

## Khadijih Bagum, Wife of the Bab

*In Simple English suitable for youth and those with English as a second language - made from the booklet by Balyuzi<sup>1</sup>.*

'O well-loved one!...You will not be a woman like other women, if you obey God in the Way of Truth...' - The Bab

### Introduction

After the Bab<sup>2</sup> was martyred, His wife Khadijih Bagum told her family the story of her own wonderful but tragic life. Many years later, her niece<sup>3</sup> told all she heard from Khadijih, and her grandson<sup>4</sup> wrote down those stories. Here is this most precious account, of Khadijih telling her own story and further details.

### The Bab and Khadijih as Neighbouring Children

The Bab and His wife were close in age. When the Bab's father died, He was looked after by the Bab's uncle<sup>5</sup>, and His uncle's house touched the house of Khadijih's father<sup>6</sup>. When they were children, the Bab and Khadijih were neighbours and playmates. Khadijih's brother<sup>7</sup> was about the same age. The Bab was always kind and considerate; whenever the children of the two households came together to play, He chose not to join in the games, although occasionally He did.

### Dreams the Bab among Flowers Wearing Coat of Verses

Years later, the Bab went to Port Bushihr<sup>8</sup> and Khadijih had a clear dream in which she saw her young Cousin the Bab in a bright green plain, filled with flowers all around, facing towards the point of prayer in Mecca<sup>9</sup> in an attitude of prayer. He wore a an outer coat<sup>10</sup> on which verses from the Qur'an were beautifully sewn with threads of gold. His face was shining. She told this dream to her mother, and also to the mother and grandmother of the Bab. They assured her the Bab's constant occupation with prayer had brought about her splendid vision. At this time the Bab was at most sixteen years.

## Dreams Fatimih asks her for Marriage to Imam Husayn

Some years later the Bab visited the holy cities of 'Iraq. He returned to Shiraz, and Khadijih dreamt that Fatimih the daughter of Muhammad had come to ask for her hand in marriage to the Imam Husayn<sup>11</sup>. Her mother hearing this dream was full of joy at her daughter's wonderful future.

### The Bab's Family Visit that Day

That very day, Khadijih said how her mother was visited by the Bab's mother and grandmother. Whenever the Bab's grandmother came, everyone would hurry to welcome her, kiss her shoulders, and wait at the entrance of the room for her permission to enter and sit. Khadijih's and the Bab's mothers would always first take their seat with her. In the presence of the Bab's grandmother, everyone present would be silent until she spoke to them.

Khadijih said, 'After they were all sitting, I took a fruit syrup<sup>12</sup> to them and left the room. Then my two married sisters<sup>13</sup> came, and went into the room. Soon they all got up to go.'

### Marriage Request

Before leaving, to Khadijih's surprise, the Bab's mother kissed her on the forehead. Seeing Khadijih's puzzled look, Khadijih's mother quickly explained to her. 'The kiss is that she has asked for you to marry her Son. You see, your dream last night has come true!' Hearing this news and thinking of her wonderful dream, Khadijih was overjoyed. The extraordinary respect all members of the family gave the Bab and the stories of His good ways she had heard from her elders, had already convinced Khadijih that her young Cousin, the Bab, stood high above them all. She said, 'From that day, I felt a great stirring in my heart. The gate of God's mercy and riches seemed to be been spread open before my face. I felt proud of my coming marriage beyond words.'

### Wedding

Two months later, the wedding was arranged. Marriage feasts were held in the homes of Khadijih's father and the Bab's uncle, who looked after Him. The Friday Imam<sup>14</sup> of Shiraz led the occasion, and read the usual speech. As was usual,

<sup>1</sup> Simplified version of the booklet of H M Balyuzi, which was mostly based on the written narrative of Abu'l-Qasim Afnan.

<sup>2</sup> Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad.

<sup>3</sup> Maryam-Sultan Bagum, daughter of Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim.

<sup>4</sup> Abu'l-Qasim Afnan.

<sup>5</sup> Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali, the maternal uncle of the Bab.

<sup>6</sup> Mirza 'Ali.

<sup>7</sup> Mirza Siyyid Hasan (the Great Afnan of future years).

<sup>8</sup> Bushire - the merchant trading was here.

<sup>9</sup> Qiblih.

<sup>10</sup> Labbadih.

<sup>11</sup> The martyred third Imam, who was a son of Fatimih.

<sup>12</sup> Sharbat.

<sup>13</sup> One to Haji Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin (her name was Zahra Bagum; her husband was a cousin of the father of the Bab and great-grandfather of Abu'l-Qasim Afnan) and the other was married to Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali.

<sup>14</sup> The Imam-Jum'ih (Friday Imam, who leads the Friday Prayers) was Shaykh Abu-Turab.

a relative of the groom responded; the Bab's uncle<sup>15</sup> did this. Later the bride and the Groom were married in the house of the Bab Himself.<sup>16</sup>

Khadijih said: 'His kindness and care to me, and also that of His mother, were both showered upon me beyond words.' The household in that small home, in the future to become the birthplace of a World Faith, was a married couple, the mother of the Bab, and two black servants - Fiddih, a woman, and Mubarak, a man.

### **Dream of the Lion**

Remembering those peaceful days before the sorrows and suffering that followed, Khadijih would say: 'No words can ever tell you my wonderful feeling of good fortune.'

A little after her marriage, she dreamt one night of a fearsome lion standing in the courtyard of their house. She had her arms around the neck of the lion. The lion dragged her round the entire edge of the courtyard two and a half times. She woke up, trembling with fear, and told her dream to her Husband. The Bab said, 'You awoke so soon! Your dream says that our life together will be at most two-and-a-half years.' Khadijih was greatly upset; but her Husband's love and words of comfort prepared her to accept every difficulty in the path of God.

### **Child Ahmad**

Soon Khadijih was with child. When the child was due, her lying-in was very difficult and dangerous. The Bab's mother told the Bab that Khadijih was about to die. The Bab wrote a prayer on the mirror that was beside Him, and asked His mother to hold the mirror in front of Khadijih. On doing this, the child was safely born. But the child lived only a short while, and the Bab's mother was upset and angry. She argued with her Son that with such power, why had He not tried to save the child's life and spare Khadijih so much suffering? The Bab smiled, and replied that it was not God's Will for Him to leave any child<sup>17</sup>. This answer infuriated His mother; but to her anger, He said no more.

The child, who the Bab named Ahmad, was buried under a cypress tree in part of the tomb of Bibi-Du'kh taran<sup>18</sup>.

In one of His Writings<sup>19</sup> the Bab speaks of Ahmad:

O gathering of Light!

Hear My call from the centre point of Fire in this snow-white ocean on this crimson earth. I am God, the Only One.

On the high throne, a much-loved noble woman with the name<sup>20</sup> of the First Friend's<sup>21</sup> loved one, was wedded to this Great Remembrance<sup>22</sup>. The heavenly angels and the souls of Paradise on the day of the Agreement, I brought to witness God's Remembrance.

O well-beloved!

Treasure this grace, which comes from the Beloved God.

You will not be a woman like other women, if you obey God in the Way of the greatest Truth. Understand the great gift He has given you; delight in being the partner of His Well-Beloved; be patient in what God has arranged for the Bab and His Family. Your son Ahmad is with Fatimih<sup>23</sup> in the Holy Paradise.

Ahmad is also mentioned in the same Book<sup>24</sup>:

Praise God, Who gave the Comfort of the Eyes<sup>25</sup> in His youth, Ahmad. We raised him to God... O Comfort of the Eyes! Be patient in what God has arranged for you.

He does whatever He wishes. He is All-Wise in His justice. He is the Lord, the Ancient of Days, and praised in all that He commands.

### **Bab's Daily Tasks**

Through their years of marriage, Khadijih says her Husband the Bab had no defined job. He spent most of His time in the upper room of their home in prayer. Sometimes in the morning the Bab went to His uncle's trade-house in the Customs House<sup>26</sup>. Some afternoons He would walk in the fields outside the city, and come home at sunset. It was His habit to write His letters or His reflections in the early evening after the fixed prayers for that period

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<sup>15</sup> Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Al'ai.

<sup>16</sup> The marriage took place in August 1842.

<sup>17</sup> Much as Muhammad had also said, that He would leave no inheritor.

<sup>18</sup> No one knows for certain who Bibi-Du'kh taran was. It is said that she was a member of the Royal House of the Atabaks of Fars - the Salghurids (1148-1270) - while others have claimed that since Bi-Bi-Du'kh taran means the matron or the Mistress of the Maidens, it is possible she was the Abbess of a Christian order of nuns.

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<sup>19</sup> Suratu'l-Qarab ("The Chapter of Kinship") in the 'Qayyumu'l Asma'.

<sup>20</sup> Khadijih.

<sup>21</sup> The Prophet Muhammad.

<sup>22</sup> The term 'Dhikr', here translated as 'Remembrance', was frequently used by the Bab to refer to Himself.

<sup>23</sup> The daughter of the Prophet Muhammad.

<sup>24</sup> In the Suratu'l-'Abd.

<sup>25</sup> The Bab often calls Himself Qurratu'l-'Ayn ("the Solace of the Eyes") in the Qayyumu'l-Asma'.

<sup>26</sup> Saray-i-Gumruk (Customs Serai).

of night.

### **Bab's Transfiguration**

Khadijih said how, one late afternoon, He came home earlier than usual. He said He had a particular task for that evening, and asked for dinner to be served earlier. Fiddih the maidservant usually did the cooking, and the family ate their evening meal in the room of the Bab's mother. The Bab then went to His room for the night.

The Afnan family recall this memorable night. It was some time before the Bab announced His Call; Khadijih said, 'An hour later, the house was quiet; everyone had gone to sleep, The Bab arose from His bed and left the room. At first I took no special thought of this. After He was away for more than an hour, I began to be concerned; I went out to look for Him, and could find Him nowhere.

I thought, Maybe He has left the house for some reason. I tried the door that opens onto the street, and found it was locked from within, just as usual. I walked to the west side of the house, and looked up at the roof-top; I saw the upper room was well-lit. I was surprised at this also; I had never known Him go to that part of the house at that hour of night unless He had guests, and He always told me when a visitor was coming - He had not mentioned any guest that night. Astonished and concerned, I went up the steps on the north side of the courtyard. I saw Him standing in that room, His hands raised to heaven, singing a prayer in a most musical voice. Tears streamed down from His eyes, and rays of light flowed out from His face. He looked so majestic and brilliant that fear seized me; I became unable to move, and trembled all over. I could not enter the room or leave and go back. All my power and will was gone, and was about to scream, when He made a sign with His blessed hands, saying for me to go back.

The movement of His hands gave me back my courage, and I returned to my room and my bed. All through that night I was deeply disturbed. In the moments I could sleep, the vision of that upper room would appear in my mind, adding to my confusion. I kept asking myself what serious happening had brought about such sorrow and tears, and prayer of such intensity. I could not sleep all night; the dimness of dawn came, and I heard the muezzin's call to prayer.

At sunrise, Fiddih took the hot water pot<sup>27</sup> and things for tea as usual to the room of the Bab's

mother. I followed him there, and as soon as my eyes fell on the Bab, that attitude and majesty I had seen that night appeared before me. My body went pale and shook. The Bab's mother at that moment had left the room, and the Bab was quietly drinking His tea. He raised His face to me, and received me with great kindness and love, asking me to sit. He passed me the tea that was left in His cup; I drank it, and His kindness gave me back my courage. He asked me what was troubling me, and I boldly said that it was this new change in Him that was heavy on my mind. "You are no longer," I told Him, "the same person I knew in our childhood. We grew up together; we have been married two years, living in this house; and now I see a different person before me. You have been transformed!" I said how this was troubling me. He smiled; He said He had not willed that I see Him in that state that night; but God had arranged it. "It was the will of God," He said, "that you saw Me the way you did last night, so that no trace of doubt will ever enter your mind, that you should know with absolute certainty I am the Manifestation of God Whose appearance has been awaited these thousand years. This light radiates from My heart and from My Being." As soon as I heard Him speak these words, I believed in Him. I knelt myself before Him, and my heart became calm and full of peace. From that moment on, I lived only to serve Him, making myself nothing before Him, without any thought of self.'

### **Khadijih's Faith**

The height of Khadijih's faith and are confirmed by Nabil:<sup>28</sup> 'The wife of the Bab... understood at the earliest dawn of the Bab's Revelation, the glory and uniqueness of His Call and felt from the very beginning the intensity of its force. Among the women of her time, only Tahirih exceeded her in the spontaneous character of her devotion and enthusiasm of her faith. The Bab told her the secret of His future suffering, and unfolded before her the significance of events that were going to happen in His Day. He directed her not to speak of this to His mother, and counselled her to be patient and submit to the will of God.'

In the prayer which Baha'u'llah revealed for visiting Khadijih after her death, He addresses Khadijih in these words:

You are the one who, before the world of being was created, found the perfume of the clothing of the Merciful One.

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<sup>27</sup> Samovar.

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<sup>28</sup> Nabil-i-A'zam, "The Dawn Breakers".

## Sadness of those days; Bab's Pilgrimage to Mecca and back

Whenever Khadijih spoke of her married days, the forced separation from her Husband, and the Bab's sufferings, she would be so full of grief, she would be unable to speak. Her grief was felt and shared by everyone who heard her.

After the Bab had made His Call known to Mulla Husayn<sup>29</sup>, some months later the Bab left Shiraz on pilgrimage to Mecca. He wrote a letter to Khadijih from Port Bushihr, beginning with these words:

'My sweet love, may God preserve thee.'

When the Bab returned from His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, fierce opposition began, until it took as martyr even the Bab Himself. Khadijih's sufferings of mind and soul can well be imagined. In later years, she particularly recalled the raid by the men of the Chief Constable<sup>30</sup> of Shiraz:

### Arrest of the Bab

It was summer-time, in the month of Fasting<sup>31</sup>. We slept on the roof, and my mother-in-law slept outside in the courtyard. The Governor's men<sup>32</sup> made their way from a neighbour's roof to our home. The Bab rose up and told me to go downstairs. The intruders took away every book and every piece of writing they found in the upper room. They said to the Bab, "You must come with us to the house of the Chief Constable." Down below, I could hear Him confront the men, demanding why they had broken into our home in the middle of night. They replied, "We hear that some people have gathered together in this house." When they discovered this was untrue, the Bab asked if they would now go away in peace. But they took Him away. Only God knows what His mother and I suffered that night. We were thankful that His elderly grandmother was elsewhere. It was almost dawn when the Bab came home. They had demanded money; He had no cash with Him, and they took the cashmere shawl around His waist and cut it up. The Governor kept half of the shawl for himself.

A letter still exists from Khadijih's brother<sup>33</sup> to the Bab's uncle<sup>34</sup> in Port Bushihr, telling the story of that night.

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<sup>29</sup> Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i, the First Letter of the Living to find and believe in the Báb.

<sup>30</sup> Darughih, 'Abdu'l-Hamid Khan.

<sup>31</sup> Ramadan.

<sup>32</sup> Farrashes.

<sup>33</sup> Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim.

<sup>34</sup> Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, maternal uncle.

## Bab Imprisoned by the Governor

A little after this night, the authorities arrested the Bab, and kept Him locked in the house of the Governor. In the city people were saying they would kill Him in the same house. The Bab's uncle<sup>35</sup>, His guardian in His childhood, did as much as he could to bring comfort and relief to the Bab, and though he was beaten up and injured, he still continued with every effort, along with Khadijih's sister Zahra<sup>36</sup>. At this time no male of the family dared come to their home, but only Zahra would come dressed as a beggar. The famous "New Mosque" of Shiraz<sup>37</sup> was nearby. Here, in a hidden part of the mosque, Zahra would change from her own body-veil<sup>38</sup> into one that was tattered and patched, and she would then go to the house of the Bab to bring any news of Him to His mother.

### Helpers and Comforters of the Bab

Among the important people of Shiraz, the one man always ready to help was the leader of the Friday prayers<sup>39</sup>. Zahra, together with the wife of a fabric-seller<sup>40</sup> related closely to that Prayer leader, regularly visited the house of that good man to find news and seek his efforts for the Bab. However, the prayer leader would explain he was powerless against the public and unstoppable opposition of the Bab's own relative<sup>41</sup>, and he advised they try to calm down that bold and noisy man.

### Bab Sentenced to Death

But when the religious leaders in Shiraz approved the Bab's death, and had it confirmed by the Governor-General of Fars province<sup>42</sup>, the Friday Prayer leader refused to add his signature to theirs. Three of those religious leaders<sup>43</sup> went to the prayer leader's house to win him over; he rejected what they asked, spoke against their terrible actions, and threw them out of his house. By now Zahra, the

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<sup>35</sup> Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali.

<sup>36</sup> Zahra Bagum.

<sup>37</sup> Masjid-i-Naw.

<sup>38</sup> Chadur, an outer garment enveloping a woman from head to foot like a sack.

<sup>39</sup> Shaykh Abu-Turab, the Imam-Jum'ih.

<sup>40</sup> Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Bazzaz (the Mercer). Haji Abu'l-Hasan was a fellow-pilgrim of the Bab, on the boat that took them from Bushihr to Jiddah. He was greatly impressed by the mien and bearing of Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad, his fellow-townsmen. Later, in Shiraz, he learned of the claim and the mission of Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad, the Bab, and gave Him his unswerving allegiance, which never faltered in the face of life-long persecution. Many were the hardships that he bore resolutely in His path and for His sake. Haji Abu'l-Hasan was the father of Mirza Muhammad-Baqir Khan Dihqan, a distinguished and greatly devoted Baha'i of the period which covered the Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

<sup>41</sup> Haji 'Abdu'l-Husayn, a brother of the wife of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad (maternal uncle of the Bab); he was foremost in denouncing, insulting, and persecuting the Bab.

<sup>42</sup> Husayn Khan, the Nizamud-Dawlih.

<sup>43</sup> Shaykh Husayn, the Nazimu'sh-Shari'ah (known as Zalim, the Tyrant), Shaykh Mihdiy-i-Kujuri, and Shaykh Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Mahallati.



Bab's mother, and the wife of the fabric-seller, had persuaded the prayer leader to find a way forward.

### **Bab Demanded to Recant in Public; Disease Empties City**

After he had refused to be linked to the Bab's death sentence, he made them agree to call the Bab to a mosque<sup>44</sup>, and there give the Bab the chance to change His mind publicly. So, one day, men were sent through the streets, and in the name of the Governor they called on the people of Shiraz to come together into the mosque in the afternoon of a certain Friday, to hear the Bab's submission.

Khadijih said, 'We were all very worried that something difficult might happen; we had heard, that once the Bab had submitted and announced His changed ways, He would be allowed to come home. The thought of His coming home was comforting. On that Friday afternoon, we wanted to send a woman to the mosque to bring us news of what was happening there, but we found women were not allowed in. We heard that government men had taken Him to the mosque, and He climbed up to the speaker's stand and spoke words which made the Governor and the religious leaders furious, and they led Him back and locked Him away. Soon after, deadly disease<sup>45</sup> suddenly struck throughout Shiraz, killing many. Everyone fled out from the city and very few stayed.

### **Bab Returns Home; Leaves for Isfahan**

One day, to our wonderful joy, the Bab came home, and He stayed two or three days. Only three of the believers<sup>46</sup> knew of His release. These were the last days of my life with Him. A few days before the fasting month of Ramadan began, the Bab told us that His stay in Shiraz was no longer wise, and He said He would leave the city that very night. Knowing how much He had suffered in Shiraz, we were happy He could now go somewhere safe. In the afternoon He visited four friends<sup>47</sup> and said farewell; He returned home about sunset. Two hours later, all alone, the Bab left the house. His clothes and what He needed for the journey had been sent out from the city earlier. With one of the believers, He took the road to Isfahan.<sup>48</sup>

### **Waiting News of the Bab; Demands for Money**

Most of our time we spent in the house of the Bab's uncle<sup>49</sup>, expecting every minute the arrival of a messenger with news of the Bab. The disease<sup>50</sup> was over; the Governor returned to Shiraz, and he immediately sent his men to seek the Bab. We stated we did not know where He was. By his own authority the Chief Constable<sup>51</sup> had allowed the Bab to depart from Shiraz, and he also said he didn't know where the Bab had gone. Then the Governor's men came to arrest my brother<sup>52</sup>, who was ill in bed and unable to walk. They threw him over their shoulders and carried him to the Governor's house. Of course my brother knew nothing, but the Governor would not believe him, and abused him so angrily that my brother lost consciousness, almost to death. Finally, the Governor told him to bring the Bab within fifteen days or pay the huge sum of 15,000 tumans.<sup>53</sup> Whatever my brother said would not change the cruel Governor's mind. Then a friend and business associate of my brother<sup>54</sup> offered to stand as guarantee for him. The Governor's men once again threw him onto their shoulders and brought him home. He was dumped in the space in front of the house and abandoned there. God knows what my brother and we went through during those two or three hours. One result of this ill-treatment was a sickness of his eyes. My brother could not open his eyes; the pain was severe, and tears streamed from them all the time.

After fifteen days, the Governor's men came again. They would not allow my brother even to get on his donkey, but took him away again in just the same manner as before. Just as the Governor was demanding fearsomely from my brother and his guarantor his 15,000 tumans, God be praised, a letter was brought to him from the Governor of Isfahan<sup>55</sup>, saying that the Bab was in Isfahan as his honoured Guest, and that none of His family should be harmed in any way. The Governor of Fars had to soften his demand, and demanded 1,500 tumans instead. The Chief of his men, and the men themselves, all demanded money, and had to be satisfied.

One of the Bab's uncles<sup>56</sup> lived in Yazd, 300 km

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<sup>44</sup> Masjid-i-Vakil ("Vakil's Mosque"), built by Karim Khan-i-Vakil (reigned 1750-79), founder of the short-lived Zand dynasty.

<sup>45</sup> Cholera.

<sup>46</sup> Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali and two others.

<sup>47</sup> Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali and Haji Siyyid 'Ali and Haji Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin and his wife, who was Khadijeh's sister,

<sup>48</sup> In the last days of September 1846; a somewhat different account of this episode is given in "A Traveller's Narrative" p9 (US) and "Dawn-Breakers" pp 197-8 (US).

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<sup>49</sup> Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali.

<sup>50</sup> Cholera.

<sup>51</sup> Darughih, 'Abdu'l-Hamid Khan.

<sup>52</sup> Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim.

<sup>53</sup> A substantial sum in those days.

<sup>54</sup> Haji Muhammad-Sadiq-i-Isfahani.

<sup>55</sup> Manuchihr Khan.

<sup>56</sup> Haji Mirza Hasan-'Ali, maternal uncle of the Bab - a younger brother of Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali.

away. Every few months, he would send a messenger to Shiraz with a letter for his sister, the mother of the Bab, to comfort her, and give her whatever news he had of the Bab. Sometimes there was a letter from the Bab Himself to His wife, mother and grandmother. A brother<sup>57</sup> of Khadijih was in Isfahan during those years, but he was hostile to the Bab and never wrote her even a line about her Husband.<sup>58</sup>

Khadijih said, This uncle<sup>59</sup> left for Yazd. Two<sup>60</sup> young members of the family often came to see us, and gave us what we needed to live. They were especially kind; whenever they met the Bab's mother, they always kissed her hand, and what they spoke gave her peace of mind.

### **The Bab Moved from Prison to Prison**

A few months later, we learnt that the Bab, the One to Arise<sup>61</sup> from the House of Muhammad, had been taken to the capital Tihiran,<sup>62</sup> and then to the second-city, Tabriz<sup>63</sup>. These patchy pieces of news caused us great worry. The Bab's mother begged her brother<sup>64</sup> to do something; so he went from Yazd to Maku, where the Bab was imprisoned, and in the end was martyred in Tihiran.

### **Martyrdom of the Bab Hidden from the Ladies; Youth's Death**

'His martyrdom there, and the martyrdom of the Blessed Bab in Tabriz, were hidden from the women of the family, and whenever we mentioned stories that came to our ears, the men would hotly deny them, saying they were clearly untrue.'

Of course the men of the family knew what had happened. Even before those dreadful events, Khadijih's brother<sup>65</sup> had found it impossible to stay in Shiraz, and he took with him on pilgrimage to Mecca an eighteen-year-old relative<sup>66</sup>. That youth had only a year earlier married his cousin<sup>67</sup>, and on the way back fell ill and died at the pilgrimage port

of Jiddah, and was buried there.<sup>68</sup> Alone, Khadijih's brother<sup>69</sup> visited the holy shrines of 'Iraq. When he reached home with the sad news of this youth's death, over a year had passed since the martyrdoms of the Bab and His uncle. The announcement of this youth's sad death brought out to the open that his father also was dead, cruelly beheaded in Tihiran, and the martyrdom of the Bab Himself could no longer be kept a secret. Now, all three were mourned together.

### **Mother of the Bab Leaves; House Rented**

The mother of the Bab was unable to be comforted. The hurtful attitude and wounding tongues of some of the family members who were bitterly hostile, made her agonies worse; at last, she could bear it no longer, and decided to leave Shiraz. At first she wished to go, with her mother, to Mashhad, the holiest city of Iran, where the remains of the Eighth Imam<sup>70</sup> lie; but she changed her mind, rented out the house of the Bab<sup>71</sup> and then, accompanied by a lady<sup>72</sup> and the Bab's faithful black servant Mubarak<sup>73</sup>, she went to Karbila and resided there for the rest of her life. Later, a man and wife who were believers<sup>74</sup> went to live in the same holy city, and the wife served the Bab's mother with perfect devotion.

### **Khadijih Leaves**

Remembering those upsetting times, Khadijih would say:

The Bab's mother leaving Shiraz greatly increased the sorrow in my heart. I no longer had by my side a comforter whose love, sympathy and care kept me going over the years. I went to live with my sister<sup>75</sup>. In the space of one year, she had lost both her husband and her only son. My sorrow was great, yet hers was even greater, and I had to comfort her. There with me, was the loyal and faithful servant Fiddih.

### **Servants Unaware of the Bab's Martyrdom**

None of the servants and maids in the house knew of the martyrdom of the Blessed Bab and His uncle. It was not possible to speak of such things with

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<sup>57</sup> Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan (later known as Afnan-i-Kabir).

<sup>58</sup> A half-brother of Khadijih Bagum, Haji Muhammad-Mihdi - a poet of distinction whose soubriquet was Hijab, had gone to Bombay for commercial pursuits.

<sup>59</sup> Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali.

<sup>60</sup> Haji Mirza Javad (Son of Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali) and Haji Mirza Muhammad-'Ali (Son of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad).

<sup>61</sup> Qa'im.

<sup>62</sup> Although summoned by the Shah to Tihiran, an order from the Prime Minister countermanded this, when the Bab was within thirty miles of the capital.

<sup>63</sup> Second largest city.

<sup>64</sup> Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali.

<sup>65</sup> Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim.

<sup>66</sup> Mirza Javad, the eighteen-year-old son of Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali.

<sup>67</sup> Khadijih Sultan-Bagum, a daughter of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad.

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<sup>68</sup> A receipt exists, from a reciter of the Qur'an in Karbila, which lists the clothing and other belongings of Haji Mirza Javad. They had been given to him by Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, and in return, he was to recite in public verses of the Qur'an on behalf of the deceased.

<sup>69</sup> Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim.

<sup>70</sup> 'Ali Ibn Musa'r-Rida.

<sup>71</sup> To Mirza Muhammad-Husayn-i-Bazzaz.

<sup>72</sup> Bibi Gawhar - a sister of Haji Mirza 'Abdu'llah Khan-i-Balyuz, and great-aunt of the present writer.

<sup>73</sup> Haji Mubarak.

<sup>74</sup> Mirza 'Abdu'l-Majid and his wife.

<sup>75</sup> The widow of Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali.

anyone. In Karbila, the Bab's servant Mubarak bought a broom with a green handle to sweep every day the courtyard of the Shrine of Imam Husayn. Green is the colour of the House of Muhammad, and he was keeping alive the hope that one day he would in this world see again with his own eyes, the light-filling face of his beloved Master, the Bab. In Shiraz we told Fiddih and others that the Master and His uncle had gone to Bombay in India to trade. When our house was being repaired, Fiddih was so happy, saying all the time that the Master was on His way home, and the house was being repaired in preparation for His home-coming. The joy of this faithful soul was wonderful to see and truly overwhelming. We were all deeply affected.

### Captive Babis

When the followers of the Bab were brought captive to Shiraz from Nayriz and Zanjan<sup>76</sup>, they could not come near us, and we could not approach them. After a while some of the ladies<sup>77</sup> visited us in the house of the Bab's uncle<sup>78</sup>, and after that we were able to visit one another.

### Khadijih's Nephew; The Call of Baha'u'llah

Years passed, and my nephew<sup>79</sup> grew up. He was greatly attached to me. Baha'u'llah was in Baghdad. My nephew wrote to Him for me, and I was honoured by a reply. At Baha'u'llah's request, Nabil<sup>80</sup> [the historian] went one day to Shiraz to announce Baha'u'llah's Call to the followers of the Bab there. They were gathered in this nephew's home when Nabil told them the One Promised by the Bab had come. With one heart, they gave their loyalty. Nabil visited me one day at my request. I was behind a curtain. When I heard him say Baha'u'llah was the Promised One from God, I immediately experienced the very same feeling I had on that night when I was standing at the entrance to the upper room of our home, and I knew for certain what God had promised for the "Year Nine" had come. I immediately put my head to the ground in praise and thanks. I could only whisper, "Offer at the entrance to His Presence my most humble devotion." My submission was immediate, and complete.

### Munirih Khanum Visits

Years passed, until a letter came from Khadijih's

brother<sup>81</sup> in Isfahan, announcing that Munirih Khanum<sup>82</sup> and her brother<sup>83</sup> and Baha'u'llah's messenger<sup>84</sup> were coming to Shiraz on their way to the Holy Land. The friends travelling to Shiraz always came to visit me, and I received them in my nephew's home. The women friends in Shiraz were few in number, and used to call to see me at the home of the Bab's uncle<sup>85</sup>. I lived in that house, and had it prepared to receive the friends from Isfahan. On their arrival, they went to a home close by<sup>86</sup>. When I heard, I went there and brought them to my home. My nephew<sup>87</sup> was in Shiraz also. They stayed for fifteen days, and those were some of the happiest days of my life.'

*So ends Khadijih's story, as she told it to the young members of her family.*

### Gifts from Baha'u'llah

Baha'u'llah's messenger<sup>88</sup> often visited Shiraz. Whenever he came there from 'Akka, he brought a Message from Baha'u'llah addressed to Khadijih, along with presents and other gestures. Once he brought her from Baha'u'llah a book in the handwriting of one of the best Baha'i scribes<sup>89</sup>; another time, a ring and shirts which Baha'u'llah had worn, with handkerchiefs and turban-cloths used around the taj on His head.

### Khadijih's Three Requests for Baha'u'llah

Munirih Khanum took three requests from Khadijih to Baha'u'llah. She longed for the Bab's house to be repaired so that she might live there; she asked that one of Baha'u'llah's daughters<sup>90</sup> might marry her nephew<sup>91</sup>; and she begged permission to travel to 'Akka to come into the presence of her Lord, in Whose path the Bab had gladly given His life. Baha'u'llah granted everything which she asked.

### The House of the Bab Repaired

The house of the Bab was repaired, and Khadijih moved and lived there; soon, however, the frequent visitors aroused the fury of the enemies of the Faith. The Governor-General of the province of Fars, who was uncle to the Shah<sup>92</sup>, decided to destroy the

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<sup>76</sup> Sites of upheaval.

<sup>77</sup> The daughters of Hujjat and some ladies from Nayriz.

<sup>78</sup> Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali.

<sup>79</sup> Mirza Aqa, the son of Haji Mirza Zaynu'l-Abidin and Zahra Bagum, sister of Khadijih Bagum.

<sup>80</sup> Mulla Muhammad-i-Zarandi, Nabil-i-A'zam.

<sup>81</sup> Mirza Siyyid Hasan.

<sup>82</sup> On her journey to wed Abdu'l-Baha.

<sup>83</sup> Aqa Siyyid Yahya.

<sup>84</sup> Shaykh Salman.

<sup>85</sup> Haji Mirza Siyyid 'Ali.

<sup>86</sup> Home of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad.

<sup>87</sup> Haji Siyyid 'Ali, son of Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan.

<sup>88</sup> Shaykh Salman.

<sup>89</sup> Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin.

<sup>90</sup> Furughiyyih Khanum.

<sup>91</sup> Haji Siyyid 'Ali.

<sup>92</sup> Haji Farhad Mirza, the Mu'tamidu'd-Dawlih, uncle to Nasiri'd-din Shah.

house. There were two Baha'is<sup>93</sup> that were members of the Prince-Governor's court and close to his person, and they managed to avert this catastrophe. For a while, Khadijih lived once more in her sister's house; eventually, she returned to the house of the Bab.

### Marriage of Nephew to Baha'u'llah's Daughter; Khadijih Unable to Reach Baha'u'llah

Her second request, the marriage of her nephew to Baha'u'llah's daughter, was to cause Khadijih untold sorrow. Her nephew promised her that if her request was allowed, he would come from where he lived and traded<sup>94</sup>, and he would take Khadijih with him to the Holy Land to see Baha'u'llah. But when approval for the marriage was received, he broke his promise and sent her a message that the situation prevented him from going to Shiraz, and that he would be going to the Holy Land via 'Ishqabad and hoped to arrange her journey some other time soon. Khadijih sensed her chance to go to the Holy Land was now gone forever; for in those days, women could only travel with a close relative, and such chances were rare.

### Khadijih's Ascension

Khadijih's heart broke. Her health became weak, and despite several doctors, within two months of receiving his letter, she passed away in the house of the Bab, three hours before sunset, on Monday 15 September 1882<sup>95</sup>. The faithful maidservant Fiddih died two hours later, in the same house. Khadijih's body<sup>96</sup> was taken that night to the public bath<sup>97</sup> adjacent to the mosque<sup>98</sup>, to be washed and prepared for burial. She was buried that same night within the shrine of one of the sons of the Seventh Imam<sup>99</sup>.

### Summary

Forty years before, had been the joyous day of her marriage to the Bab. 'Be patient in all that God has arranged for the Bab and His Family,' He had counselled her, and to His advice she clung faithfully, to her very last hour. Their life together in this earthly world lasted two brief years, and after this came a separation best expressed by the Bab

in His own words, during His pilgrimage journey to Mecca:-

My sweet love... God is my witness, that since the time of separation sorrow has been so intense, it can never be described...

As we reflect on the heroic life of this steadfast woman - ennobled by her instant recognition of both the Bab and Baha'u'llah - sadness gives way to pride and praise, and to the peace of the words which her beloved Bab closed His letter to her:

'Peace be upon thee and the mercy of God and His blessings.'

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### Info

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<sup>93</sup> Mirza Abu'l-Hasan, the Munshi-Bashi (Chief Secretary), and Mirza Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khn-i-'Ali-Abadi.

<sup>94</sup> Yazd.

<sup>95</sup> 2 Dhi'l-Qi'dih 1299 AH.

<sup>96</sup> As her brother Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim records.

<sup>97</sup> Known as Hammam-i-Guldastih.

<sup>98</sup> Masjid-i-Naw, "New Mosque".

<sup>99</sup> In the Shah-Chiragh - the tomb of Mir Siyyid Ahmad, a son of the Seventh Imam, Musa'l-Kazim - in the section known as Sadru'l-Hifaz (to the north of the tomb of Mir Siyyid Ahmad), which was called Masjid-i-Zananih (Women's Mosque).