



The Hidden Sunrise – Part A

Dawn-Breakers Chapters 25-26

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Glimmerings notes are a companion to study of the Dawn-Breakers

Prologue

For Shí'a Muslims, the Day of Resurrection will be ushered in by the return of the twelfth Imám, the *Qá'im* [He who ariseth], followed by the coming of Imám Husayn and his hosts. For Sunní Muslims, the Day of Resurrection will see the coming of the *Mahdí* [One who is guided] followed by the return of Jesus Christ.

Siyid Kázim had told his disciples:

For soon after the first trumpet-blast which is to smite the earth with extermination and death, there will be sounded again yet, another call, at which all things will be quickened and revived. Then will the meaning of the sacred verse be revealed: "And there was a blast on the trumpet, and all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth expired, save those whom God permitted to live. Then was there sounded another blast, and lo! Arising, they gazed around them. And the earth shone with the light of her Lord, ..."¹
Verily I say, after the *Qá'im*, the *Qayyúm* ﴿﴾ [the Self-Subsisting] will be made manifest. For when the star of the Former has set, the sun of the beauty of Husayn will rise and illuminate the whole world.²

On the eve of 22 May 1844, the First Trumpet Blast had sounded – the *Qá'im* had arisen. He had claimed the title of "the Báb" [the Gate]. He was the gate to a new Revelation. He was the gate that closed the cycle of prophecy and opened the cycle of fulfillment for all religions.³ But His main role was as the gate to the *Qayyúm*, the One Who was to arise after Him; the One greater than Himself; the One whose coming all past religions have prophesied. The Báb called Him: "Him Whom God shall make manifest".

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¹ *Qur'án* 39:68

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p41-42; and *God Passes By* Chapter 6, p97.

³ *God Passes By* Chapter 4, p57: 'He [the Báb] Who was, in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the "*Morn of Truth*" and "*Harbinger of the Most Great Light*," Whose advent at once signaled the termination of the "*Prophetic Cycle*" and the inception of the "*Cycle of Fulfillment*," ...'

Section One: Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest

The Báb's Writings are replete with references about the greatness of "Him whom God shall make manifest" [*Man-Yuzhiruhu'lláh* ]. These Writings also make it clear that His Manifestation is imminent.¹

The Year Nine

The imminent appearance of the "Him Whom God shall make Manifest" is linked with the "year nine" in the Writings of the Báb:

Rise ye all when ye hear the name of Him Whom We shall make manifest ... then in the year nine ye shall attain unto all good.²

Ere nine will have elapsed from the inception of this Cause, the realities of the created things will not be made manifest. All that thou hast as yet seen is but the stage from the moist germ until We clothed it with flesh. Be patient, until thou beholdest a new creation. Say: 'Blessed, therefore, be God, the most excellent of Makers!'³

Wait thou, until nine will have elapsed from the time of the Bayán. Then exclaim: 'Blessed, therefore, be God, the most excellent of Makers!'⁴

In the year nine, ye will attain unto the presence of God.⁵

The "year nine", counting from and including 1844, makes the year 1852. The end of 1852 is when Bahá'u'lláh, while imprisoned in the prison of Siyáh-Chál in Tíhrán,

¹ For example see Taherzadeh [Revelation of Baháullah Volume 1, Chapter 18, p294-314](#); and *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p21 and p28-31, and Chapter VI, p97-99.

² *Arabic Bayán* 6:15 quoted in Saiedi *Gate of the Heart* Chapter 14, p344

³ Quoted in *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p29

⁴ Quoted in *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p29

⁵ Quoted in *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p29

received the Call announcing His Revelation, as we will see shortly [DB 25-26 – Part A, Section 6].¹

The Name and Meeting with “Him Whom God shall make Manifest”

In the Persian Bayán, the Báb revealed:

Well is it with him, who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord.

For He will assuredly be made manifest.

God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayán.²

The Báb assured several of His disciples that they would meet “Him Whom God shall make Manifest”. A passage from *God Passes By*, the historical analysis of the birth of the Bábí and Bahá'í Revelations, summarizes this as follows:

Some of His disciples the Báb assiduously prepared to expect the imminent Revelation [of Him Whom God shall make Manifest]. Others He orally assured would live to see its day. To Mullá Báqir, one of the Letters of the Living, He actually prophesied, in a Tablet addressed to him, that he would meet the Promised One face to face. To Sayyáh, another disciple, He gave verbally a similar assurance. Mullá Husayn He directed to Tihrán, assuring him that in that city was enshrined a Mystery Whose light neither Hijáz nor Shíráz could rival. Quddús, on the eve of his final separation from Him, was promised that he would attain the presence of the One Who was the sole Object of their adoration and love. To Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunúzí He declared while in Máh-Kú that he would behold in Karbilá the countenance of the promised Husayn. On Dayyán He conferred the title of “the third Letter to believe in Him Whom God shall make manifest,” while to ‘Azím He divulged, in the *Kitáb-i-Panj-Sha’n*, the name, and announced the approaching advent, of Him Who was to consummate His own Revelation.³

Each of the above met Bahá'u'lláh as predicted by the Báb.

¹ Bahá'u'lláh does not publicly announce this Declaration until 21 April – 2 May 1863 in the Garden of Ridván, Baghdád [commemorated as the Festival of Ridván]. During this ten-year period, although not fully public, many will recognize the Station of Bahá'u'lláh and copious will be the revelation of Divine verses by Him. The public Declaration in 1863 was also foretold by the Báb: “Be attentive from the inception of this Revelation till the number of Váhid (19).” And “The Lord of the Day of Reckoning will be manifested at the end of Váhid (19) and the beginning of eighty (1280 AH).” [1280 AH is 1863 CE]. Quotes from *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p29.

² *Persian Bayán* Vahid 3 quoted in *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p25

³ *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p28

Recognition of “Him Whom God shall make Manifest” before the Year Nine [1852]

Besides Mullá Husayn, Quddús and Tâhírih, there were several other Bábís who recognized the special power flowing through Bahá'u'lláh before the “year nine” [1852]. Nabíl lists several of them.¹ We see examples of this with two individuals, one an old man and one a youth, who met Bahá'u'lláh during His visit to Karbalá' in 1851-1852.

The old man who recognized the station of Bahá'u'lláh in Karbalá' was Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunúzí , one of the amanuenses of the Báb. Shaykh Hasan had been one of the close disciples of Siyyid Kázim and then recognized the Báb' station and became one of the three main amanuenses of the Báb. He was an old man by the time he met Bahá'u'lláh in Karbalá'. The Báb had promised him that he would meet the promised Husayn. Before the Báb, Siyyid Kázim had also told him that he would meet the promised Husayn [DB 1-2, Section 2]. After they met in Karbalá' and Shaykh Hasan realized that Bahá'u'lláh was the promised Husayn, Bahá'u'lláh told him to keep this knowledge a secret, because the time was not yet ripe to tell the world.² [For full story see Portrait: Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunúzí].

The youth who was drawn to Bahá'u'lláh in Karbalá' was Mírzá 'Abdu'l- Vahháb-i-Shírází . His story begins in Shíráz when he tried to leave with the Letter of the Living Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí. Later he is in Karbalá' when Bahá'u'lláh is there and despite Bahá'u'lláh's admonition that he should stay where he is, 'Abdu'l-Vahháb could not help himself. He follows Bahá'u'lláh to Tihrán, is imprisoned with Him in the Síyáh-Chál and suffers martyrdom there. Bahá'u'lláh Himself tells Nabíl the touching story of the martyrdom of 'Abdu'l-Vahháb which is recorded in the *Dawn-Breakers*.³ [For full story see Portrait: Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Vahháb-i-Shírází].

Recognition of Bahá'u'lláh and how it should be shared with others

Nabíl records that many years later [in 1889], in a gathering, Bahá'u'lláh gave this counsel regarding recognition of His Station and how it should be shared with others keeping in mind the principles of moderation and wisdom. He also touched on the subject of what leads to recognition or rejection of His Cause:

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 25, p593-594

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 2, p32-33

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 25, p594; Chapter 26, p633-634.

Praise be to God, that whatever is essential for the believers in this Revelation to be told has been revealed. Their duties have been clearly defined, and the deeds they are expected to perform have been plainly set forth in Our Book. Now is the time for them to arise and fulfil their duty. Let them translate into deeds the exhortations We have given them. Let them beware lest the love they bear God, a love that glows so brightly in their hearts, cause them to transgress the bounds of moderation, and to overstep the limits We have set for them. In regard to this matter, We wrote thus, while in 'Iráq, to Hájí Mírzá Músáy-i-Qumí : "Such is to be the restraint you should exercise that if you be made to quaff from the well-springs of faith and certitude all the rivers of knowledge, your lips must never be allowed to betray, to either friend or stranger, the wonder of the draught of which you have partaken. Though your heart be aflame with His love, take heed lest any eye discover your inner agitation, and though your soul be surging like an ocean, suffer not the serenity of your countenance to be disturbed, nor the manner of your behaviour to reveal the intensity of your emotions."¹

Be thankful to God for having enabled you to recognise His Cause. Whoever has received this blessing must, prior to his acceptance, have performed some deed which, though he himself was unaware of its character, was ordained by God as a means whereby he has been guided to find and embrace the Truth. As to those who have remained deprived of such a blessing, their acts alone have hindered them from recognising the truth of this Revelation. We cherish the hope that you, who have attained to this light, will exert your utmost to banish the darkness of superstition and unbelief from the midst of the people. May your deeds proclaim your faith and enable you to lead the erring into the paths of eternal salvation.²

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¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 25, p584-585

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 25, p586

Section Two: Bahá'u'lláh's Activities mid-1850 to mid-1852

Mid-1850: After the Martyrdom of the Báb

The Báb, knowing the imminence of the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh, had not appointed any successor. To divert the attention of the authorities, Mírzá Yahyá¹ was put forward, in name only, as the head of the Bábí community, while the real guidance and authority lay with Bahá'u'lláh.² After the Báb's martyrdom, Bahá'u'lláh began to work to re-instill hope and give direction to the persecuted Bábí community. In the words of Nabíl:

He [Bahá'u'lláh] continued to devote Himself to the task of reviving the energies, of organising the forces, and of directing the efforts, of the Báb's scattered companions. He was the sole light amidst the darkness that encompassed the bewildered disciples who had witnessed, on the one hand, the cruel martyrdom of their beloved Leader and, on the other, the tragic fate of their companions. He alone was able to inspire them with the needful courage and fortitude to endure the many afflictions that had been heaped upon them; He alone was capable of preparing them for the burden of the task they were destined to bear ...³

Sadly, Mírzá Yahyá and his group of companions, in an effort to gain power, took steps that caused confusion in the Bábí community and gave excuses to the enemies of the Faith to further persecute it.⁴

Mid-1851: Bahá'u'lláh goes to Karbalá'

With the martyrdom of the Báb and the suppression of the Bábí movements at Shaykh Tabarsí, Nayríz, Zanján and other parts of the land, the Grand Vazír, the *Amír-Kabír*, felt he had got the Bábí problem under control. The *Amír-Kabír* also knew Bahá'u'lláh, and, even though admiring His many capacities, thought of Him as a problem.⁵ But even so, being a politician, he wanted to try and use Bahá'u'lláh

¹ Younger half-brother of Bahá'u'lláh, see DB 4-7,, Section 3

² *God Passes By* Chapter 2, p28-29

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p595

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p638

⁵ This story is from unpublished writings of Nabíl quoted in *Furútan Stories of Bahá'u'lláh*, #12:

to further his own political ends. With this in mind, in mid-1851, the *Amír-Kabír*, invited Bahá'u'lláh to meet with him. This was in Tihrán. Bahá'u'lláh Himself related to Nabíl, the details of that meeting. The *Amír-Kabír* told Bahá'u'lláh directly he knew that without Bahá'u'lláh's leadership the Bábí resistance could not have continued. He then added: "The ability and skill with which you have managed to direct and encourage those efforts could not fail to excite my admiration. ... I feel it a pity that so resourceful a person should be left idle and not be given an opportunity to serve his country and sovereign." The *Amír-Kabír* then added that after the Sháh returned from his current planned trip outside the capital, he would ask the Sháh to confer upon Bahá'u'lláh the position of *Amír-Díván*. Bahá'u'lláh told Nabíl how He had responded:

We vehemently protested against such accusations and refused to accept the position he hoped to offer Us. A few days after that interview, We left Tihrán for Karbilá.¹

One day in Tihrán, the *Amír-Kabír*, Mírzá Taqí Khán, asked Bahá'u'lláh, the meaning of the verse: 'There is no dry or wet which is not revealed in the Book of God' (reference to Qur'án 6:59) to which Bahá'u'lláh replied: 'This means that everything is contained in the Qur'án.' The *Amír-Kabír* then asked if there was anything about himself in the Qur'án. 'Yes,' said Bahá'u'lláh, 'where it states: "I take refuge in the God of Mercy from thee! If thou art *taqí* [pious] ..." (Qur'án 19:18). The implication of this verse ruffled the *Amír-Kabír*, but concealing his anger, he continued: 'And what about my father?' To which Bahá'u'lláh replied: 'In the verse which states: "God has made a covenant with us, that we believe not any Messenger until He brings us a *qurbán* [sacrifice] which fire shall devour." ' (Qur'án 3:179). This infuriated the *Amír-Kabír*, because his father, who was a cook for the Qá'im-Maqám (the Grand Vazier at the time of the the *Amír-Kabír's* father) bore the name *Qurbán* and worked with fire.

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 25, p591



Mírzá Taqí Khán, the *Amír-Kabír*. He was also known by the title of *Amír-Nizám*.¹

Bahá'u'lláh left Tihrán June 1851,² and after a brief stop-over in Baghdád, arrived in Karbalá' in August 1851.³

Mid-1851 to mid-1852: Bahá'u'lláh's stay in Karbalá'

Bahá'u'lláh stayed in Karbalá' for about eight months [August 1851 to March/April 1852]. He found the Bábí community in the Baghdád-Karbalá' region disheartened and confused, and He spent this time inspiring and guiding them.

During this period there were many changes in the upper echelons of the government in Persia. A key change was that the Grand Vazír, the *Amír-Kabír*, fell out of favour, was demoted and eventually killed on 10 January 1852.⁴ Mírzá Áqá

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 23, p500

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 25, p587

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 25, p593

⁴ *Amir-Kabir* [Wikipedia article](#)

Khán-i-Núrí became the new Grand Vazír. He was a distant relative of Bahá'u'lláh being from the same area of Núr, and he thought very highly of Bahá'u'lláh. Before Mírzá Áqá Khán-i-Núrí became Grand Vazír, Bahá'u'lláh had in fact helped him on several occasions.¹ Mírzá Áqá Khán-i-Núrí had been Minister of War at the time when the *Amír-Kabír* called his ministers together to get their support for the decision to execute the Báb. At that time, he was the only minister who had suggested to the *Amír-Kabír* this was perhaps not the best path forward.²



Mírzá Áqá Khán-i-Núrí, the *Sadr-'Azam*. He was also known by the title of *l'timádu'd-Dawlih*.³

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 23, p522-523; Balyuzi *Bahá'u'lláh King of Glory* Chapter 15, p76.

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 23, p502, 503; although the intentions for this suggestion by Mírzá Áqá Khán-i-Núrí may have been more self-serving and not purely humanitarian [*Amanat Resurrection and Renewal* Chapter 9, p396]. [DB 23, Section 1].

³ Mírzá Áqá Khán-i-Núrí, [Wikipedia article](#)

Mid-1852: Bahá'u'lláh's return to Tihrán

From the very beginning, Áqá Khán-i-Núrí wanted to bring about some kind of reconciliation between the government of which he was now the head, and Bahá'u'lláh, whom he regarded as the leading disciple of the Báb. Nabíl notes:

He [Áqá Khán-i-Núrí] sent Him [Bahá'u'lláh] a warm letter requesting Him to return to Tihrán and expressing his eagerness to meet Him. Ere the receipt of that letter, Bahá'u'lláh had already decided to leave 'Iráq for Persia.¹

Bahá'u'lláh arrived back in Tihrán early May 1852.² He was met by the brother of the Grand Vazír, who with great respect hosted him for more than a month.

Bahá'u'lláh then went to His own summer residence in Shimírán ³, just outside Tihrán.

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p598

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p598

³ Shimírán or Shimrán is the name applied to the villages and mansions situated just northeast outside Tihrán. Located on the lower slopes of the Alborz mountains, this scenic area served as the summer residences for the wealthier inhabitants of Tihrán. The county is called Shimíránát. [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p599 footnote 1]



Bahá'u'lláh's summer residence, called Murgh-Mahallih, in Shimírán [just outside Tíhrán, in the Shimíránát county]. Archival photo. ¹

Bahá'u'lláh remained in this area that summer. He was staying in the village of Afchih, Lavásán  as a guest of the Grand Vazír's brother, when the news of the attempt on the life of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh reached Him. That attempt was made on 15 August 1852. ²

The predictions about the Year Nine were soon to be fulfilled.

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¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p598

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p598-599

Section Three: Attempt on the life of the Sháh [15 August 1852]

A small group of immature and misguided Bábís

Living faith involves a process much like that of a seed developing into a tree that bears good fruit. It is a long process, and all don't make it beyond certain stages after germination. 'Azím ⁽¹⁾ sadly was among those Bábís whose faith remained immature.¹ 'Azím [his real name was Mullá Shaykh 'Alí ⁽¹⁾] had met the Báb several times,² but the martyrdom of the Báb and the constant persecution of the Bábís was something he could not accept. He and a small group of companions, in their misguided minds, sought revenge.

While Bahá'u'lláh was staying in the Shimírán area, upon His return to Tihrán in the summer of 1852, 'Azím came to see Him. When Bahá'u'lláh learnt about 'Azím's revenge plans, He, in most emphatic terms, told 'Azím that he should abandon this path. Nabíl records that:

Bahá'u'lláh condemned his ['Azím's] designs, dissociated Himself entirely from the act it was his intention to commit, and warned him that such an attempt would precipitate fresh disasters of unprecedented magnitude.³

But Bahá'u'lláh's emphatic counsel was to no avail.

15 August 1852: Attempt on the life of the Sháh

Three of 'Azím's companions decided they could not wait any more to avenge the martyrdom of the Báb and the persecution of the Bábís. Two⁴ of them were Bábí

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p599

² 'Azím was in the first contingent in Mashhad who became Bábí. They were taught by Mullá Husayn when he went to Mashhad after the Declaration of the Báb. 'Azím was a learned mullá and his name was Shaykh 'Alí. 'Azím [means Great] was the title given to him later by the Báb [DB 10-12, Section 2; *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 6, p125]. 'Azím came to Shiráz and met the Báb and was the friend of Vahíd who arranged Vahíd's meetings with the Báb [DB 8-9, Section 4; *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 9, p172]. Later 'Azím was with the Báb in Chihríq [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 17, p306] and in Tabríz [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 18, p313].

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p599

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p599 says two youth, but p609-610 says three individuals were involved in the attack, one was killed right away and the other two were caught and killed later. Presumably two of them were younger and the ones referred to as the "two youth" and the third was older. The p599 footnote 3 quoting Gobineau's *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* p231-233, also says it was three who attacked the Sháh. The footnote 3 describes in some detail the attack on the Sháh.

youth, Sádiq ﴿﴾ of Tabríz, a confectioner, and Fathu'lláh ﴿﴾ of Qum, an engraver.¹ Both lived at that time in Tíhrán. Together with a Hájí Qásim ﴿﴾ of Nayríz, they came up with a plan to assassinate the Sháh. The whole plan was so ill-conceived that, instead of proper guns, they took pellet shotguns which could not possibly kill a person. They did have some short daggers too.

On the morning of 15 August 1852, the Sháh went out for a horseback ride with his retinue. He was camped with the imperial army in Shimírán. As the Sháh rode, the three Bábís, who were waiting by the roadside, jumped up, ran to his horse, tried to pull him down and shot their pellet guns at him.² The attempt was of course ineffectual. The Sháh's guards immediately came to the rescue. The Sháh was injured; his right arm and back had been hit with the pellets.³ He was quickly taken away. The three attackers were captured. Sádiq, the youth who had pulled the Sháh off his horse, was killed right away, and his body cut into two. The other two were taken for torture to determine their co-conspirators, but they would not give any names. Both were then brutally killed: one with molten lead poured down his throat, and the other with holes cut into his flesh.⁴

During the first twenty-four hours after the assassination attempt, many were not clear about the outcome. Rumours had been spread the Sháh had been killed. But it soon became clear that was not the case. The bodies of the perpetrators were put on display to allay public fears. But the Sháh was enraged at this assassination attempt. The authorities now used this as the excuse they needed to begin a purge of the Bábís in the capital city. This persecution of the Bábís soon spread to other cities, towns and villages throughout the land.

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¹ Balyuzi *Bahá'u'lláh King of Glory* Chapter 15, p74-75.

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p599-600

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p599, footnote 3 quoting Gobineau's *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* p231-233.

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p609-610

Section Four: Genocide of the Bábís

What followed the assassination attempt of the Sháh was a genocide of the Bábís unprecedented in its cruelty and inhumaneness. It lasted for many months and in its wake many thousands of Bábís throughout the land were martyred.

Many illustrious Bábís were killed during this period, including Táhirih. Alongside these events, Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned in the Síyáh-Chál and then banished to Iráq. The sections that follow will describe the last days of Táhirih and Bahá'u'lláh's imprisonment. In this section, we will briefly describe some aspects of the barbaric genocide of the Bábís.

Massacres in Tihrán

To please the Sháh and under the guise of getting rid of dissidents, arrests and killing of whoever was thought of as a Bábí was begun. Nabíl recounts:

Confusion, unprecedented in its range, reigned in the capital. A word of denunciation, a sign, or a whisper was sufficient to subject the innocent to a persecution which no pen dare try to describe. Security of life and property had completely vanished. The highest ecclesiastical authorities in the capital joined hands with the most influential members of the government to deal what they hoped would be the fatal blow to a foe who, for eight years, had so gravely shaken the peace of the land, and whom no cunning or violence had yet been able to silence. ... Those arrested were distributed among the various classes of people, ... Day after day fresh victims were forced to expiate with their blood a crime which they had never committed, and of the circumstances of which they were wholly ignorant. Every ingenious device that the torture-mongers of Tihrán could employ was applied with merciless severity to the bodies of these unfortunate ones who were neither brought to trial nor questioned, and whose right to plead and prove their innocence was entirely ignored.¹

An Austrian officer who had been sent by his government to be at the Sháh's service at that time in Tihrán, described the horrors he witnessed in a letter to a friend]:²

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p604-605 and p611

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p605 footnote 1. The Austrian officer, Captain von Goumoens, was in the Sháh's service at that time. He was so disgusted and horrified by what he witnessed that he sent in his resignation and

Tihrán, August 29, 1852.

Dear Friend, My last letter of the 20th inst. mentioned the attempt on the King. I will now communicate to you the result ... follow me, my friend, you who lay claim to a heart and European ethics, follow me to the unhappy ones who, with gouged-out eyes, must eat, on the scene of the deed, without any sauce, their own amputated ears; or whose teeth are torn out with inhuman violence by the hand of the executioner; or whose bare skulls are simply crushed by blows from a hammer; or where the bazar is illuminated with unhappy victims, because on right and left the people dig deep holes in their breasts and shoulders and insert burning wicks in the wounds. I saw some dragged in chains through the bazar preceded by a military band, in whom these wicks had burned so deep that now the fat flickered convulsively in the wound like a newly-extinguished lamp. Not seldom it happens that the unwearying ingenuity of the Orientals leads to fresh tortures. They will skin the soles of the Bábí's feet, soak the wounds in boiling oil, shoe the foot like the hoof of a horse, and compel the victim to run. No cry escaped from the victim's breast; the torment is endured in dark silence by the numbed sensation of the fanatic; now he must run; the body cannot endure what the soul has endured; he falls. Give him the coup de grace! Put him out of his pain! No! The executioner swings the whip, and—I myself have had to witness it—the unhappy victim of hundredfold tortures and runs! This is the beginning of the end. As for the end itself, they hang the scorched and perforated bodies by their hands and feet to a tree head downwards, and now every Persian may try his marksmanship to heart's content ... I saw corpses torn by nearly one hundred and fifty bullets.... When I read over again what I have written I am overcome by the thought that those who are with you in our dearly beloved Austria may doubt the full truth of the picture, and accuse me of exaggeration. Would to God that I had not lived to see it! But by the duties of my profession I was unhappily often, only too often, a witness of these abominations. At present I never leave my house, in order not to meet with fresh scenes of horror. After their death the Bábí's are hacked in two and either nailed to the city gate, or cast out into the plain as food for the dogs and jackals. ... Since my whole soul revolts against such infamy, against such abominations as recent times, according to the judgment of all, present, I will no longer maintain my connection with the

then wrote to a friend. This friend's letter is quoted in EG Browne's *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion* p267-271.

scene of such crimes. [He goes on to say that he has already asked for his discharge but has not yet received an answer].¹

Another Western diplomat describes how the culture of being present at cruel executions, and even taking part in it, was common practice at the court of the Sháh and even seen as sign of loyalty to the sovereign. Describing what happened to the contingent of Bábís that were especially brought to the court itself for their execution, it is noted:

His Excellency [the Grand Vazír] resolved to divide the execution of the victims among the different departments of the state; the only person he exempted was himself. First came the Sháh ... To save the dignity of the crown, the steward of the household, as the Sháh's representative, fired the first shot at the conspirator selected as his victim, and his deputies, the farráshes [attendants], completed the work. The Prime Minister's son headed the Home Office, and slew another Bábí. Then came the Foreign Office. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs ... with averted face made the first swordcut, and then the Under-Secretary of State and clerks of the Foreign Office hewed their victim into pieces. The priesthood, the merchants, the artillery, the infantry, had each their allotted Bábí. Even the Sháh's admirable French physician, the late lamented Dr. Cloquet, was invited to show his loyalty by following the example of the rest of the Court. He excused himself, and pleasantly said he killed too many men professionally to permit him to increase their number by any voluntary homicide on his part.²

As for the general populace, giving vent to barbaric acts was common. They were steeped in blind fanaticism and bitter hatred fueled by their religious leaders, and misled by propaganda and misinformation put out by the authorities.³ Accounts tell how there seemed to be no limits to their inhumanity towards the innocent Bábís:

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p605 footnote 1 quoting letter of the Austrian officer, Captain von Goumoens, to his friend; which is found in EG Browne's *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion* p267-271.

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p612 footnote 2 quoting Lady Sheils *Glimpses of the Life and Manners in Persia* p277-281

³ For example, the Tihrán Gazette of that period published this anti-Bábí propaganda piece: "Some profligate, unprincipled individuals, destitute of religion, became disciples of the accursed Siyyid 'Alí-Muḥammad Báb, who some years ago invented a new religion, and who afterwards met his doom. They were unable to prove the truth of their faith, the falsehood of which was visible. For instance, many of their books having fallen into our hands, they are found to contain nothing but pure infidelity. In worldly argument, too, they never were able to support their religion, which seemed fit only for entering into a contest with the Almighty. They then began to think of aspiring to sovereignty, and to endeavour to raise insurrections, hoping to profit by the confusion, and to pillage the property of their neighbours. A wretched miserable gang, whose chief, Mullá Shaykh 'Alí of Turshíz, styled himself the deputy of the former Báb, and who gave himself the title of High Majesty, collected

On that day, a spectacle was witnessed in the streets and bazaars of Tihrán which the people can never forget. Even to this very day, it remains the topic of conversation; one still feels a shocking horror which the years have not been able to lessen. The people saw marching, between executioners, children and women with deep holes cut into their flesh in which lighted wicks were inserted. The victims were dragged with ropes and goaded on with whips. Children and women went forth singing this verse: 'In truth, we come from God and unto Him do we return.' Their voices were raised triumphant ... When one of the victims fell to the ground and they prodded him up with bayonets ...

Some of the children expired on the way. The executioners would throw their bodies under the feet of their fathers and sisters, who proudly walked over them without giving it a second thought. When the cortège reached the place of execution near the New Gate, the victims were given the choice between life and abjuration of their faith; they were even subjected to every form of intimidation.

One of the executioners conceived the idea of saying to a father that, unless he yielded, he would cut the throats of his two sons on his very breast. The sons were quite young, the oldest about fourteen. Covered with blood, their flesh scorched, they were listening stoically to the threats. The father replied, while laying himself down, that he was ready and the older of the boys, claiming a prior right, requested to be the first to die. ...

At last, the tragedy was over and night fell upon a heap of formless bodies; the heads were tied in bundles to the posts of justice and the dogs on the outskirts of the city were crowding about.¹

The example of Hájí Sulaymán Khán

Among the many who were arrested and martyred in Tihrán during that period, was Hájí Sulaymán Khán . Nabíl gives a detailed description of accounts of

round themselves some of the former companions of [the] Báb. They seduced to their principles some dissolute debauchees, one of whom was Hájí Sulaymán Khán, son of the late Yahyá Khán of Tabríz. In the house of this Hájí it was their practice to assemble for consultation, and to plan an attempt on the auspicious life of his Majesty. Twelve of their number, who were volunteers for the deed, were selected to execute their purpose, and to each of them were given pistols, daggers, etc. It was resolved that the above number should proceed to the Sháh's residence at Niyávarán and await their opportunity." The article goes on, with great pride to describe the inhumane killing of the captured Bábís, as a badge of honour. [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p612 footnote 2 quoting Lady Sheils *Glimpses of the Life and Manners in Persia* p277-281].

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p612 footnote 2 quoting Gobineau's *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* p248-250

eyewitnesses of Hájí Sulaymán Khán's martyrdom, as an example of the fortitude and spirit the Bábís exemplified.¹

Hájí Sulaymán Khán's father² had been an attendant of 'Abbas Mírzá [the father of Muhammad Sháh], and then of Muhammad Sháh. As such, Hájí Sulaymán Khán's father was highly regarded in the court circles. However, Hájí Sulaymán Khán did not like the life in the court and in his youth had gone to Karbalá' and become one of the followers of Siyyid Kázim. When he heard about the Message of Báb, he immediately embraced it. He eventually came to Tihrán from Karbalá' to go to join Fort Shaykh Tabarsí, but by then it was too late. So, he stayed in Tihrán, where he was always actively teaching the Cause of the Báb. He also went to see the Báb in Chihríq, making the journey in disguise.³ He and his father were so influential, however, that the *Amír-Kabír*, the Grand Vazír of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh at that time, decided to spare his life, and just ignore his acts.⁴ He was highly trusted by Bahá'u'lláh. Just before the martyrdom of the Báb, Hájí Sulaymán Khán decided to go to Tabríz to save the Báb. He got there a day too late and instead helped rescue the holy remains, and on the instructions of Bahá'u'lláh arrange for their transport in secret to Tihrán [DB 23, Section 5].⁵

With the events of August 1852, Hájí Sulaymán Khán was not spared, especially because 'Azím and his group used to sometimes meet in his house in Tihrán.⁶ When Hájí Sulaymán Khán was arrested, the Sháh asked one of the senior courtiers, *Hájibu'd-Dawlih* , to question him, and if he was innocent of involvement in the assassination plot to have him recant and be released. By the end of the questioning, the *Hájibu'd-Dawlih* was convinced of Hájí Sulaymán Khán's innocence and told him that he would be free to go after recanting his Faith. To this Hájí Sulaymán Khán responded: "Never, so long as my lifeblood continues to pulsate in my veins, shall I be willing to recant my faith in my Beloved!" He was then asked how he wished to die, so he described what he wanted: nine holes to be cut in his

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p613-615 and 616-621

² Yahyá Khán *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 23, p518

³ Balyuzi *The Báb* Chapter 12, p149

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p613-615

⁵ Balyuzi *The Báb* Chapter 12, p149

⁶ Balyuzi *Bahá'u'lláh King of Glory* Chapter 15, p74

body and burning candles inserted in each, and then to be led through the streets to the gate of Naw, where his body was to be cut in half.¹

Hájí Sulaymán Khán was led to the marketplace and the abominable process that would end with his martyrdom began. Seeing the executioner's hands were trembling when trying to make holes in his body, Hájí Sulaymán Khán reached out his hand saying, "Let me myself perform the deed and light the candles." He even told them where on his body to pierce the holes: two in his breast, two on his shoulders, one in the nape of his neck, and four on his back.² Nabil then writes:

With stoic calm he endured those tortures. Steadfastness glowed in his eyes as he maintained a mysterious and unbroken silence. Neither the howling of the multitude nor the sight of the blood that streamed all over his body could induce him to interrupt that silence. Impassive and serene he remained until all the nine candles were placed in position and lighted.³

With this, Hájí Sulaymán Khán was led through the streets, with minstrels and drummers in advance, all the way to the gate of Naw. As he walked through the streets, his face gleamed, and he spoke in exclamations of joy to the crowd that pressed upon him. He chanted poems and shouted to the vast throng:

"Would that He whose hand has enkindled my soul were here to behold my state! Think me not to be intoxicated with the wine of this earth!. It is the love of my Beloved that has filled my soul and made me feel endowed with a sovereignty which even kings might envy!"⁴

Whenever one of the candles fell from his body, he would with his own hand pick it up, light it from the others, and replace it. The executioners, seeing in him such exultation and rapture said: "If thou art so eager for martyrdom, why dost thou not dance?" With this, he began to leap, and to sing, in verses.⁵

He was still in the bazaar when the blowing of a breeze excited the burning of the candles that were placed upon his breast. As they melted rapidly, their flames reached the level of the wounds into which they had been thrust.

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p617-618. "He was martyred in August 1852" [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p620 footnote 1].

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p618

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p618

⁴ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p619

⁵ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p620 footnote 1 quoting *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* p228-230.

Those who were following a few steps behind him could hear distinctly the sizzling of his flesh. The sight of gore and fire which covered his body, instead of silencing his voice, appeared to heighten his unquenchable enthusiasm. He could still be heard, this time addressing the flames, as they ate into his wounds: “You have long lost your sting, O flames, and have been robbed of your power to pain me. Make haste, for from your very tongues of fire I can hear the voice that calls me to my Beloved!”¹

Finally, enveloped by flames, he arrived like a conqueror at the gate of Naw. After speaking his last words to the massive crowd, he prostrated himself, prayed and then murmured to the executioner: “My work is now finished. Come and do yours!”. He was still alive when his body was hewn into two with a hatchet. Each half was hung up on the either side of the gate of Naw.²

When the report of Hájí Sulaymán Khán’s martyrdom was given a short while later at a gathering of the authorities, even the *Nizámu’l-‘Ulamá* ﴿﴾ [minister of the ‘ulamá] who was present, was shocked and exclaimed: “How strange, how very strange is this Cause!”³



Gate of Naw, Tihrán. Archival photo.^{4, 5}

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p619-620

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p645

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p617, p621

⁴ This picture is from *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p457. This may be a mislabeling as pictures from other sources show this picture to be Gate of Sháh ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím (see [The Gates of Teheran](#)).

⁵ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p620 footnote 1 quoting from *Tárikh-i-Jadíd* describing Hájí Sulaymán Khán’s martyrdom says that the end was at “the gate of Sháh ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím”.

The genocide of the Bábís spreads throughout the land

The conflagration kindled in the capital now spread to the adjoining provinces, bringing in its wake devastation and misery to countless innocent people. During this period, exaggerated reports were received in the capital about activities of the Bábís in the other parts of the land. These alarmed the Sháh who ordered his Grand Vazír to have the Bábís throughout the land suppressed. The bigoted religious leaders who bitterly hated the Bábís and were terrified of the spread of that movement were thus given the excuse they needed. Together with power-hungry civil authorities they began the arrest of Bábís, confiscation of their properties, and their barbaric persecution. Countless Bábís were killed in a genocide that did not end in a month or two but continued for many months. It was spread through most of the land from Mázindarán to Yazd to Shíráz to Zanján to Nayríz and more. Those not killed were imprisoned and for them the atrocities continued in some places for up to two years. And this genocide encompassed Bábís that were young and old; not just men but also numberless women and children, who came from all walks of life and from all parts of the land. Nabíl writes:

My pen shrinks in horror in attempting to describe what befell those valiant men and women who were made to suffer so severely for their Faith. The wanton barbarity that characterised the treatment meted out to them reached the lowest depths of infamy in the concluding stages of that lamentable episode. A pen abler than mine ... will, I trust, be found to place on record a tale which, however grim its features, must ever remain as one of the noblest evidences of the faith which the Cause of the Báb was able to inspire in His followers.¹

No accurate estimate exists of the number of Bábís martyred during this period. For the nine years from 1844 to 1853, the low-end estimate is more than ten thousand.^{2,3}

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p617, p621

² *God Passes By*, Introduction p xiv; *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p605 footnote 1 quoting Phelps' *Life and Teachings of 'Abbás Effendí*, introduction p36.

³ The goal of the persecution of the Bábís was to kill the Cause of the Báb. While on the surface, there seemed to a momentary stilling of the Cause of the Báb, the persecutions only fed its flame. Speaking of the persecutions in August 1852, one Western historian noted: "That day won for the Bábís a larger number of secret followers than much exhortation could have done ... the impression caused by the terrifying impassibility of the martyrs was deep and lasting. I have often heard eyewitnesses describe the scenes of that fateful day, men close to the government, some even holding important positions. While listening to them, one could easily have believed that they were all Bábís, so great was their admiration for the events ..." [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p612 footnote 2 quoting Gobineau's *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* p248-250]. And another Western historian noted: "The barbarity of the persecutors defeated its own ends, and instead of inspiring terror, gave the martyrs an opportunity of exhibiting a heroic fortitude which has done more than any



Picture of a Bahá'í martyr. Archival photo.¹

propaganda, however skillful, could have done to ensure the triumph of the Cause for which they died.... The impression produced by such exhibitions of courage and endurance was profound and lasting; nay, the faith which inspired the martyrs was often contagious, ..." [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p612 footnote 2 quoting EG Browne's *A Year amongst the Persians* p111-112].

¹ *Bahá'í World* Vol 8, p198



Picture of a martyred Bahá'í family. Archival photo.¹

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p610



Picture of a believers gathered around the body of a Bahá'í martyr. Archival photo.¹

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¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p611

Section Five: Táhirih's Last Days and Her Martyrdom

Nabíl writes, referring to the days after the attempted assassination of the Sháh on 15 August 1852:

Those days of unceasing turmoil witnessed the martyrdom of yet another eminent disciple of the Báb. A woman, no less great and heroic than Táhirih herself, was engulfed in the storm that was then raging with undiminished violence throughout the capital.¹

Background: Táhirih's confinement in Tihrán [1850-1852]

Táhirih had been brought to Tihrán in January of 1850. After meeting the *Amír-Kabír* and the Sháh, she was placed under house arrest at the residence of Tihrán's chief of police, Mahmúd-Khán-i-Kalántar [DB 21, Section 2].

[Note: "In Tihrán there are said to be three kinds of prison: the subterranean cells beneath the Ark, where criminals guilty of conspiracy, or high treason are reported to have been confined [the Síyáh-Chál]; the town prison, where the vulgar criminals may be seen with iron collars round their neck, sometimes with their feet in stocks, and attached to each other by iron chains; and the private guard-house, that is frequently an appurtenance of the mansions of the great."²]

Táhirih remained confined at the Kalántar's residence for about two and a half years until her martyrdom in August 1852.³ During this period, in spite of her confinement, Táhirih was besieged by her women admirers. They thronged her doors, eager to be in her presence and to seek the benefit of her knowledge. This was in large part because of the wife of the chief of police, the Kalántar, who had become one of Táhirih's greatest admirers. Acting as Táhirih's hostess, she served Táhirih with extraordinary enthusiasm and facilitated women from her wide network of noble families to come and meet Táhirih. Referring to Táhirih by her title *Qurratu'l-'Ayn*, one historian records this incident as an example of Táhirih's influence:

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p621

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p608 footnote 1 quoting Lord Curzon's *Persia and the Persian Question*, vol. i, p458-459

³ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p628

While [Qurratu'l-'Ayn was] a prisoner in the house of the Kalántar, the marriage of the son of the family took place. Naturally, the wives of all the prominent men were invited; but, although the host had gone to a great deal of expense to provide the customary entertainment, the women loudly demanded that Qurratu'l-'Ayn be brought before the company. She had hardly appeared and begun to speak when the musicians and dancers were dismissed. The ladies, forgetful of the sweets of which they were so fond, had eyes only for Qurratu'l-'Ayn.¹



Outdoor (left) and indoor (right) dress of Persian ladies in mid-nineteenth century. The women's faces would typically be fully veiled [veils not shown in these drawings]. Archival drawings.²

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p622 footnote 2 quoting ALM Nicolas' *Sijyid 'Alí-Muhammad dit le Báb* p446-447.

² *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p624



The house of the Kalántar in Tihrán, where Táhirih was confined [upper room behind the tree is the one she occupied]. Archival photo.¹

Táhirih's Interrogation and her death sentence

The influence that Táhirih was exerting on the leading women in the capital started to have an effect. Her teachings on the emancipation of women were winning the women over, but it was also causing them to have disputes with their husbands as they wanted more treatment as equals. The new Grand Vazír, Áqá-Khán-i-Núrí, sent two leading *ulamá* to examine Táhirih's beliefs and call her to order. They had seven meetings with her, and during these Táhirih argued eloquently for the Cause of the Báb and His teachings. But the two *ulamá* would not accept her arguments and stuck to old literal interpretations and superstitious understanding of the Islamic scriptures. One historian records what happened at the end was this:

Exasperated, she [Táhirih] finally told them: "Your reasoning is that of an ignorant and stupid child; how long will you cling to these follies and lies? When will you lift your eyes towards the Sun of Truth?" Shocked by such

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p623

blasphemy, Hájí Mullá ‘Alí rose up and led his friend away saying, “Why prolong our discussion with an infidel?” They returned home and wrote out the sentence which established her apostasy and her refusal to retract, and condemned her to death in the name of the *Qur’án*.¹

Then came the events of August 1852, which precipitated the enactment of the death sentence on Táhirih.

Táhirih prepares for her martyrdom

Nabíl records that persons with whom the wife of Kalántar was intimately connected have heard her relate the following:

One night ... I was summoned to her [Táhirih’s] presence and found her fully adorned, dressed in a gown of snow-white silk. Her room was redolent with the choicest perfume. I expressed to her my surprise at so unusual a sight. “I am preparing to meet my Beloved,” she said, “and wish to free you from the cares and anxieties of my imprisonment.” I was much startled at first, and wept at the thought of separation from her. “Weep not”, she sought to reassure me. “The time of your lamentation is not yet come. I wish to share with you my last wishes, for the hour when I shall be arrested and condemned to suffer martyrdom is fast approaching. I would request you to allow your son to accompany me to the scene of my death and to ensure that the guards and executioner into whose hands I shall be delivered will not compel me to divest myself of this attire. It is also my wish that my body be thrown into a pit, and that that pit be filled with earth and stones. Three days after my death a woman will come and visit you, to whom you will give this package which I now deliver into your hands. My last request is that you permit no one henceforth to enter my chamber. From now until the time when I shall be summoned to leave this house, let no one be allowed to disturb my devotions. This day I intend to fast—a fast which I shall not break until I am brought face to face with my Beloved.” She bade me, with these words, lock the door of her chamber and not open it until the hour of her departure should strike. She also urged me to keep secret the tidings of her death until such time as her enemies should themselves disclose it.

The great love I cherished for her in my heart, alone enabled me to abide by her instructions. ... I locked the door of her chamber and retired to my own,

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p622 footnote 1 quoting ALM Nicolas' *Sijyid 'Alí-Muhammad dit le Báb* p446-447.

in a state of uncontrollable sorrow. I lay sleepless and disconsolate upon my bed. The thought of her approaching martyrdom lacerated my soul. “Lord, Lord,” I prayed in my despair, “turn from her, if it be Thy wish, the cup which her lips desire to drink.” That day and night, I several times, unable to contain myself, arose and stole away to the threshold of that room and stood silently at her door, eager to listen to whatever might be falling from her lips. I was enchanted by the melody of that voice which intoned the praise of her Beloved. I could hardly remain standing upon my feet, so great was my agitation.

Four hours after sunset, I heard a knocking at the door. I hastened immediately to my son and acquainted him with the wishes of Táhirih. He pledged his word that he would fulfil every instruction she had given me.¹

Táhirih’s martyrdom [latter part of August 1852]

It chanced that night that my husband was absent. My son, who opened the door, informed me that the farráshes [attendants/wardens] of ‘Azíz Khán-i-Sardár were standing at the gate, demanding that Táhirih be immediately delivered into their hands. I was struck with terror by the news, and, as I tottered to her door and with trembling hands unlocked it, found her veiled and prepared to leave her apartment. She was pacing the floor when I entered and was chanting a litany expressive of both grief and triumph. As soon as she saw me, she approached and kissed me. She placed in my hand the key to her chest, in which she said she had left for me a few trivial things as a remembrance of her stay in my house. “Whenever you open this chest,” she said, “and behold the things it contains, you will, I hope, remember me and rejoice in my gladness.”

With these words she bade me her last farewell, ... She mounted the steed which the Sardár had sent for her, and, escorted by my son and a number of attendants, who marched on each side of her, rode out to the garden that was to be the scene of her martyrdom.

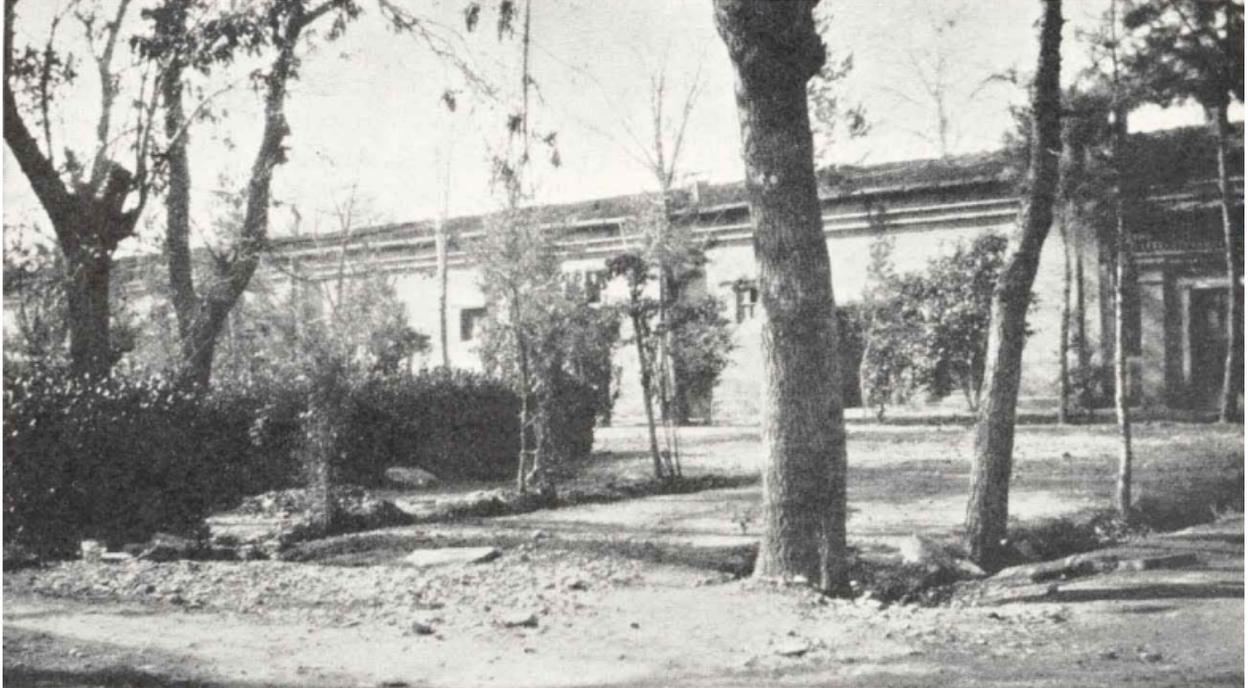
Three hours later my son returned, his face drenched with tears, hurling imprecations at the Sardár and his abject lieutenants. I tried to calm his agitation, and, seating him beside me, asked him to relate as fully as he could

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p622-625

the circumstances of her death. “Mother,” he sobbingly replied, “I can scarcely attempt to describe what my eyes have beheld. We straightway proceeded to the Ílkhání garden, outside the gate of the city. There I found, to my horror, the Sardár and his lieutenants absorbed in acts of debauchery and shame, flushed with wine and roaring with laughter. Arriving at the gate, Táhirih dismounted and, calling me to her, asked me to act as her intermediary with the Sardár, whom she said she was disinclined to address in the midst of his revelry. “They apparently wish to strangle me,” she said. “I set aside, long ago, a silken kerchief which I hoped would be used for this purpose. I deliver it into your hands and wish you to induce that dissolute drunkard to use it as a means whereby he can take my life.”

When I went to the Sardár, I found him in a state of wretched intoxication. “Interrupt not the gaiety of our festival!” I heard him shout as I approached him. “Let that miserable wretch be strangled and her body be thrown into a pit!” I was greatly surprised at such an order. Believing it unnecessary to venture any request from him, I went to two of his attendants, with whom I was already acquainted, and gave them the kerchief with which Táhirih had entrusted me. They consented to grant her request. That same kerchief was wound round her neck and was made the instrument of her martyrdom. I hastened immediately afterwards to the gardener and asked him whether he could suggest a place where I could conceal the body. He directed me, to my great delight, to a well that had been dug recently and left unfinished. With the help of a few others, I lowered her into her grave and filled the well with earth and stones in the manner she herself had wished.¹

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p625-627



The garden of Ílkhání where Táhirih was martyred. Archival photo.¹

Kalántar's wife concludes her account

I wept hot tears as my son unfolded to my eyes that tragic tale. I was so overcome with emotion that I fell prostrate and unconscious upon the ground. When I had recovered, I found my son a prey to an agony no less severe than my own. He lay upon his couch, weeping in a passion of devotion. Beholding my plight, he approached and comforted me. "Your tears," he said, "will betray you in the eyes of my father. Considerations of rank and position will, no doubt, induce him to forsake us and sever whatever ties bind him to this home. He will, if we fail to repress our tears, accuse us before Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, as victims of the charm of a hateful enemy. ... We should ever treasure her love in our hearts and maintain in the face of a slanderous enemy the integrity of that life."

His words allayed my inner agitation. I went to her chest and, with the key she had placed in my hand, opened it. I found a small vial of the choicest perfume, beside which lay a rosary, a coral necklace, and three rings, mounted with turquoise, cornelian, and ruby stones. As I gazed upon her earthly belongings, I mused over the circumstances of her eventful life, and

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p626

recalled, with a throb of wonder, her intrepid courage, her zeal, her high sense of duty and unquestioning devotion. I was reminded of her literary attainments, and brooded over the imprisonments, the shame, and the calumny which she had faced with a fortitude such as no other woman in her land could manifest. I pictured to myself that winsome face which now, alas, lay buried beneath a mass of earth and stones. The memory of her passionate eloquence warmed my heart, as I repeated to myself the words that had so often dropped from her lips. The consciousness of the vastness of her knowledge, and her mastery of the sacred Scriptures of Islám, flashed through my mind with a suddenness that disconcerted me. Above all, her passionate loyalty to the Faith she had embraced, her fervour as she pleaded its cause, the services she rendered it, the woes and tribulations she endured for its sake, the example she had given to its followers, the impetus she had lent to its advancement the name she had carved for herself in the hearts of her fellow-countrymen, all these I remembered as I stood beside her chest, wondering what could have induced so great a woman to forsake all the riches and honours with which she had been surrounded and to identify herself with the cause of an obscure youth from Shíráz. What could have been the secret, I thought to myself, of the power that tore her away from her home and kindred, that sustained her throughout her stormy career, and eventually carried her to her grave? Could that force, I pondered, be of God? Could the hand of the Almighty have guided her destiny and steered her course amidst the perils of her life?

On the third day after her martyrdom [August 1852], the woman whose coming she had promised arrived. I enquired her name, and, finding it to be the same as the one Táhirih had told me, delivered into her hands the package with which I had been entrusted. I had never before met that woman, nor did I ever see her again.¹

Nabíl concludes his account of Táhirih's life with these words:

The name of that immortal woman was Fátimih, a name which her father had bestowed upon her. She was surnamed Umm-i-Salmih by her family and kindred, who also designated her as Zakíyyih. She was born in the year 1233 AH [1817-1818 CE], the very year which witnessed the birth of Bahá'u'lláh. She was thirty-six years of age² when she suffered martyrdom in Tihrán. May

¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p627-628

² Count based on lunar calendar years from birth: 1233 to 1268 AH.

future generations be enabled to present a worthy account of a life which her contemporaries have failed adequately to recognise. May future historians perceive the full measure of her influence, and record the unique services this great woman has rendered to her land and its people. May the followers of the Faith which she served so well strive to follow her example, recount her deeds, collect her writings, unfold the secret of her talents, and establish her, for all time, in the memory and affections of the peoples and kindreds of the earth.¹

Note on supplemental resources: Further accounts and analyses of the life and poetry of Táhirih can be found in Martha Root [*Táhirh – The Pure*](#), Sabir Afaqi [*Táhirih in History – Perspectives on Qurratu’l-‘Ayn from East and West*](#), Ahdieh & Chapman [*The Calling – Táhirih of Persia and her American Contemporaries*](#), Hatcher & Hemmat [*The Poetry of Táhirih*](#), Hatcher & Hemmat [*Adam’s Wish – Unknown Poetry of Táhirih*](#), and Hatcher & Hemmat [*Sparks of Fire – Unknown Poetry of Táhirih*](#).

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¹ *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 26, p628-629

Epilogue

“O Son of Man!

Write all that We have revealed unto thee with the ink of light upon the tablet of thy spirit. Should this not be in thy power, then make thine ink of the essence of thy heart. If this thou canst not do, then write with that crimson ink that hath been shed in My path. Sweeter indeed is this to Me than all else, that its light may endure forever.”¹

“Indeed, the attacks and the obstructiveness of the ignorant but cause the Word of God to be exalted and spread His signs and tokens far and wide. Were it not for this opposition by the disdainful, this obduracy of the slanderers, this shouting from the pulpits, this crying and wailing of great and small alike, these accusations of unbelief levelled by the ignorant, this uproar from the foolish—how could news of the advent of the Primal Point and the bright dawning of the Day-Star of Bahá ever have reached to east and west? How else could the planet have been rocked from pole to pole? How else could Persia have become the focal point of scattering splendours, and Asia Minor the radiating heart of the beauty of the Lord? However else could the flame of the Manifestation have spread into the south? By what means could the cries of God have been heard in the far north? How else could His summons have been heard in the continents of America and of Africa ... All these blessings and bestowals, the very means of proclaiming the Faith, have come about through the scorn of the ignorant, the opposition of the foolish, the stubbornness of the dull-witted, the violence of the aggressor. Had it not been for these things, the news of the Báb’s advent would not, to this day, have reached even into lands hard by. Wherefore we should never grieve over the blindness of the unwitting, the attacks of the foolish, the hostility of the low and base, the heedlessness of the divines, the charges of infidelity brought against us by the empty of mind. Such too was their way in ages past, nor would it be thus if they were of those who know; but they are benighted, and they come not close to understanding what is told them.”²

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¹ Bahá’u’lláh *Hidden Words Arabic* #71.

² Abdu’l-Bahá *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, #195, p234-236.

End of DB 25-26: The Hidden Sunrise – PART A