

Munirih Khánum's Story

By Munirih Khanum, Abdu'l-Bahá's wife

- In simple English -

Her own story of her family, birth and early life, up until her marriage to Abdu'l-Bahá.



Note to the Simplification

This simplified story has the same content as the original, but is reworded to make the English easier. Unusual words have been changed into familiar words, difficult sentences made easy to read, and most names and places have been put as notes at the bottom of each page. My hope is that this story will be readable by children and people across the world who speak some English.

At the end, you will find the opening comments by the translator, a link to the original version, contents, and a map of all the places mentioned.

Munirih Khanum's Story

Opening Words

In the Name of Abhá the Most Glorious

A number of spiritual sisters and women-servants of God in the West have asked me to write down a brief story of my own life and its connections to this great Call.

O All-Powerful God! You witness that all parts of my body, heart, soul and spirit, speak of Your endless gifts; how, from the beginning of my life, even though I am so unworthy, You have sent Your

Kindness like rain upon me, a woman-servant at Your door.

From when I was born, and as a child, I have experienced many wonderful things, each one a great and amazing miracle. To explain everything fully and give enough thanks, I would get only a short way into this story.

From when I was twelve until I stood in the Holy Presence of Bahá'u'lláh, and visited the Blessed Shrine, I have had many important dreams, which amaze the mind; when great difficulties arise, remembering those dreams brings peace, joy and patience. From such dreams as these, it is clear to any person that everything which happens has a great, hidden wisdom and plan for the spirit. Realising this, it is impossible to become unhappy or lose hope.

About this, Bahá'u'lláh writes in the "Seven Valleys":

"If you see injustice, understand in it Justice, and if you experience unkindness, understand in it kindness."

So I will begin with the story and tell some of the important events of the past. We rely on God, and we pray for help from Him. I have nearly forgotten many of the events, yet because some of the friends have asked for a short story, I have done so. Before beginning it, I will tell you a little bit about my own family.

Father and Ancestry; Family Name "Nahri"

My father's name was Mirza Muhammad Ali Nahri. He was the son of Hájí¹ Siyyid² Mehdi Nahri, who was the son of Hájí Siyyid Muhammad Hendi; 'Hendi' means Indian.

Great Grandfather

This last, was born and lived in the village of Zavareh, just outside Isfahán. When he was old enough, he went to India. He was born in the family-line of Muhammad, the Prophet. Everyone born in Muhammad's line is greatly respected everywhere, and so in time he married one of the Princesses of the Indian family who ruled there: the Indian Prince wished to marry his family into the family of Muhammad and become favoured by God, and so he married his own daughter to my great grandfather, and as my great grandfather stayed in India, he became known as 'Hendi' - "Indian". This family connection brought him great fame and money, and he lived like a rich prince.

¹ Hájí is someone who has been on the main Islamic Pilgrimage.

² Siyyid is someone born from the family line of Muhammad.

After some time, he had two sons. The first was my grandfather, Hájí Siyyid Mehdi; he later inherited all his father's wealth, and he moved from India to Najaf, where the first Imam³ is buried. There, he built up much wealth and property - farms, houses, inns, public baths and shops - all in the cities of Karbala (where Imam Husayn⁴ was martyred) and Najaf. After a while, he used one-third of his money to build an aqueduct to bring water into the city, and so people called him "Nahri" which means a stream of water in Persian. This name Nahri has been used for our family even to this day.

Father

This person, my grandfather, had several children, male and female. Among them was my father, named Mirza Muhammad Ali Nahri, and my uncle, Mirza Hádí; this uncle's daughter became the wife of the King of Martyrs⁵.

Great-Grandfather Seeks the Promised One

Let me tell you an interesting story. When my great-grandfather was living in India, a famous astrologer drew his horoscope. He said that from his line of children some will live in the day of the Promised One of God, believe in Him, and give their whole heart and life to His Call. My great-grandfather believed in this, and wrote that when he would die, and his belongings were shared out to his relations, what remained in cash and other things should be kept to earn money, and be given to the Promised One when He comes.

He left this in writing, passed from this world, and sped up to the Kingdom of Light.

Father and Uncle Seek the Báb

When the Call of the Báb arose from Shiraz, my father and uncle heard it. Without returning to their homes or saying goodbye to their families, they immediately set off with great speed to Shiraz to reach the Báb.

The other brothers loved material things and were not religious at heart; they took advantage of this and went and told the Mullahs in Najaf and Karbala that their brothers - my father and uncle - were unbelievers and what had come to them at their fathers' death should be taken away from them. They called them "Bábís", and took for themselves all the money and belongings of their father, entirely ignoring the will.

³ Imam 'Ali.

⁴ Third Imam, Muhammad's grandson, famous Islamic martyr.

⁵ Mírzá Muhammad-Hasan.

Táhirih (Qurat'ul-'Ayn)

When my uncle understood how his brothers only lived for this life, he withdrew his hand from the world and its people, turned his heart away from his father's wealth, and spent his days and nights serving the True One. Then wishing to fulfil his grandfather's will, he himself offered in his grandfather's name a box of his own precious jewels to Táhirih. She was living in Baghdad and Karbala, and her many journeys were paid for by the sale of jewels from that box. In this way, the wishes of his grandfather were brought about. Táhirih lived in Baghdad and kept company with my father and uncle, and they lived in such joy. That story would need a whole separate book, which if I find the time, I will write.

Grandmother's Dream of Two Lights; Father and Uncle Born

My grandmother (my father's mother) was a holy, believing soul, may the Lord be with her always! One night in her dreams, she saw two balls of light⁶ rising up from the well in her home, and they entered her heart. This dream excited her so much that she awoke, and stayed awake all night. Before sunrise, full of happiness, she went to the house of a very important scholar⁷ whose word was obeyed throughout Persia; no one was his equal. My grandmother told him her dream, and asked him what it meant.

He said, "Be happy, for God will give you two children who will be like suns, and will spread their light on all your family and relatives."

About then, my grandmother became pregnant; my father was born; and a year and three months later, my uncle Hádí⁸ was born.

Father and Uncle - Student, Mystic, Marriage

When my father and uncle were old enough, my father wished to learn philosophy, science, and literature. He joined a college⁹ in Isfahán, and eagerly sought knowledge. My uncle was more a mystic and Sufi. He lived away from people, and meditated and did good things, and followed the Quietist school. As time passed, both the people and the clergy¹⁰ trusted him. Because of his fame amongst well-known people, the high priest¹¹ gave him his cousin to marry. Later on, she became well-

⁶ "Orbs"

⁷ Hájí Siyyid Muhammad Bagher.

⁸ Mirza Hádí.

⁹ Kaseh-Garan.

¹⁰ Ulama.

¹¹ Hájí Siyyid Mohammed Baghar.

known as "the brilliant sun"¹². This uncle lived in Isfahán, and everyone loved him.

Father Marries; Uncle; Siyyid Kazim, the Báb

When my father finished college, he journeyed to the sacred cities. In Karbala he became a firm and enthusiastic student in the classes of Siyyid Kazim¹³, and an eager follower of Shaykh Ahmad¹⁴. These two brilliant moons were above all others in fame and knowledge, and shine today in the greater world. After living some time in that sacred city, my father married.

My uncle Hádí, with his family, also journeyed to Karbala. Whilst there, he spent much time with my father and the followers of Shaykh Ahmad, and as they were doing so, suddenly in the year 1844 they heard the Call of the Promised One, called "The Báb", calling from Shiraz. As soon as they heard this, they set out with great speed for Shiraz, without telling their families, wishing to find out for themselves.

During the time of their classes with Siyyid Kazim, they saw the Báb many times, and saw wonderful signs of the Spirit from Him.

Siyyid Kazim; Stories of the Báb

One of the stories my uncle used to tell, was this:

"Before the Báb called out to the world, Siyyid Kazim was teaching the people of Karbala, with the words, 'Truly, truly, the Kingdom of God is right at hand.' My brother and myself were disciples of Shaykh Ahmad, and every day we came to his classes. One day when the class was over, we went to visit the Holy Shrine of Imam Husayn¹⁵.

We entered the sacred enclosure, and we saw a young Siyyid, very beautiful, straight and full of energy. He stood before the Shrine with the greatest humility, and was chanting a prayer of request. As we looked into his face, we were so moved with his beautiful face and the joy of meeting Him that we stood still, just looking at Him, and our tongues could not move.

Siyyid Kazim's often stated to us in his classes, that the day of the Manifestation was near. He warned us always to search, because the Promised One was living among the people but the people were blind and not looking.

When we saw the Báb standing so very humbly

before the Shrine of Husayn, we often wondered if He might be the invisible Promised One, come to visit the Shrine of His ancestors. Whenever we saw the Báb visiting the shrine, we sat near to Him, listening to the sweet melody of His prayers, and we saw His deep spirituality. Often, tears flowed like rain from His eyes. When He finished His prayer, He would not go into the inner enclosure of the Tomb of Husayn; but with great humility He would bow down, and leave.

I was much astonished when I saw this, and I wondered who this holy person may be. I followed Him until He entered His house, and went from my sight. I asked His neighbours about the house, "Who are the people who live here?" and they replied, "They are merchants from Shiraz; they have been living there these past few days."

I realized that this holy person was from Shiraz. From that time, I would meet Him every day when He visited the Holy Shrine. During His spirit-purposed stay in Karbala, He came sometimes with a bright and beautiful face to the classes of Siyyid Kazim. When He entered the class, Siyyid Kazim would always show Him the greatest honour. When these classes and the time of pilgrimage had both finished, the Báb returned by ship to Búshihir, and over land to Shiraz, and Siyyid Kazim left this life for the higher world.

When my brother and I were living in Karbala, we heard the Call of the Manifestation in Shiraz by the name of the Báb. When we heard this, our hearts immediately turned to that Person, who we remembered smiling among us while we were in Karbala. I immediately said to my brother, "By God! this heavenly Person must be the same Youth of Shiraz who would visit the classes of Siyyid Kazim."

Father and Uncle Go to Shiraz; Báb on Pilgrimage; Return Separately to Karbala and Isfahán; Wife Dies

Along with my brother, we journeyed to Shiraz. When we were halfway there, we learned that the Báb had started on Pilgrimage to Mecca, so I returned to Karbala, and my brother went to Isfahán."

When my father arrived in Isfahán, his wife was living in Karbala, so he took a room in the college¹⁶. About this time, the Báb sent Mullá Husayn¹⁷ from Shiraz to Isfahán, and there he spread news of the Call, and guided many souls to it. My father was one

¹² Shms-Us-Zoha.

¹³ Hájí Siyyid Kazim Rashdi.

¹⁴ Shaykh Ahmad Ahsá'i.

¹⁵ Third Imam; a reference also to Bahá'u'lláh (Husayn-Ali).

¹⁶ Kaseh-Garan.

¹⁷ Bábu'l-Báb, gate to the Gate.

of those who accepted the Message. After a while he learned that his wife had passed to the higher Kingdom, and sadness came to him.

Father Remarries; Dream

He was without the comfort of a home; he became friends with one of the new believers¹⁸, who was a well-known merchant of Isfahán. He loved my father very dearly, and one day said, "Your wife passed away without child, perhaps you should leave your college room, and live with us in our home; I have a sister, and if you are pleased, I will be very happy to arrange your marriage, making the love of our families stronger."

My father easily agreed. The merchant spoke with his mother, and found she was very eager for this also. His mother said, "Last night in my dreams, I saw a person with a bright face from the line of Muhammad¹⁹ visit our home. In his hands he carried two lamps. Your friend must be this person, and you must quickly bring about this marriage."

Munirih Conceived from the Báb's Act; Brothers and Sisters

The merchant invited many friends to a feast, and his sister - my mother - was engaged to my father. It was well-known that my father had no children from his first wife. Two years passed after this marriage with my mother, and still no child was born. As the Báb was travelling from Shiraz, He arrived in Isfahán, and He stayed in the home of the leader of the Friday prayers, the Imam Juma. The Imam Juma arranged for my uncle Ibrahim²⁰, the father of the King and the Beloved of the Martyrs, to be host to the Báb, and wait and serve Him at all times. One night he invited the Báb to dinner, and the Báb accepted. There were many people²¹ present at that memorable feast, and they received the blessings of the Báb, and listened to His words until supper was served. They all sat down for a spiritual and material feast. While eating the food, the Báb turned to someone present and asked about the children of my father. He answered that, although he had married twice, no children had come. So the Báb offered my father a spoonful of sweets. He ate, and at that moment realised that the will of the Lord was for him to have a child. After the feast, he

¹⁸ Hájí Áqá Muhammad.

¹⁹ Siyyid.

²⁰ Mirza Ibrahim.

²¹ Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, Imam Juma, Mirza Muhammad Husayn (the brother of Imam Juma, who later became instrumental in the martyrdom of the King and the Beloved of Martyrs, and whom Bahá'u'lláh called "the snake"), Siyyid Mohammed Reza, Hájí Áqá Muhammad, Mirza Ibrahim Taj, Mulla Muhammad Hájí Harati - the father of Mirza Muhammad Ali and Mirza Ibrahim - and the uncle, who was the host.

returned home and mentioned this to my mother. He had kept some of the sweets, and gave it to her. Eight months and nine days later, I was born. Three years later, my brother²² was born; after another three years, a sister²³; five years passed and another sister²⁴ saw the light of day; my parents were blessed with nine daughters and one son.

Báb Imprisoned; Black Flag; Father and Uncle Join (1848)

The Báb left Isfahán and was led to the strong prisons of Tabríz and Mah-Ku. Whilst there, He sent a message to all the believers of God to join under the "Black Flag" to be lifted up in the Region of Khurásán, as tradition required. My father set off for that district. Before leaving, he said to my mother:

I am going on this long journey. I do not know how it will end, or what will happen to me; perhaps I may be martyred. I am making my will now, so that if God wills another child is born, if he is a son, name him Ali, and if a girl, call her Fatima."

Badasht and Khurásán; Niyala; Persecutions

This was the will of my father and mother. Then, in a group with about twenty-five other men, my father journeyed for Khurásán. They arrived at the Plain of Badasht to meet with the believers, and my uncle Hádí also joined them. At that time Bahá'u'lláh, Quddús and Táhirih were there. Each day groups of believers arrived from different parts of Persia, and joined the others until everyone had come, and the 'Army of God' took up its tents and left for Khurásán. It was here that the incidents at Niyala and the stoning of the friends happened, as our histories write fully elsewhere.²⁵

Uncle Dies; Father Buries Him with Surprise Help

My uncle received many injuries and he died on the way; my father used to tell this story:

When Niyala was disturbed, the believers fled in different directions; the people of Niyala followed them, killing everyone they could. My brother and myself and a few other believers had taken to the road and were going slowly, when suddenly my brother became very weak. We found on the way a ruined inn, and we spent the night there. During the night, my brother passed away from this life. The

²² Hájí Siyyid Yahya.

²³ Razieb Begum.

²⁴ Gohaur Begum.

²⁵ With the new freedom felt at Badasht, and Táhirih having removed her veil, a few Babis took this freedom to excess, and at dawn they were stoned from the top of a mountain by the people, causing everyone to flee, leaving only Bahá'u'lláh, Táhirih and a young man. [see Dawnbreakers, p298-9.]

friends were afraid the enemies would attack again, and at midnight they left for different parts. I was left alone with the body of my brother.

In the morning, I left the inn and stood by the roadside, not knowing what to do, how to bury my brother, and escape the enemy. Suddenly I saw in the distance a woman walking toward me.

She asked me, "Who are you; why do you stand here?"

I answered, "Last night my brother died in this inn; I am wondering how I shall bury him."

The woman replied, "Do not worry, I have come here to help you. Last night I dreamt of Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad. She told me one of her children had died in this inn, and in the morning I should come and help you in his burial. Now I have come to do her command."

When she had said this, she returned to the village, and came back immediately with a number of other people, and everything we needed for the burial. The body was washed in the running stream; it was covered with a white sheet. My brother had wished to be buried "by the side of the road where the pilgrims come and go," and we buried him there. When this was done, the village people returned to their homes, and I journeyed to the capital Tihrán, and then to Isfahán, arriving completely exhausted, stoned by the enemy, my brother dead, and my sister travelling with Táhirih, not knowing where they were, or whether they were safe.

Father Reaches Isfahán; Difficulties and Successes

In this state my father reached Isfahán; at this time no one would dare mention the word "Bábi". Amidst this wild disorder, on the very night he arrived, he held an enthusiastic meeting, and he began to share the wonderful Message of the Báb. He was so full of love for God, that his older brother sent him this message:

"My dearest brother, You Bábis have a great wind blowing in your minds; you are not afraid of any danger. It is best if you leave this part of the city: for my life, my family and children, are all in great danger."

My father sent him this message:

"I will not hide the religion of God for reasons of the world. I gave up the endless wealth of my father, and as long as my body has life, I will put every effort into spreading this Call."

Immediately, my father bought a house in another part of the city²⁶. He got together with two other energetic Bábis²⁷, one of whom later killed himself in Baghdad, and they spent their time spreading the Call of God. Among many fine souls who were guided to the Source of Truth, were the King and the Beloved of Martyrs²⁸. When they had finished their work, my father and uncle journeyed for Baghdad to visit Bahá'u'lláh.

Visit to Bahá'u'lláh, 1850s; Great-Uncle Believes in Bahá'u'lláh Before Ridván

Often my father would say:

"On this journey, I told my uncle: 'when you are in the Presence of Bahá'u'lláh, you must speak for our hearts, and ask him all our questions.' My uncle replied: 'Do not worry, when we were in Badasht, I became very close friends with Bahá'u'lláh; it will be easy to speak with Him.'

We arrived in Baghdad, and the time came for the meeting. My uncle on the way had boasted of his closeness with Bahá'u'lláh, but now he was in Bahá'u'lláh's Presence, I saw he was completely silent, humble, and lost; he could not speak any word. The more kindness Bahá'u'lláh showed him, the more my uncle remained silent and humble. At last, Bahá'u'lláh said to him:

"Mirza Hádí! We were close friends, and travelling companions!"

Then Bahá'u'lláh said everyone could leave. When we came out, I asked my uncle, "What happened to you - you said nothing!"

He answered, "By God, Bahá'u'lláh is not the same Bahá I had met in Badasht: I tell you, with full certainty! - He is the Promised One, promised by the Báb." "

My uncle was one of a few souls who believed in Bahá'u'lláh before His public Call. Some months later, they returned from Baghdad; I was eleven years old²⁹. After a year, tragedy came for us; our father passed away and flew to the Kingdom above - may God show him favour.

I often heard my father say to my mother, "I wish to take Munirih³⁰ to the Holy Family³¹." And I would

²⁶ Called Shah-Shahan.

²⁷ Zayn al-Muqarrabin, a well-known Baha'i scribe, and Siyyid Ismail.

²⁸ King of Martyrs (Sultánu'sh-Shuhadá') Mírzá Muhammad-Hasan and Beloved of Martyrs (Mahbúbu'sh-Shuhadá') Mírzá Muhammad-Husayn.

²⁹ 1859 AD.

³⁰ "Fatima", Munitih Khanum's name.

³¹ Of Bahá'u'lláh.

wonder within myself, "O God, where is this Holy Family? in Karbala - or some other blessed land?"

Father Passes Away; Munirih Looked After by Relatives; Marriage Requests, Stresses and Sadness

When my father died, the relatives of my father and mother looked after us. They all showed me great love and kindness; they felt I was a gift given by the Báb, on the night of the feast. They were eager to serve and please me, and they would choose the most attractive young men as my future husband. They struggled with each other about this, and argued much, until they were ready to turn their backs on each other. I felt these arguments so deeply, they filled me with sadness; in my sadness, I had no wish to be at joyous events. Often I said to them, that I was my own leader and I would not take a husband, not even Christ from heaven or the beautiful Joseph from Egypt.

Prayerfulness

I spent much time reading and singing the new messages and prayers. I recited every day the Great Prayer, and I fasted both the Bahá'í and the Islamic months. My heart had no wish for worldly pleasure; and I often wondered, "Why do I have no feeling for the ordinary pleasures of society?" I would tell myself it was because I loved my relatives and friends; but I would doubt this, and ask myself, Why do I not try to do their wish?

Every sunset, and part of each night, I would climb on the roof of the house, and I would say and sing holy prayers and poems. My mother would always ask me angrily, "Why do you do this!"

Dream of Horseman in the Desert

One night, I came down from the roof, sad and unhappy, and I went to bed. I dreamt I saw myself walking in a desert; a person was following my footsteps. Suddenly a man on a horse came, and he said to me, "Why are you afraid? Come, I will take you on my horse, and carry you wherever you wish to go." He took my hand, pulled me up from the ground onto his horse, and I rode behind him. He said, "Tell me what you wish, and I will give you it."

I said, "Give me two wings, so I may fly high." He touched my back, and lifted me a little above the seat. I realized I had two wings, and I began to fly. For a long time I flew far and high, until I came to a huge field, filled with an ocean of people. In the middle of this great crowd, I saw a raised stage, for speaking; I saw Muhammad on it and all the Prophets and Apostles gathered around Him. While I saw all these strange things, I knew I was a dove,

flying freely in the air. I circled above the crowd, and then I landed on a corner of the stage. Muhammad touched me with His blessed hand, and hung a necklace about my neck. I floated up and started to fly again; I flew on and on; I saw wonderful and strange scenes of beauty that cannot be described. In one place I saw a crowd of people who were leaving; I saw among them my mother, and I gave her the necklace; and I continued to fly.

This dream caused such great joy, I awoke and started to cry. My mother was nearby, and she awoke. She wondered what had happened. The next day, from morning until evening, I hardly knew who or where I was. I saw many dreams of this kind, flying in the air and feeling full of joy; I knew how dreams where people see themselves flying, have a beautiful meaning. Time passed, and two relatives³² pressed me, and the Imam Juma with force, to marry my cousin, who was the younger brother of these two relatives³³. They would not stop; I could not refuse, and I let them have their wish.

First Marriage

All the messages from the Holy Land³⁴ to the believers of Isfahán, were carried by this young man. He was a beautiful and well-mannered youth, full of love and attraction. All the relatives and friends were filled with happiness at our engagement, and they made great and detailed preparations for the marriage.

Every day, this youth sent me letters flooding with love, whilst a house was being put up as our future home. The home was finished, and at last the wedding feast was spread, and the marriage night came near. Following the custom of Persia, the guests and relatives carried me to the house of my uncle, whilst my future husband, my cousin, read and sang poems and songs of happiness. At ten o'clock, my cousin came from his room and welcomed me with great joy, and took me to the wedding bedroom.

By this time, all the guests had gone and just a few close relatives stayed; and they also went. We were left to ourselves. I sat silent, and watched my cousin. He did not lift his head, or speak any word. He did not try to remove my marriage veil, give me any welcome, ask about my health, or show any love. This continued for several hours, and I could take it no more; I did not dare say any word. At last, the dim light of the morning began to show, and I

³² The King and the Beloved of Martyrs.

³³ To Mírzá Kázim; they were betrothed in infancy by their parents, as was the Persian custom.

³⁴ 'Akka.

saw the shadows of several relatives trying to look through the gaps of the window.

In despair, I ended my silence, and I said, "What has happened to you that you speak not even one word?"

He answered, "I have a headache. It has taken away my power to speak." He continued silent again.

Such a strange story, surely is very uncommon. It is so strange, no one would believe it, except the people of Isfahán who saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears. This spread great sadness over the brothers and all the relatives. They would argue with him, and try to make him understand his unique, strange behaviour; he was helpless, like a man living in confusion. He swore by God, that it was beyond his control; he said some power was keeping him away from me; he was willing to obey anything, except he could not do this. Whenever he spoke, he would often end by saying that there must be some reason for this, which would become known in the future.

For some time we continued to live together in this way. I found him always silent and dreamy. He would speak and share his thoughts with no one, and would not meet people. One night, we were alone in the house; there was only the woman-servant. He placed his head on my lap, and without saying any word, went to sleep. A long time passed, and suddenly, I felt a strange feeling. I touched his hand; it was cold like ice. He had given up his life to God; may His Mercy be upon him always.

I tell this story so that it will become clear that for every difficulty, there is a wisdom. This pure cousin was a guard; he brought me to the perfect beloved, and joined this stream of water to the most great sea. After this sad event, I turned my back completely on the world and its people, I cut my heart from every attachment, and filled with the love of God, I spent my time reading the verses and signs of God, and kept company with the believers of God.

Engaged to Abdu'l-Bahá

Following Bahá'u'lláh's wish, one of the Bahá'ís³⁵ arrived in Persia, and later passed through Isfahán to spread the Call of God. A great feast was made for him, and all the believers gathered round, and asked him eagerly for news from the Holy Land, and of the Holy Family, and of the believers in prison in Akka.

³⁵ Siyyid Mehdi Dhajy.

My uncle's wife³⁶ said to him, "While you were in the Presence of Bahá'u'lláh, did you ever hear any girl spoken of or chosen for the Master, Abdu'l-Bahá?"

He said, "No; but one day, Bahá'u'lláh was walking in the men's room and speaking. He turned His face to me, and He said, 'I had a wonderful dream last night of the beautiful girl living in Tihrán, whose hand we asked in marriage for 'Abdu'l-Bahá'³⁷; her face became dark and hidden; and at the same moment, the face of another girl appeared, whose face and heart was bright. We have chosen her to become the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.' Except for these words from Bahá'u'lláh, I have heard nothing."

My aunt returned to the house; she stated by God, that at the very moment he was telling us Bahá'u'lláh's dream, she realised, without any doubt, that I was that girl, and before long we would see that she was right. I wept, and I answered, "It cannot be; I am not worthy of such a gift. I ask you, never speak another word of this!"

Some time passed, and a Message from the Holy Land came in honour of the King of Martyrs. In that Message, Bahá'u'lláh also announced:

"You are Our relatives and near ones."

When the reader³⁸ read this, he went to everyone in the family, and asked if any one had written any private thoughts of their heart to Bahá'u'lláh; he was amazed at this glad news, and could not see the reason for such a gift. We all told him that no one had written anything; he asked every one to tell no one about this, and said we should wait until we received further light to guide us regarding this mysterious sentence.

Mecca and Palestine

After some months, Shaykh Salman arrived in Isfahán from the Holy Land. He met the King of Martyrs, and told him he had great news and a most wonderful gift.

He said, "I have been instructed to take your cousin Munirih³⁹; we will pass through Mecca with the pilgrims who are visiting the House of God in Arabia⁴⁰. Prepare what you need for the journey, so that during the month of pilgrimage, we may set off through Shiraz and Búshihir. You must keep this news secret; tell no one, until three days before we leave."

³⁶ Shms os Zoha.

³⁷ From Mirza Hassen.

³⁸ The original only says "he"; it's probably the messenger but could perhaps be a family member.

³⁹ "The daughter of Mirza Muhammad Ali."

⁴⁰ The Kaaba.

Wife of the Báb and Relatives in Shiraz

The time of pilgrimage arrived. With my brother⁴¹ and a servant, we started for Shiraz. When we came to that city, we stayed in a very delightful inn. It was about sunset. The Afnán⁴² heard of our arrival, and came to visit us. They took us to the house of the Báb's uncle⁴³, and we spent the night in that beautiful home. To my mind, it is holy ground, a bright place, one of the hallways of Paradise. Here I met the Afnán ladies. They welcomed me with the greatest love; I hugged and kissed them, with holy love. Spirituality and blessing surely come to whoever sleeps in that house. Next morning, the blessed wife of the Báb, like Mary⁴⁴ and Fatima the daughter of Muhammad, came to welcome us.

She surrounded us with kindness. She invited me to go with her to her home; I was glad to do so. Her home belonged to the great uncle of the Báb⁴⁵; he was later one of the Seven Martyrs⁴⁶. This house is next to the house where the Báb was born. I was taken first to the House of the Báb. Within it there is a large room; its doors and windows are always locked, no one enters it. It was the Báb's room. They opened its doors for us, and we went in. We stood, with the utmost humility and submission for nearly one hour on that holy spot. Then the wife of the Báb said, "I have been expecting you to arrive. It was written to me⁴⁷ saying I would soon have a guest."

The Báb's Great Uncle's Wife Believes

She took us to her own home. There we met the wife of the great uncle of the Báb. She was a holy, prayerful woman; she gave much of her time to religion; she was not fully convinced of the truth of the great Call, and she would say, "This, our Mirza Muhammad Ali⁴⁸, has indeed caused a great stir in the world! How many important souls have died as a result of this confusion, how much blood has been spilled!"

I answered, "O my beloved friend, your Muhammad Ali is the Promised One of Muhammad. He is the One Who will Arise⁴⁹ and the awaited Revealer of all

⁴¹ Siyyid Yahya.

⁴² "Twigs" - maternal relatives of the Bab and the surname of their descendants

⁴³ Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad.

⁴⁴ "The Virgin", Mother of Jesus.

⁴⁵ Haji Siyyid Ali.

⁴⁶ Seven Martyrs of Tihrán. The Prime Minister put some Bábí prisoners under great pressure to say they would give up the Báb. Some did so and were released, whilst the Seven Martyrs stayed firm and refused, and were taken to the public square, stoned along the way, and killed. See Dawnbreakers p446; New History p250.

⁴⁷ By Mirza Hassan.

⁴⁸ The Báb.

⁴⁹ Qa'im.

the Holy Books. Whenever a Manifestation appears, the call of God is raised, and in every time and society, the same disturbance happens, rivers of blood flow, and opposers reject. You have read in the Qur'án, how 'Whenever a Messenger comes to you with something you do not wish, you proudly reject him, accusing some of lies and killing others.' Again, you read, 'O the sadness of men! Every messenger that comes to them, they laugh away.'" I gave a number of similar passages from the Qur'án. She said that no one understood the real meaning of the Qur'án, except God and those who have knowledge.

I answered, "Yes, the Qur'án is beyond human understanding; so let us look at the books of Masnavi by Rumi. Think about how the King rejected Moses, how the priests responded to Jesus; think how the people in Arabia rejected Muhammad. All these are found in the Masnavi and other books."

We spent hours together, reading the Masnavi, and I explained to her its important points. The Afnán ladies were present every time. Those were truly happy days, with a sweetness and memory that will stay with me forever.

After we left Shiraz, I heard the glad news that she had become firm in the Faith.

Wife of the Báb Tells Stories of the Báb

One day, as we had talked enough of these debates, I asked the Báb's wife if she would tell me some stories of her life and her time with the Báb, the hours she spent in His Holy Presence, and how she married him. She answered:

Marriage of the Báb and Khadijih

"I do not remember everything; I will tell you what has stayed in my mind. The father of the Báb⁵⁰, was my uncle's son. His business and trade went very well. We were three sisters. One night, I saw in my dream, Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad. She came to our house, and wished one of us to marry her son. My sisters and I welcomed her with love and respect. She sat down, and looked us over keenly; then, she rose from her seat, came forward, and kissed my forehead. In the dream, I felt she was very pleased with my appearance, and I was her favourite. Next morning, I arose; I felt light and floating, but I was too shy to tell anyone my dream. In the afternoon, the mother of the Báb came to our house. My sisters and I welcomed her, and, to my surprise, just as I had seen in my dream, she left

⁵⁰ Siyyid Muhammad Reza.

her seat, came smilingly toward me, kissed my forehead, and embraced me. After some general talking, she left. My eldest sister whispered into my ears, that she had come to ask for me to marry her Son. I answered, 'How fortunate I am!' I told my dream of that night, saying the dream, coming true, brought great happiness to my heart.

After some days, the engagement was discussed and gifts were sent to our house to confirm this happy promise. Then His Holiness the Báb left for the port of Búshihir with His uncle to work there. After the dream, whenever I met the Báb's mother, although she was my aunt, I was unable to show her closeness, but I gave her great respect and obedience.

I do not remember how long the Báb's trip to Búshihir lasted: but while He was in that city, one night, I saw in my dream, the night of marriage had come. I was sitting beside the Báb; He wore a green robe, around which some writings were embroidered. Looking closely, I found they were verses from the Qur'án, amongst which was the verse on Light⁵¹; and the body of the Báb was surrounded in a glow of light. It made me so happy to meet the Báb in this wonderful way. I awoke from my sleep, and from that time, I knew in my heart with great faith, that He must be a most wonderful person. His love filled my heart more than it could hold, but I did not dare tell these secret things to anyone until after He returned from Búshihir and His uncle arranged the marriage feast.

When the wedding passed and I came to know the Báb fully, I turned away from material things; my heart was wholly attracted to Him; his sayings of wisdom, instruction, His behaviour and manners, assured me that He was a person from heaven; yet I never in my widest imagination imagined He was the Promised One of Muhammad.

Declaration of the Báb in 1844

He spent much of His time chanting prayers and reading the Holy Verses. In the evening when He returned home, as merchants do, He would ask for his folder, and what I imagined were His money books; I looked closer; they did not seem like account books. Sometimes I would ask Him, "What is within these books and papers?"

He would answer smilingly, "These are the account

books of the people of the world."

If a person arrived suddenly when He was reading or writing, He would quickly gather up His books and papers, and tie them in a cloth. All the friends and relatives, such as the uncles and aunts, felt sure the Báb was a special being, and they showed Him great respect.

Then came the night of May 23, 1844. On this night, Mullá Husayn⁵² visited the Báb; he accepted His Mission, and became the first follower of His Call. That was indeed a wonderful night.

The Báb said, "Tonight, we will look after a very dear guest." His blessed face was full of light and life. The spiritual ecstasy of the Báb, made me long to listen to His blessed words, but He turned His face to me, and said, "It is best for you to go to your room and sleep."

I did not wish to disobey His wish and leave my bed; yet I lay awake all night; and at all hours, I heard His spiritual voice speaking in the most lively manner with Mullá Husayn, reading verses to him, and offering proofs.

Suffering after the Báb's Declaration

Every day, from that time on, the Báb received an unknown guest, and these spiritual discussions continued without a break. If I wished to tell the suffering and tests that were poured upon Him during those days, you would be unable to listen. I will give you one of the many events, telling how He was taken away by His enemies.

One night we were in bed, asleep. At the hour of twelve, the Mayor of the City⁵³, followed by a crowd of men, came into the house from the roof, and entered the rooms. He dragged the Báb out of bed, without asking any questions or allowing any explanation, and took Him away dressed only in a very thin robe. That was my last visit with my blessed Husband. The nightmares and trials which surrounded the Báb, the unheard-of persecutions against Him, are all beyond my power to describe. I never again met any of His friends and followers. The door of contact was shut from all sides, and we could not meet or keep in touch with Him.

One day, I heard a great upset in Shiraz, like a battle was happening. I heard music and trumpets, and I saw people running backward and forward. I asked about it and learned they had brought the heads of the martyrs of Nayriz to the city⁵⁴. The next

⁵¹ "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His light is as a niche and within it a lamp, the lamp enclosed in glass, the glass as if a brilliant star, and lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east nor the west, whose oil almost shines, though fire barely touched it: Light upon Light! God guides whom He will to His light. God presents parables for men, and knows all things." (Qur'án 24:35.)

⁵² Mullá Husayn Bushru'i, the Bábu'l-Báb.

⁵³ Abdul Hamid Khan.

⁵⁴ Nayriz saw the deaths of a great number of Bábis. (See Dawnbreakers XXII;)

day, saw the same crowd and noise, and the shouts of the gangs as they marched the captives of Nayriz through the streets. I longed to meet one of those prisoners: but it was impossible. Later, however, two of the captives, dressed secretly as beggars, knocked at our door; they said no word about the Call, because they were watched by spies. Those were most difficult days; yet now, when you arrive here, you have freedom. We can sit down, and speak about this Truth, without fear and shaking. It is now possible for you to remain here for some time and meet the Afnán ladies, and speak with them about these spiritual matters."

Goodbye to the Wife of the Báb; Her Wishes, and Her Passing from this World

Shaykh Salman looked after our group; he said we would be wise to leave Shiraz now, and to continue our journey with the Pilgrims just as Bahá'u'lláh had instructed. We all cried greatly and were full of sadness; we said goodbye to the Báb's wife and the Afnán ladies, and then set out for Búshihr. Before we left, she asked me to take two wishes for her to Bahá'u'lláh. She asked if one of Bahá'u'lláh's daughters may be married to a relative of the Báb, so that these two heavenly Trees may also join in the outer world; and she asked for permission to visit Bahá'u'lláh. When I came to stand in the room of Bahá'u'lláh, I gave Him these two wishes, and He immediately allowed them.

Bahá'u'lláh said the brother of the Báb's wife⁵⁵ could leave Shiraz, bring the Báb's wife with him, and travel to the Holy Land, journeying as if going to Mecca. However he met some difficulties, and so journeyed for the Holy Land; he wrote to his sister the wife of the Báb, saying he needed to go ahead, and that if God willed, a way for her to travel would come. She was so filled with sadness by this letter, her health failed, and within two days, her spirit left this world. Her earthly remains are buried in Shiraz⁵⁶.

When Bahá'u'lláh was told of these sad events, he was extremely upset. He immediately sent an order⁵⁷ that, without any delay or excuse, the relatives of the King of Martyrs should be sent to the Holy Land; this was carried out with speed.

Búshihr; the Sea

I arrived with my travelling companions in the port of Búshihr late one afternoon, and we stopped at an

inn. I had never seen the ocean, and so I went immediately to the roof of the building; for the first time, I saw the infinite expanse of the sea; I was overjoyed at the sight, and I said to myself, "You will travel across these waters, to distant worlds."

Thoughts filled my mind of my home and love for my relatives, bringing powerfully to my heart past memories; tears came to my eyes, because our family and relatives are all such valued people, united with a special, gentle love. Yet I praised God, that He had scattered us over the earth to be workers on His path. He had separated us into different places, made many of us give up our lives for His Call, caused our name to be talked about in every gathering, and given among us the two titles of the King and the Beloved of Martyrs.

Dream of the Pearls

I came down from the roof, filled with happiness and joy. As I was still thinking of far-away friends, sisters and relatives, feeling so many sweet remembrances, I placed my head on the saddle-bag in the corner of the room, and I fell asleep. As I slept, I dreamed. I found myself in an endless desert. A pearl necklace hung around my neck. Suddenly, the thread of the necklace broke, and the pearls were thrown all across the sand. Upset and full of worry, I collected them as fast as I could; to my surprise I found each pearl had grown larger than a hen's egg, and some of them were joined together, shining so brilliantly that the great Sahara desert was filled with light. They were so beautiful, so perfect, so fully white, and lovely, that in my dream, I remembered the words of the Báb, in the Persian Bayán:

"Try as hard as you can, to present every valuable thing to the Presence of Him Whom God Shall Manifest."

I said to myself, "It would be wonderful to gather all these pearls, and carry them along with me, and when I stand in the Presence of Bahá'u'lláh, to offer them to Him." In the land of dreams, I found a vase, and I gathered the pearls, and placed them in it. Holding it above my head, I cried at the top of my voice:

'O, Him Whom God Shall Manifest! O, Him Whom God Shall Manifest!'

I found I had travelled some distance. Suddenly, a branch shot out from the centre of the vase, and leaned over toward the Holy Land, guiding me to that blessed spot. At one moment I would see the branch standing upright, and again it would bend down in worship. A sweet angel's voice came out from the branch, saying:

New History 119.)

⁵⁵ Father of Mirza Mohsen, husband of one of Abdu'l-Bahá's daughters.

⁵⁶ Sha-Tcherag, Shiraz.

⁵⁷ To Mirza Sadeg of Isfahán.

'God is Great! God is the Greatest! God is Most Beautiful!'⁵⁸

I called out also with this greeting, praising God with these same words. My voice was so loud, and I was crying with so much joy, that my brother⁵⁹ was woken from his sleep. He shook me until I awoke, saying, "Sister, sister! what has happened to you; you are crying and talking so much in your sleep!"

I told him my dream; and said I was unable to present its heavenly beauty. I was in such a state of joy that I sat down, in the middle of the night, and wrote out that dream for my mother, and I sent it to Isfahán.

Steamship to Jeddah; Pilgrimage at Mecca; Delays from Trouble in Akka

The next day, we set out on the steamship, and after a few days on the sea, we arrived at the port of Jeddah. We visited Mecca and performed the ceremonies of the great pilgrimage⁶⁰. Here, we met a number of believers; some of them⁶¹ were coming back from the Holy Land, and had also performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. When we said we were journeying to the Holy Land, they tried to stop us leaving; they said that no one is allowed into Akka now, because sad events had caused the Friends to be put in prison again, and the guards did not allow any Bahá'í to come into Akka. This news troubled us very much, and we wondered what we should do. Shaykh Salman told us that this would not affect us, and made us feel happy to enter the Holy Land in peace, even though every believer was thrown in chains into prison.

Having performed every duty for the pilgrimage to Mecca, we returned to the port of Jeddah. We found there a letter from the Bahá'u'lláh's secretary⁶², giving Bahá'u'lláh's instruction to stay in Jeddah and when all the Pilgrims had returned home, to travel quietly to Alexandria and wait there for a telegram.

We followed these instructions, and stayed in Jeddah until all the Pilgrims had left. We travelled to Alexandria with the company of seventeen of the Friends of God. In Alexandria, a telegram reached us from Bahá'u'lláh, saying that all the other companions must go back, and the four of us must leave on the Austrian steamship for Akka; and when the ship reaches the port of Akka, we must then

stay on board until one of the friends⁶³ calls us, and leave the ship with him.

Steamship to Palestine; Long Wait to Leave the Ship

Our travelling companions left us, and we journeyed on to the Holy Land. Our ship anchored in the port of Akka half an hour before sunset. We waited and waited, but we could not see him. All the passengers left the ship, and the cargo was unloaded; yet still no one came. We were very worried, and wondered what to do. My brother⁶⁴ joked, "Dear sister, it seems to me we will have to go back!"

"Brother, we are ready to obey. Bahá'u'lláh states⁶⁵, 'The paradise of accepting the situation is greater than the paradise of struggling with it.'"⁶⁶

Night came, and the wooden bridge for entering the ship was lifted away. We lost heart, and we were wholly disappointed. Shaykh Salman was unable to be comforted, and was crying all the time. Suddenly out of the silence, a clear voice came like a trumpet call from heaven, reaching our ears. The bridge was lowered again, and we walked down it. The man came for us in a special boat. In the silence of the night, we rowed to the landing place for boats in Akka. It was very dark; we could see no one except Bahá'u'lláh's brother Kalim⁶⁷, and the owner of the house in which Bahá'u'lláh lived⁶⁸. Later, the Greatest Holy Leaf⁶⁹ told me that following Bahá'u'lláh's instruction, Abdu'l-Bahá had also come, but I do not remember seeing him.

Akka; In the House of Kalim

Following Bahá'u'lláh's brother, we went to the inn, and were looked after by him and his family; in the morning, members of Bahá'u'lláh's Family came to welcome us. I returned with them, and for the first time, I stood in the Presence of Bahá'u'lláh. The state of extreme joy that filled me, is beyond description. The first words of Bahá'u'lláh were these:

"We have brought you into the Prison at this time, when the door of meeting is closed to all believers, so that everyone may know the Power and Might of God."

I continued to live in the house of Kalim for nearly

⁵⁸ "Allah O Akbar! Allah O Azem! Allah O Abha!"

⁵⁹ Siyyid Yahya.

⁶⁰ Hajj.

⁶¹ Siyyid Ali Akbar, the nephew of Siyyid Mehdi Dahjy, and his wife.

⁶² Mirza Aqa Jan.

⁶³ Abdul Ahad.

⁶⁴ Siyyid Yahya.

⁶⁵ Tablet of "The City of Resignation".

⁶⁶ 'The paradise of Resignation is superior to the paradise of negation.'

⁶⁷ Mirza Musa - Aqay-i-Kalim.

⁶⁸ Khojeh Abbud.

⁶⁹ Bahá'u'lláh's daughter, Bahiyiyh Khanum.

five months. I visited Bahá'u'lláh many times, and each time I returned to my home. Whenever Kalim returned from visiting Bahá'u'lláh, he would tell me of His infinite gifts, and bring to me a material gift from Him. One day he arrived with great happiness in his face; he said:

Named Munirih ('Illumined'); Marriage to Abdu'l-Bahá

"I have brought a most wonderful gift for you - a new name has been given you; 'Munirih' - Illumined."

Immediately I remembered Bahá'u'lláh's dream of the girl⁷⁰, who became ill; how her colour faded until she left this earthly world; and then another girl appeared with a bright face, a spiritual heart, and she was chosen to be the wife of Abdu'l-Bahá.

Because of the lack of room in Bahá'u'lláh's house, for five months I continued to live in the home of Kalim. He was asked by the owner of Bahá'u'lláh's house⁷¹ why the marriage was being delayed. He did not receive a clear answer; later he saw the delay was for need of a room. His house was joined onto Bahá'u'lláh's, and so he lifted the separation between the two houses, and added a room from his house to Bahá'u'lláh's. He himself arranged the room with great simplicity and purity; and when everything was ready, he went to Bahá'u'lláh and told Him he had prepared this room for Abdu'l-Bahá; his offer was accepted.

Then the night of union, more desirable than a hundred thousand years, was near. I was dressed in a white robe, prepared for me by the Greatest Holy Leaf, more precious than the silks and velvets of Paradise. About nine o'clock in the evening, the soul-lifting voice of the One Beloved was heard from Heaven, and I was allowed to stand in the Presence of Bahá'u'lláh. Looked after by the Greatest Holy Leaf, I listened to the words of Bahá'u'lláh, as He rested under a mosquito net, saying:

"You are welcome! You are welcome! O Blessed Daughter! We have chosen you to be the companion of the Greatest Branch, and to assist Him. This is My Gift, of which there is no equal; the treasures of the earth and heaven can never be compared with this."

After speaking in this way, and raining His Mercy on me, He spoke of Baghdad, Edirne⁷² and the Most Great Prison of Akka, saying that many girls had hoped for this great bounty, yet they were not

accepted.

"You must be very thankful, for this most great favour and gift has come to you."

Bahá'u'lláh then sent us away with these words:

"May you be always under the Protection of God."

You can easily imagine, after listening to these heavenly words, and laying eyes on these kingly gifts, in what glorious sky I was flying. How wonderfully all my hopes had been fulfilled! Just as the Persian Poet says:

"At that moment, heaven speaks to the earth and says, 'It you have not seen the resurrection with your own eyes, come and see it now!'"

After that blessed hour, I lived in the paradise of eternity with a world of longing, attraction, humility and surrender. I entered the room prepared for Abdu'l-Bahá, and experienced His favour, His love, His glory and His greatness.

An hour later, Abdu'l-Bahá, the wife of Kalim, the wife of the owner of the house, and his daughter, entered the room. Abdu'l-Bahá's aunt⁷³ brought the special Tablets which are read and sung on such occasions; especially the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh, which begins with the joyous announcement:

"Truly, the doors of Paradise are opened, and the divine Youth has appeared!"

She gave this Tablet to me and asked me to sing. I took that blessed Tablet into my hands and sang with a clear, rich voice. In later years, whenever I would meet the wife of Abbud, she would bring to mind that night, saying she can never forget that meeting, and the sweetness of my singing was still ringing in her ears; she would say, "Never before in this world, have I heard a bride singing at her own wedding."

Closing Words

This is the brief story of my own life, my dreams, my travels and my meeting with the wife of the Báb. To write the details of fifty years of my companionship with the Beloved of the world, of His love, mercy and bounty, would need fifty more years of time; yet, with the seas of the world for ink, and the leaves of the forests for paper, I could not tell it as well as it should be.

I beg of the Doorway to Oneness, and beg Him that He may rain on us His Favour and Gifts throughout all the worlds. O Lord, make the end of all days and work filled with goodness, honour, and happiness.

⁷⁰ Daughter of Mirza Hassan.

⁷¹ By Khojeh Abbud.

⁷² Adrianople.

⁷³ "Mother of Mirza Muhammad Ali."

Written by this woman-servant at the Doorway

Munirih.

January, 1924.

Foreword

Munirih Khanum is the wife of Abdu'l-Bahá, known by all Bahá'ís as "the Holy Mother". A few months ago, she sent me a Persian text of stories from her eventful and holy life, stories so pleasing and near to the heart. With the text was a letter from Munirih Khanum and Shoghi Effendi, offering me the joy of translating and publishing it for the friends.

I have many years served Abdu'l-Bahá, and while I was living in the Holy Land every day I was given continuous hospitality and kindness from His blessed family; so I carried out this service with great pleasure and satisfaction.

There is nothing more important than to read the story of someone who saw with their own eyes the great historical events; Munirih Khanum has been not only this, but also a close partner of the Wonderful Bahá'í Revelation. May her spiritual story give readers a greater and brighter understanding of Truth!

Translator,

MIRZA AHMAD SOHRAB.

The translation of the life story of Munirih Khanum, the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, written by herself, as asked for by a number of American friends.

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