccan, who is India's best known woman, and most eloquent woman speaker, a poet whose works are translated into many languages, the greatest worker for women in India in this century, had also said to me on June fourth, 1930, when I travelled again through India to promote the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh: "Oh, for ten years I have longed to have the poems of Táhirih!" So, as a Bahá'í friend in Irán had copied some of Táhirih's poems and placed them in a lovely little book for a gift to me, I was trying to get some of these copied in long-hand, for her and for some other scholars in India, including the celebrated Islamic writer and poet, Sir Muhammad Iqbal of Lahore.

Knowing this, Mr. Isfandiari K. B. Bakhtiari, a most devoted Persian Bahá'í of Karachi, India, who was with me that day in Lahore, took my gift and had a thousand little Persian books printed so that they might be given out in India. Táhirih was such a great poet, but as most of her poems were spiritual and were about the Báb and His Holy Cause, they were burned with her other writings. Some of her poems are set to music and I often heard the records on the vitrolas [gramophones] in Persian homes.

O Táhirih, you have not passed out, you have only passed on. Your spiritual, courageous individuality will forever inspire, ennoble and refine humanity, your songs of the spirit will be treasured in innumerable hearts. You are to this day our "living", thrilling Bahá'í teacher! And your work is only beginning, for you will bring our Bahá'í Faith to many millions yet unborn!

Epilogue

HAVING brought this short narrative to a close I wish, in epilogue, to quote the words of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, in his book "The Dawn-Breakers", that they may ever be our on-going:

"And yet who knows what achievements, greater than any that the past and present have witnessed, may not still be in store for those into whose hands as precious a heritage as the Bahá'í Faith has been entrusted? Who knows but that out of the turmoil which agitates the face of present day society there may not emerge, sooner than we expect, the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, the bare outline of which is being but faintly discerned among the world-wide communities that bear His name? For, great and marvelous as has been the achievements of the past, the glory of the golden age of the Cause whose promise lies embedded within the shell of Bahá'u'lláh's immortal utterance, is yet to be revealed. Fierce as may seem the onslaught of the forces of darkness that may still afflict this Cause, desperate and prolonged as may be that experience, the ascendancy it will eventually obtain will be such as no other Faith has ever in its history achieved. The welding of the communities of East and West into a world-wide Brotherhood of which poets and dreamers have sung, and the promise of which lies at the very core of the Revelation conceived by Bahá'u'lláh; the recognition of His Law as the indissoluble bond uniting the peoples and nations of the earth; and the proclamation of the reign of the Most Great Peace, are but a few among the chapters of the glorious tale which the consummation of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh will unfold.

Who knows but that triumphs unsurpassed in splendor are not in store for the mass of Bahá'u'lláh's toiling followers? Surely,

we stand too near the colossal edifice His hand has reared to be able, at the present stage of the evolution of His Revelation, to claim to be able even to conceive the full measure of its promised glory. Its past history, stained by the blood of countless martyrs, may well inspire us with the thought that, whatever may yet befall this Cause, however formidable the forces that may still assail it, however numerable the reverses it will inevitably suffer, its onward march can never be stayed and that it will continue to advance until the very last promise, enshrined within the words of Bahá'u'lláh, shall have been completely redeemed."

Appendix I. Táhirih's Poems.

CONCERNING the poems of Táhirih, Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University, England, in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Volume XXI, page 934, has written the following most illuminating comment: "Turning from the Báb, there is another figure amongst those who took part in this sad drama which irresistibly commands our attention. I mean the beautiful and accomplished Qurratu'l-'Ayn the heroine, poetess, of the new Faith, distinguished by the title of 'Jináb-i-Táhirih', 'Her Excellence the Pure'. Anxious as I was to obtain some of her poems, I only met with a very limited amount of success. None of the Bábis at Shiráz whom I conversed with had any in their possession, and they said that Qazvin and Hamadán where Qurratu'l-'Ayn had preached, and Tihrán, where she had suffered martyrdom, would be the most likely places to obtain them. However, at Yazd I saw copies of two short poems (ghazals) attributed to her authorship..."

"Although these poems, especially the first can only be referred very doubtfully to the authorship of Qurratu'l-'Ayn, it must be borne in mind that the odium which attaches to the name of the Bábi amongst Iránian Muhammadans would render impossible the recitation by them of verses confessedly composed by her. If therefore, she were actually the authoress of poems, the grace and beauty of which compelled an involuntary admiration even from her enemies, it would seem extremely probable that they should seek to justify their right to admire them by attributing them to some other writer, and this view is supported by an assertion which I have heard made by a learned Persian with whom I was acquainted in Tihrán, and who, though not actually a Bábi, did not lack a certain amount of sympathy for those who were such, to the effect that many poems written by Qurratu'l-'Ayn were amongst the favourite songs of the people, who were for the most part, unaware of their authorship. Open allusion to the Báb had of course been cut out or altered, so that no one could tell the source from whence they came.

"Without pretending to assert positively that either of these two poems is by Qurratu'l-'Ayn, I venture to give a translation of the second of them which I have attempted to versify in imitation of the original metre, so as to afford a better idea of its style than could be given by a literal rendering in prose. In this I have endeavored to adhere as closely as possible to the sense of the original, even though the English may have suffered thereby.

This second poem is:

"The thalls of yearning love constrain in the bonds of pain
and calamity

These broken-hearted lovers of thine to yield their lives in
their zeal for thee.

Though with sword in hand my Darling stand with intent to
slay, though I sinless be,

If it pleases him this tyrant's whim, I am well content with his tyranny.

As in sleep I lay at the break of day that cruel Charmer came to me,

And in the grace of his form and face the dawn of the Morn I seemed to see;

The musk of Cathay might perfume gain from the scent those fragrant tresses rain,

While his eyes demolish a faith in vain attacked by the pagans of Tartary.

With you who contemn both love and wine for the hermit's cell and the zealot's shrine,

What can I do? for our Faith divine you hold a thing of infamy?

The tangled curls of thy darling's hair, and thy saddle and steed are thy only care,

In thy heart the Absolute hath no share, nor the thought of the poor man's poverty.

Sikandar's pomp and display be thine, the Kalantar's habit and way be mine,

That, if it please thee, I resign, while this, though bad, is enough for me,

The country of 'I' and 'we' forsake; thy home in Annihilation make,

Since fearing not this step to take, thou shalt gain the highest felicity."

Another poem of Táhirih's which Professor Edward G. Browne published in his book, "A Traveller's Narrative," English edition Cambridge University Press, page, 315, is:

"The effulgence of thy face flashed forth and the rays of thy visage arose on high;

Why lags the word 'Am I not your Lord?'³⁶ 'Yea, that thou art' let us make reply.

'Am-I-not's appeal from thy drum to greet what 'Yeas' do the drums of devotion beat;

At the gates of my heart I behold the feet and the tents of the host of calamity."

The following poems of Táhirih in Persian language were given to me with a few others, when I was leaving Irán after a four months' Bahá'í teaching tour in 1930. I came direct to India in May of that year, and immediately in travelling through India I found that the cultured classes know about Qurratu'l-'Ayn and were deeply interested in her poems. I asked my good friend, Mr. Isfandiar K. B. Bakhtiari, a most devoted Iránian Bahá'í residing in Karachi, if he could please copy for me, in long hand, a few of these poems to give to some poets and other writers in India.

At once, this great Bahá'í had a thousand copies printed in Karachi and these were given out during the memorable tour through India and Burma in 1930. Then again in 1933, in memory of that same visit, Mr. Bakhtiari printed a second edition of one thousand copies which have been given to the literati of India. It is astonishing how many of the educated classes in India know the Persian language, and they know the life and poems of Qurratu'l-'Ayn better than we in the West

³⁶ Why do you hesitate to lay claim to a divine nature? Were you to do so, all of us would admit your claim.

know them.³⁷

I have asked Mr. Bakhtiari please to take from the little book seven of these Persian poems written by Táhirih, and I include them in this supplement. Some day all these will be translated into the English language and into many other tongues.

Many Indian scholars know Táhirih's poems by heart. One of the leading Indian Orientalists, Professor M. Hidayat Hosain, Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, of Bengal, now Philological Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, Calcutta, is one of these.³⁸ The whole five continents have scholars who write asking to know more about Táhirih, her life and -her poetry "touched by the Flame of God."

Note. Anent [following] the transliteration of Oriental words frequently used in Bahá'í literature, it is not always possible to get all the accent marks, but these will soon be made available in all countries. The author of this book, "Táhirih, Irán's Greatest Woman", has used the accent marks available.

Appendix II. The World Religion

A summary of Its Aims, Teachings and History

by

SHOGHI EFFENDI

Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith

[NB: statistics given below are now greatly out-dated.]

THE Revelation proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh, His followers believe, is divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, broad in its outlook, scientific in its method, humanitarian in its principles and dynamic in the influence it exerts on the hearts and minds of men. The mission of the Founder of their Faith, they conceive it to be to proclaim that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is continuous and progressive, that the Founders of all past religions, though different in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, "abide in the same Tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech and proclaim the same Faith." His Cause, they have already demonstrated, stands identified with, and revolves around, the principle of the organic unity of mankind as representing the consummation of the whole process of human evolution. This final stage in this stupendous evolution, they assert, is not only necessary but inevitable, that it is gradually approaching, and that nothing short of the celestial potency with which a divinely ordained Message can claim to be endowed can succeed in establishing it.

The Bahá'í Faith recognizes the unity of God and of His Prophets, upholds the principle of an unfettered search after truth, condemns all forms of superstition and prejudice, teaches that the fundamental purpose of religion is to promote concord and harmony, that it must go hand-in-hand

³⁷ This book "Táhirih the Pure, Irán's Greatest Woman" is already being translated into Persian and Urdu languages and these will soon be published in India.

³⁸ Professor Hosain has written a most interesting article entitled "A Female Martyr of the Babi Faith" published in a book called "Proceedings of the Idara-i-maarif-i-Islamia", a Convention held in Lahore in 1933, and the volume is dedicated to the Nizam of Hyderabad, Deccan.

with science, and that it constitutes the sole and ultimate basis of a peaceful, an ordered and progressive society. It inculcates the principle of equal opportunity, rights and privileges for both sexes, advocates compulsory education, abolishes extremes of poverty and wealth, exalts work performed in the spirit of service to the rank of worship, recommends the adoption of an auxiliary international language, and provides the necessary agencies for the establishment and safeguarding of a permanent and universal peace.

Born about the middle of the nineteenth century in darkest Persia, assailed from its infancy by the forces of religious fanaticism, the Faith has, notwithstanding the martyrdom of its Forerunner, the repeated banishments of its Founder, the almost life-long imprisonment of its chief Promoter and the cruel death of no less than twenty thousand of its devoted followers, succeeded in diffusing quietly and steadily its spirit throughout both the East and the West, has established itself in no fewer than forty countries of the world, and has recently obtained from the ecclesiastical and civil authorities in various lands written affirmations that recognize its independent religious status.

The Forerunner of the Faith was Mirza 'Ali Muhammád of Shiráz, known as the Báb (The Gate) Who proclaimed on May 23, 1844, His twofold mission as an independent Manifestation of God and Herald of One greater than Himself, Who would inaugurate a new and unprecedented era in the religious history of mankind. On His early life, His sufferings, the heroism of His disciples, and the circumstances of His tragic martyrdom I need not dwell as the record of His saintly life is minutely set forth in *The Dawn-Breakers : Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Faith*. Suffice it to say that at the early age of thirty-one the Báb was publicly martyred by a military firing squad at Tabriz, Irán, on July 9, 1850. On the evening of that same day His mangled body was removed from the courtyard of the barracks to the edge of the moat outside the gate of the city whence it was carried by His fervent disciples to Tihrán. There it remained concealed until such time as its transfer to the Holy Land was made possible. Faced by almost insuperable difficulties and facing the gravest dangers a band of His disciples, acting under the instructions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, succeeded in transporting overland the casket containing His remains to Haifa. In 1909, 'Abdu'l-Bahá with his own hands and in the presence of the assembled representatives of various Bahá'í communities deposited those remains within the vault of the Mausoleum he himself had erected for the Báb. Ever since that time countless followers of the Bahá'í Faith have made the pilgrimage to this sacred spot, a spot which ever since 1921 has been further sanctified by the burial of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in an adjoining vault.

The Founder of the Faith was Bahá'u'lláh (Glory of God), Whose advent the Báb had foretold. He declared His mission in 1863 while an exile in Baghdad. He subsequently formulated the principles of that new and divine civilization which by His advent He claimed to have inaugurated. He too was bitterly opposed, was stripped of His property and rights, was exiled to 'Iráq, to Constantinople and Adrianople, and was eventually incarcerated in the penal colony of 'Akká where He passed away in 1892 in His seventy-fifth year. His remains are laid to rest in the Shrine at Bahji, North of 'Akká.

The authorized Interpreter and Exemplar of Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings was His eldest son 'Abdu'l-Bahá (Servant of Bahá) who was appointed by his Father as the Center to whom all Bahá'is should turn for instruction and guidance. 'Abdu'l Bahá ever since his childhood was the closest companion of his Father, and shared all His sorrows and sufferings. He

remained a prisoner until 1908, when the old regime in Turkey was overthrown and all religious and political prisoners throughout the empire were liberated. After that he continued to make his home in Palestine but undertook extensive teaching tours in Egypt, Europe and America, being ceaselessly engaged in explaining and exemplifying the principles of his Father's Faith and in inspiring and directing the activities of his friends and followers throughout the world. He passed away in 1921 in Haifa, Palestine, and, as already stated, was buried in a vault contiguous to that of the Báb on Mount Carmel.

According to the provisions of His Will, I, as His eldest grandson, have been appointed as First Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith and Head of the Universal House of Justice which must, in conjunction with me co-ordinate and direct the affairs of the various Bahá'í communities in East and West in accordance with the principles enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh.

The period since 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing has been characterized by the formation and consolidation of the Local and National Assemblies, the bedrock on which the edifice of the Universal House of Justice is to be erected. There are, according to the latest reports from Tihrán, over five hundred Local Assemblies already constituted in Irán. Organized Bahá'í communities are to be found in every continent of the globe. National Assemblies have already been formed and are functioning in the United States and Canada, in India and Burma, in Great Britain, in Germany and Austria, in Irán, 'Iráq, Egypt and Australasia. Such Assemblies are in the process of formation in Caucasus, Turkestan, and other countries. Local Assemblies and groups have been already established in France, Switzerland and Italy, in the Scandinavian countries, in the Balkans, in Turkey, Syria, Albania, Abyssinia, China, Japan, Brazil and South Africa. Christians of various denominations, Muslims of both the Sunni and Shi'ih sects of Islám, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and Buddhists, have eagerly embraced its truth, have recognized the divine origin and fundamental unity underlying the Teachings of all the Founders of past religions, and have unreservedly identified themselves with both the spirit and form of its evolving institutions. All these centers function as the component parts of a single organism, of an entity the spiritual and administrative center of which lies enshrined in the twin cities of Akká and Haifa.

Appendix III. Some Interesting Books

[Omitted]

Further Material on the Web

Life of Tahirih by [Jinab-i-Fadil](#), in Dawnbreakers ([Martyrdom](#), [All References](#)) and by [Avirih](#).

[Munirih Khanum \(Abdu'l-Baha's wife\) - Autobiography](#)

Info

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