



The Story of Badí

Call thou to mind his honor Badí', ... and reflect how he laid down his life. ... If things such as these are to be denied, what shall, then, be deemed worthy of credence? (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 72)

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BADÍ BECOMES A BAHAI

Mulla Muhammad-i-Zarandi, Nabil-i-A'zam, in the course of his travels (prior to his Egyptian episode, his imprisonment in Alexandria and his subsequent sojourn in the Holy Land) came to Nishabur (or Nishapur), in the province of Khurasan. There he met Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid-i-Shalfurush (dealer in shawls), a noted merchant and a survivor of Shaykh Tabarsi, and as Nabil himself says, 'an old acquaintance'. Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid took him to his home. There, Nabil met Shaykh Muhammad-i-Ma'muri, the uncle of the martyr, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Khurasani, engaged in copying Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh. And to his surprise, Nabil found Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid attending personally to everything. He asked the Haji whether he did not have a son old enough to assist him. (*Balyuzi, King of Glory chapter 33, henceforth KOG*)

The reason behind the question was that Nabil must have been surprised that Aba Badí' was entertaining him personally. Because in those days the young generally paid great respect to their parents, and in a case such as this, a young son would not allow his father to serve the guest personally, bearing in mind that it was against the custom of the time for the female members of the family to entertain guests of the opposite sex. (*Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baháullah volume 3 chapter 9 henceforth ROB*)

Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid replied that he had, but his son did not obey him. Indeed, his son, Aqa Buzurg, a youth in his teens, led a wild life, was unruly, and took no interest at all in his father's preoccupations; in a word, he was the despair of his family. To see what followed, let Nabil, that inimitable narrator, tell us himself: (*KOG*)

'I said, "Send for him to come, I wish to see him." He was sent for and he came. I saw a tall, gangling youth, who, instead of physical perfections, had merely a simple heart, and I told his father to make him my host and leave his case to God . . . Then, I mentioned matters, very moving, which would melt a heart of stone.' Nabil-i-A'zam here quotes a number of verses from the long poem by Bahá'u'lláh - Qasidiy-i-'Izz-i-Varqa'iyiyih, which he composed in Sulaymaniyyih. In these verses quoted by Nabil, Bahá'u'lláh speaks of His own sufferings and tribulations. (*ROB*)

'Hearing these divine themes, the colour of the visage of that youth reddened. His eyes welled with tears, and the sound of his lamentation rose high. I calmed his agitation, but throughout that night, his enamourment and attraction kept sleep away from the eyes of Shaykh Muhammad and myself. Until the light broke we read and recited from the holy script. In the morning, when he prepared the samovar for tea, and went out to fetch milk, his father came and said: "I had never heard my son weep. I thought that nothing could move him. Now, what is the spell cast on him to make his tears flow and to cause him to cry out, to make him afire with the love of God?" I said: "In any case he is no longer in command of himself, and you must give him up." And his father said: "This manner of losing one's self

is exactly what I desired. If he remains firm in the Cause of God, I myself shall serve him." (KOG)

'Aqa Buzurg was insistent that he should accompany me to Mashhad. But his father said: "I brought Shaykh Muhammad here, specifically to be his tutor, so that he might learn reading and writing within a short time, and study the Íqán under Shaykh Muhammad's tuition, and make a copy of the book. Should he do these, then I undertake to provide him with a steed and all his expenses." (KOG)

BADÍ TRAVELS TO BAGDAD

Nabil narrates;

'Subsequent to my departure from Khurasan and arrival at Tihran, Shaykh Fani reached Nishabur and mentioned that he was on his way to Bandar-i-'Abbas, so as to go to Baghdad, and ultimately to the Land of Mystery [Adrianople], and was permitted to take one person with himself. Jinab-i-Aba-Badí' [the Father of Badí'] provided his dear son with a steed and money, so that he might catch up with me at Baghdad, and we might travel together to the abode of the Beloved. 'Badí' had accompanied the Shaykh up to Yazd, and there had parted company with him, and giving the Shaykh all that he possessed, and all alone, had set out on foot to walk all the way to the Daru's-Salam - the Abode of Peace [Baghdad]. (KOG)

BADÍ IN BAGDAD AND MOSUL

While Badí' was in Baghdad, the enemies of the Cause fatally wounded Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rasul-i-Qumi, an ardent follower of Bahá'u'lláh who had taken upon himself the arduous task of carrying water to the House of Bahá'u'lláh in that city. In those days in the Middle East, there was no running water in houses. Water had to be carried from springs or rivers; there were water carriers in every town. The most common method was to carry large leather skins filled with water on one's back. The supply of water to that House was essential as some believers were living there. When Badí' learned of the tragic story of the martyrdom of Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rasul, he volunteered for the job and began to carry skins of water from the river to the House of Bahá'u'lláh and the believers; consequently, he too became a target of assaults by the enemy. He was attacked several times as he was carrying water and each time stabbed with knives or daggers. Undeterred by the malice of the fanatic mob, this youth, whose destiny was to become a new creation of God in this Day and a spiritual giant of this Dispensation, continued in this work. God vouchsafed His protection to him during those turbulent days. (ROB)

And when the companions were rounded up, to be taken to Mosul, that illumined youth, although wounded in several places by rascally men, betook himself to Mosul, and reached that city before the arrival of the captives, where, once again, he engaged in carrying water for them. *(KOG)*

BADÍ'S TRAVEL TO AKKA

After some time the news reached the believers that Bahá'u'lláh had been exiled to 'Akká. Badí' could wait no longer. *(ROB)*

The day had come in the life of this seventeen-year-old youth when he felt that he had to turn to Bahá'u'lláh. And he began to walk - to walk all the way from Mosul to the waters of the Mediterranean, to the foot of the citadel of 'Akká, where, he knew, his Lord was incarcerated. *(KOG)*

BADÍ IN AKKA

He arrived there early in 1869. ... Badí' seems to have entered the city without much difficulty. The watchful eyes of Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani and his accomplice Aqa Jan, who were housed above the gate of the city so that they might report to the authorities the arrival of any person they suspected of being a Bahá'í, failed to recognize the youth carrying his water skins and wearing a long cloak of coarse cotton of the type worn among the Arabs. *(ROB)*

Once inside the city, however, he was at a loss, for he had no idea how to contact his fellow-believers and could not risk betraying himself by making enquiries. Uncertain as to the course he should follow, he repaired to a mosque in order to pray. Towards evening, a group of Persians entered the mosque and, to his delight, Badí' recognized 'Abdu'l-Bahá among them. *(KOG)*

He waited till the prayer was finished and then approached the Master with great reverence and handed him a note containing two lines of a poem he had hurriedly composed on the spot. In it he had, without introducing himself, declared his loyalty to the Master and his faith in Bahá'u'lláh in moving and tender language. 'Abdu'l-Bahá warmly welcomed Badí' and managed to take him to the barracks. *(ROB)*

TRANSFORMATION OF BADÍ

In one of the Tablets written by Mirza Aqa Jan, it is stated that Badí' was ushered into the Presence of Bahá'u'lláh alone on two occasions. No one knew what was happening in these audiences except that Bahá'u'lláh had said that God was about to create a new creation and Badí' himself was unaware of it. In another Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh states that He created him anew with the hands of power and might and sent him out as a ball of fire. It was in the course of these two meetings that Bahá'u'lláh gave him the name Badí' -- Wonderful. *(ROB)*

In yet another Tablet Bahá'u'lláh has testified that He took a handful of dust, mixed it with the waters of might and power and breathed into it a new spirit from His presence, adorned it with the ornament of a name (Badí') in the Kingdom of Creation and sent it out to the King with a Book revealed by God. *(ROB)*

In a Tablets to the father of Badí', Bahá'u'lláh recounts in moving language the exciting events which took place when his son had attained His presence. He indicates that when He desired to create a new creation He summoned Badí' to come to His room and uttered 'one word' to him, a word which caused his whole being to tremble. He affirms that had it not been for the divine protection vouchsafed to him at that moment, Badí' would have swooned away. Then the Hand of Omnipotence, according to Bahá'u'lláh's description, began to create him anew and breathed into him the spirit of might and power. So great was the infusion of this might, as attested by Bahá'u'lláh, that single and alone he could have conquered the world through the power of God, had he been ordered to do so. *(ROB)*

Bahá'u'lláh states that when this new creation came into being he smiled in His presence and manifested such steadfastness that the Concourse on High were deeply moved and exhilarated and the voice of God was heard calling aloud: 'Hallowed and glorified be Baha for having fashioned a new and wonderful creation.' Bahá'u'lláh testifies that He disclosed to his eyes the 'Kingdom of Revelation', and as a result his whole being was filled with an ecstasy that rid him of all attachments to this world and made him arise to assist his Lord and bring victory to His Cause. *(ROB)*

That Bahá'u'lláh had enabled Badí', while in His presence, to see the Kingdom of Revelation is a unique bounty of which we can have no understanding. The only thing we can deduce from observing this illustrious youth is that whatever had happened to him in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, he was entirely a different person when he left. Before, he was only 'a handful of dust', but after his two audiences with Bahá'u'lláh he became a new creation into which 'the spirit of might and power' had been breathed. *(ROB)*

That Badí' had been carried away into a world of joy and eternal ecstasy as a result of meeting Bahá'u'lláh is not in itself a unique experience. Every one of His followers with a pure heart was deeply moved and exhilarated when they came in contact with Him, like a

piece of iron which becomes magnetized when in contact with a magnet. But the case of Badí was a special one. Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, ... has explained some of his experiences in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká and made a comment about Badí'. Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali describes the effect of being in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh when He chanted a Tablet He had revealed for him. This is the translation of some of his words: *(ROB)*

This Tablet... was chanted by the Beauty of the All-Bountiful. What an effect it had on me! To what a world did I ascend! To what a paradise did I enter! What did I see! In what way did I hear that voice and that melody! ... These I cannot tell. I entered that Paradise which no eye had seen, and no ear had heard, nor any heart had felt. I saw the Kingdom of grandeur and majesty, and felt the might, the transcendent power, the glory, and the sovereignty of the ever-living, the ever-abiding, the incomparable God. But to speak of it, write about it, give an image or likeness of it, exalt and sanctify it, allude to it, extol and Praise it, or describe and narrate it, all these are impossible for this humble servant or anyone else in the world. We have only access to words and terms, whereas that experience and condition are exalted above all things. They cannot be put into words or described by talks. No one can interpret the inner feelings of one's conscience... But this condition remains only for a single moment. It is a fleeting experience. Its manifestation within the human being is due to a special bounty of God. Its duration, varying from the twinkling of an eye to a longer period, depends upon one's capacity to become the recipient of this bounty. The deeds and actions of the person demonstrate its existence. But it has never been heard that this condition lasted for three or four months in a person except in Badí'... *(ROB)*

BADÍ RECEIVES HIS INSTRUCTIONS

Many were the men, veterans, who had longed for the honour to be entrusted with that Letter. But Bahá'u'lláh had made no move and waited. He had waited a long time until the forlorn, the weary youth, who had come to receive the gift of second birth from His hands, reached the gates of 'Akká, and entered the citadel. *(KOG)*

When Badí' learnt that Bahá'u'lláh was looking for someone to deliver a special Tablet to Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, he begged to be allowed to carry out this service, knowing full well that he would have to lay down his life. Bahá'u'lláh accepted him for this important mission, instructed him to proceed to Haifa where he would be given the Tablet and instructed him also not to associate with any believer, either on the way or in Tihran. The Tablet to the Shah of Persia was not handed to Badí' in 'Akká. Bahá'u'lláh entrusted Haji Shah-Muhammad-i-Amin with a small case and a Tablet to be delivered into the hands of Badí'. *(ROB)*

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali has recorded in his history Bihjatu's-Sudur an account he heard from Haji Shah-Muhammad-i-Amin: 'I was given a small box, the length of which was one and a half spans, its width was less than one span and its thickness was one-quarter of a span, and

I was told to deliver it to him [Badí'] in Haifa together with a few pounds. I did not know what was in the box. I met him in Haifa and gave him the good news that a favour had been bestowed upon him and I was entrusted with its delivery. And so we went outside the town, onto Mount Carmel, and I delivered the box to him. He held it with both hands and kissed it, then he prostrated himself. There was also a sealed envelope for him which he took from me. He walked some twenty or thirty paces away from me and, turning towards the place of Bahá'u'lláh's imprisonment, he sat down and read it. *(ROB)*

On the envelope Baha'o'llah inscribed certain words. This inscription attracted Badí. His face shone. The following is an excerpt from this inscription: - "We ask God to send one of his servants and to detach him from contingent being and to adorn his heart with the decoration of strength and composure that he may help his lord among the concourse of creatures and go with speed to the abode of the throne, let him hold converse with none till he goeth forth one day and standeth where he, the Shah, shall pass by. Then let him raise aloft the letter and with the utmost humility and courtesy, say, 'It hath been sent on the part of the prisoner.' It is incumbent upon him to be in such a mood, that should the Shah decree his death, he shall not be troubled within himself and shall hasten to the place of sacrifice saying, 'O Lord, praise be to thee that thou hast made me a helper. By thy glory I would not exchange this cup for all the cups in the world - neither is it rivaled by Kwather and Salsabil.' *(Abdu'l-Baha, Divine Philosophy, p. 71)*

He then prostrated himself again and his face was radiant with joy and ecstasy. I asked him whether I could also have the honour of reading the Tablet which he had received but he replied: "There is no time." I understood that it was a matter which could not be divulged. What was it? I had no idea at all of the significance of what was happening, nor of the importance of the task with which he had been commissioned. *(KOG)*

'I said to him, "Come with me into Haifa for I have been instructed to deliver a sum of money to you." He replied, "I won't come into the town with you, you go and bring the money." I went and returned but could not find him anywhere - he had departed. I wrote to Beirut that they should give him the money there but they had not seen him. I had no further news of him until I heard reports of his martyrdom from Tihiran. Then I realized that in that box had been the Lawh-i-Sultán, and in the envelope had been a Tablet bearing tidings of the martyrdom of that essence of steadfastness and constancy.'*(KOG)*

BADÍ TRAVELS TO TIHRAN

Badí' plodded on, a solitary figure, over deserts and mountain peaks, for four months, never seeking a companion, never choosing a friend with whom he could share his great secret. His father had no knowledge of his return. *(KOG)*

Haji Shah-Muhammad-i-Amin has further related: 'The late Haji 'Ali, brother of Haji Ahmad of Port Sa'id, used to recount:' "From Trebizond to Tabriz I was in his [Badí's] company for some of the stages of the journey. He was full of joy, laughter, gratitude and forbearance. And I only knew that he had been in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh and was now returning to his home in Khurasan. Time and again I observed that, having walked a little more or less than one hundred paces, he would leave the road and, turning to face 'Akká, would prostrate himself and could be heard to say: 'O God, that which you have bestowed upon me through Your bounty, do not take back through Your justice; rather grant me strength to safeguard it.' (KOG)

DELIVERING THE LETTER TO THE SHAH

In Tihran, as bidden by Bahá'u'lláh, Badí' did not go in search of his fellow Bahá'ís, but spent three days in fasting while he made certain where the Shah's summer camp was, and went straight there, sitting on a hillock, all day long, so that he might be seen and taken to the Shah. The hour came when the Shah set out on a hunting expedition; Badí' approached him calmly, addressing the monarch with respect: 'O King! I have come to thee from Sheba with a weighty message'. Násiri'd-Dín Sháh may have been taken aback, but the confident tone of that youth had already impressed on his consciousness that this message had come to him from Bahá'u'lláh. In the words of Shoghi Effendi, 'at the Sovereign's order, the Tablet was taken from him and delivered to the mujtahids of Tihran who were commanded to reply to that Epistle - a command which they evaded, recommending instead that the messenger should be put to death. That Tablet was subsequently forwarded by the Shah to the Persian Ambassador in Constantinople, in the hope that its perusal by the Sultan's ministers might serve to further inflame their animosity.' (KOG)

Only those well versed in the history of Persia in the nineteenth century can appreciate the immense dangers which faced an ordinary person like Badí' wishing to meet a palace official, let alone the King. A despot such as Násiri'd-Dín Sháh ruled his country with a rod of iron. The government officials showed their authority through tyranny. They were accustomed to deal ruthlessly with anyone who dared to utter a word, or raise a finger against them or the established regime. The mere sighting of a soldier wearing the military uniform, or of a low-ranking government officer, was sufficient to frighten people away. As these men passed through the streets most people showed their respect for them; sometimes they had to bribe them and the timid often ran away.

(ROB)

To meet the King was far more frightful! When the forward section of the royal escort arrived in the street, the cry of the herald who announced to the public the approach of the King's entourage would strike terror into the hearts of the citizens. It was a familiar term to

all when he shouted: 'Everyone die', 'Everyone go blind.' The significance of these instructions was that as the King and his men passed by, everyone must stand still as a dead corpse and all eyes must be cast down as if blind. (ROB)

"In theory the king may do what he pleases; his word is law. The saying that 'The law of the Medes and Persians altereth not' was merely an ancient periphrasis for the absolutism of the sovereign. He appoints and he may dismiss all ministers, officers, officials, and judges. Over his own family and household, and over the civil or military functionaries in his employ, he has the power of life and death without reference to any tribunal. The property of any such individual, if disgraced or executed, reverts to him. The right to take life in any case is vested in him alone, but can be delegated to governors or deputies....Such is the divinity that doth hedge a throne in Persia, that not merely does the Shah never attend at state dinner or eat with his subjects at table, with the exception of a single banquet to his principal male relatives at Naw-Ruz, but the attitude and language employed towards him even by his confidential ministers are those of servile obeisance and adulation. 'May I be your sacrifice, Asylum of the Universe' is the common mode of address adopted even by subjects of the highest rank. (*The Dawn-Breakers*, introduction page xxxviii-xxxix)

Knowing the circumstances which prevailed at the time, we can appreciate the courage and steadfastness of Badi' and the spirit of ascendancy and superhuman audacity which this youth of seventeen manifested as he stood assured and confident, straight as an arrow, face to face with the King. Calmly and courteously he handed him the Tablet and in a loud voice movingly called out the celebrated verse from the Qur'an: 'O King, I have come unto thee from Sheba with a weighty message.' (ROB)¹

THE ARREST AND MARTYRDOM OF BADI'

The officer in charge of torturing Badi' narrates himself about the events that took place.²

[L]et me tell you a tale. This man was a strange creature. At Safid-Ab-i-Lar, the Shah mounted to go hunting. As it happened I had not mounted. Suddenly I saw two cavalymen galloping towards me. The Shah had sent for me. I immediately mounted, and when I reached the Shah, he told me that a Bábí had brought a letter. "I ordered his arrest," the Shah said, "and he is now in the custody of Kishikchi-Bashi [Head of the Sentries]. Go and take him to the Farrash-Khanih. Deal with him gently at first, but if not successful use every manner of force to make him confess and reveal who his friends are and where they are to be found -- until I return from the hunt." I went, took him from the Kishikchi-Bashi and brought him away, hands and arms tied. But let me tell you something of the sagacity and the alertness of the Shah. This man was unmounted in that plain and as soon as he raised his paper to say that he had a letter to deliver, the Shah sensed that he must be a Bábí and ordered his arrest and the removal of any letter he had. He was then detained but had not

given his letter to anyone and had it in his pocket. I took this messenger home. At first I spoke to him kindly and gently; "Give me a full account of all this. Who gave you this letter? From where have you brought it? How long ago was it? Who are your comrades?" He said, "This letter was given to me in 'Akká by Hadrat-i-Bahá'u'lláh.

He told me: 'You will have to go to Iran, all alone, and somehow deliver this letter to the Shah of Iran. But your life may be endangered. If you accept that, go; otherwise I will send another messenger.' I accepted the task. It is now three months since I left. I have been looking for an opportunity to give this letter into the hands of the Shah and bring it to his notice. And thanks be to God that today I rendered my service. If you want Bahá'ís, they are numerous in Iran, and if you want my comrades, I was all alone and have none." I pressed him to tell me the names of his comrades and the names of the Bahá'ís of Iran, particularly those of Tihiran. And he persisted with his denial: "I have no comrade and I do not know the Bahá'ís of Iran. I swore to him: "If you tell me these names I will obtain your release from the Shah and save you from death." His reply to me was: "I am longing to be put to death. Do you think that you frighten me?" Then I sent for the bastinado, and farrashes (six at a time) started to beat him. No matter how much he was beaten he never cried out, nor did he implore. When I saw how it was I had him released from the bastinado and brought him to sit beside me and told him once again: "Give me the names of your comrades." He did not answer me at all and began to laugh. It seemed as if all that beating had not harmed him in any way. This made me angry. I ordered a branding-iron to be brought and a lighted brazier. While they were preparing the brazier I said: "Come and speak the truth, else I will have you branded"; and at that I noticed that his laughter increased. Then I had him bastinadoed again. Beating him that much tired out the farrashes. I myself was also tired out. So I had him untied and taken to the back of another tent, and told the farrashes that by dint of branding they ought to get a confession from him. They applied red-hot iron several times to his back and chest. I could hear the sizzling noise of the burning flesh and smell it too. But no matter how hard we tried we could get nothing out of him. It was about sunset that the Shah returned from hunting and summoned me. I went to him and related all that had happened. The Shah insisted that I should make him confess and then put him to death. So I went back and had him branded once again. He laughed under the impact of the red-hot iron and never implored. I even consented that this fellow should say that what he had brought was a petition and make no mention of a letter. Even to that he did not consent. Then I lost my temper and ordered a plank to be brought. A farrash, who wielded a pounder used for ramming in iron pegs, put this man's head on the plank, and stood over him with the raised pounder. I told him: "If you divulge the names of your comrades you will be released, otherwise I will order them to bring that pounder down on your head." He began to laugh and give thanks for having gained his object. I consented that he should say it was a petition he had brought, not a letter. He even would not say that. And all those red-hot rods applied to his flesh caused him no anguish. So, in the end, I gave a sign to the farrash, and he

brought down the pounder on this fellow's head. His skull was smashed and his brain oozed through his nostrils. Then I went myself and reported it all to the Shah.' (ROB).

As the three successive days of torture by branding yielded no information about the identity of other believers, the Chief Officer, Kazim Khan, threatened Badí' with death unless he cooperated. Badí' smiled at this threat and, as he did not reveal any name, his head was beaten to a pulp with a butt of a rifle. His body was thrown into a pit and earth and stones heaped upon it. This was in July 1869. (ROB)³

FAILURE TO RESPOND TO THE LETTER

Now when His Majesty the King had perused certain passages and become cognizant of the contents of the epistle, he was much affected at what had taken place and manifested regret, because his courtiers had acted hastily and put into execution a severe punishment. It is even related that he said thrice, "Doth anyone punish [one who is but] the channel of correspondence?" Then the Royal Command was issued that their Reverences the learned doctors and honorable and accomplished divines should write a reply to that epistle. But when the most expert doctors of the capital became aware of the contents of the letter they ordained: "That this person, without regarding [the fact] that he is at variance with the Perspicuous Religion, is a meddler with custom and creed, and a troubler of kings and emperors. Therefore to eradicate, subdue, repress, and repel [this sect] is one of the requirements of the Well-established Path, and indeed the chief of obligations."

This answer was not approved before the [Royal] Presence, for the contents of this epistle had no obvious discordance with the Law or with reason, and did not meddle with political or administrative matters, nor interfere with or attack the Throne of Sovereignty. They ought, therefore, to have discussed the real points at issue, and to have written clearly and explicitly such an answer as would have caused the disappearance of doubts and the solution of difficulties, and would have become a fulcrum for discussion to all. (*Abdu'l-Baha, A Traveller's Narrative, p. 58*)⁴

FINAL PROOF TO THE PEOPLE OF PERSIA

The Message of the Báb, the accounts of His martyrdom and the transforming power of His Cause had already reached every corner of that land and from there its reverberations had echoed to the western world. But the people of Persia did not differentiate between the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh and that of the Báb. Most people considered the Bahá'í Faith to be the same as the Bábí Faith and did not appreciate the vast differences in the teachings of the two. (ROB)

The proclamation of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh to the Shah of Persia had a special significance. This momentous Tablet, handed to the person of the sovereign himself, was meant to introduce the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in its true perspective to the inhabitants of Persia. The people in that country knew a good deal about the Bábí Faith and the majority were antagonistic to it. For over two decades the people of Persia had witnessed memorable acts of heroism performed by that small band of God-intoxicated heroes whose devotion and self-sacrifice had lit a great conflagration throughout the country. *(ROB)*

As attested by Bahá'u'lláh in a Tablet, not until this momentous epistle was delivered to the King had the nature of the Cause of God, or the claims of its Founder, or its principles and teachings, been clearly enunciated to those who held the reins of power in their hands. He mentions in the same Tablet that before Badí' had delivered that weighty epistle to the King, God's testimony had not been fulfilled and the conclusive proofs of His Faith had not been declared. But after the proclamation of His Message, there was no remaining excuse for anyone to arise against His Cause. And, since the people of Persia did not respond to the Call of God, which was clearly raised in that Message, sufferings and tribulations which had already been prophesied by the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh descended upon them as a punishment from God. *(ROB)*⁵

STATION OF BADÍ

In the forementioned Tablet to Haji 'Abdu'l-Majid, the father of Badí', Bahá'u'lláh states that the Temple of the Cause of God was adorned by Badí' and that his station was so exalted that no pen could describe it. Through him, Bahá'u'lláh affirms, the pillars of tyranny were shaken and the countenance of victory unveiled itself. He had attained to such heights in the worlds above that no mention could be made of it. *(ROB)*

We have known that the pen of Bahá'u'lláh, for the space of three years, lauded his valour and constancy. We have known that to him was given the title of Fakhru'sh-Shuhada' - The Pride of Martyrs, and that Bahá'u'lláh characterized His references to his 'sublime sacrifice' as 'the Salt of My Tablets' *(KOG)*

In these Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh not only glorifies the station of Badí', but also attaches great importance to the proclamation of His message to the Shah of Persia. In one of these Tablets He states in referring to Badí' that He had offered up the life of one of His servants after having created him anew with the hands of might and power, and sent him straight into the mouth of a serpent, so that the peoples of the world might become assured that the Almighty God stands transcendent and supreme over His creation. Bahá'u'lláh further states that He sent Badí' with a Book in which He had proclaimed His Cause and declared conclusively His proofs to all humanity: He affirms that He had removed from the person of

Badí' every trace of fear, adorned him with the ornament of faith and power, fired his soul with the utterance of a Word and sent him out as a ball of fire to proclaim His Cause. Statements such as these may be found in numerous Tablets which flowed from the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh during these three years. *(ROB)*

DIVINE CHASTISEMENT

And, further on, He alludes to the martyrdom of Badí when he refers to the lamentations of the 'inmates of the cities of justice and equity'. *(Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Baha'u'llah v 4, p. 38)*

In one instance this took the form of a famine which soon after the martyrdom of Badí' claimed the lives of a great many people in that land. *(ROB)*.

"Mention should, moreover, be made of the devastating famine which, about a year after the illustrious Badí had been tortured to death, ravaged Persia and reduced the population to such extremities that even the rich went hungry, and hundreds of mothers ghoulishly devoured their own children" *(Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By page 233)*

The effect of the famine was so devastating that Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Shahmirzadi, known as Haji Akhund, wrote a letter to Bahá'u'lláh, begged forgiveness for the people of Persia and asked for relief in their sufferings. In a Tablet to him, Bahá'u'lláh affirms that the famine was God's punishment for the martyrdom of Badí', declares that prior to that He had prophesied in His Tablets impending afflictions and tribulations, and states that were it not for the sake of the believers, the whole nation would have been struck down by God. He then responds favourably to Haji Akhund's intercession and assures him that soon the situation would change and God would grant them relief. *(ROB)*.

PHOTOGRAPH OF BADÍ

The Shah, who was usually eager to see the photographs of prisoners, ordered a photograph to be taken of Badí', especially when he had heard the stories of his fortitude under torture. This photograph shows the brazier of fire containing the rods of iron in the foreground and is the best testimony to the spirit of steadfastness and resignation, of calm and assurance which Badí''s face portrays. *(ROB)*

We have also sent unto thee a photograph of His Holiness the glorious Badí whom thy Lord did send to His Highness Nassir-ed'Din-Shah with a manifest epistle by which He perfected the proof and evidence to the people of Persia. ... He was sitting between the executioners

at the time of his death with all dignity, while turning unto God. (*Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha v3, p. 717*)

NOTES

¹ On arrival in the summer of 1869, he discovered that the King was on a camping expedition. He made his way to the area and sat on top of a rock far away, but opposite the royal pavilion. There he sat for three days and three nights in a state of fasting and prayer, awaiting the passing of the royal escort. On the fourth day, the Shah looking through his binoculars spotted a man dressed in a white garb sitting motionless and in a most respectful attitude on a rock opposite. He guessed that he had some demand to make for justice or was seeking help for his difficulties. He sent his men to find out who he was and what he wanted. Badi' told them that he had a letter from a very important personage for the Shah and must hand it to him personally. The officers searched him and then brought him to the King. It seems very surprising that these officials, drunk with pride, ruthless and cruel in every way, did not grab the letter from him and walk away. The only explanation is that they must have felt the extraordinary power with which Bahá'u'lláh had invested His messenger. Otherwise, it was very unusual to allow an ordinary citizen to come and meet the sovereign face to face. (ROB)

² In Paris Mme. Dreyfus-Barney, having met the ... Persian officer [Muhammad-Vali Khan], presented him with a copy of that book [Some Answered Questions]. When Muhammad-Vali Khan read the account given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets to the kings including Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, he took up his pen and wrote in the margin some first-hand information he had personally heard from the fore-mentioned Kazim Khan, the officer in charge who tortured and eventually martyred Badi'.

³ The last Bábí put to death actually by the Shah's order was, I think, the young messenger, Mirza Badi', who brought from Acre, and delivered into the king's own hands at Teherán, the remarkable apology for the Bábí faith addressed to him by Bahá'u'lláh. (*E.G Brown, A Year Amongst the Persians sid 111.*)

⁴ That same letter the Shah sent to Tihiran for Mulla 'Aliy-i-Kani and other mullas to read and to answer. But they said that there was nothing to answer; and Haji Mulla 'Ali wrote to Mustawfiyu'l-Mamalík (who was the Premier at the time) to tell the Shah that, 'If, God forbid, you should have any doubts regarding Islam and your belief is not firm enough, I ought to take action to dispel your doubts. Otherwise such letters have no answer. The answer was exactly what you did to his messenger. Now you must write to the Ottoman

Sultan to be very strict with him and prevent all communications.' Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz was living then. It was during his reign. (ROB)

The Shah is reported to have been immensely displeased with the attitude of the divines in refusing to meet the challenge and write an answer to Bahá'u'lláh, but he could do nothing to change their decision. (ROB)

The Shah gave the letter from Bahá'u'lláh to the priests that they might explain it to him. After some days these priests told the Shah that the letter was from a political enemy. The Shah grew angry and said, 'This is no explanation. I pay you to read and answer my letters, therefore obey!' (*Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, p. 77*)

⁵ In one of the forementioned Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh states that after the proclamation of His Message to the Shah of Persia, and through Him to the public, there was no excuse left for anyone. He then makes an interesting comment about the inevitability of God's punishment and states that the believers ought to meditate as to why the wrath of God, which afflicted the people so promptly, had allowed the Shah himself a period of respite. (ROB)

But when we recall the fate which befell the bearer of Behá's letter to the Shah, which is a matter of notoriety in Persia,... (*E.G. Brown, Selections from the writings of E.G. Brown on the Bábí and Bahá'í religions sid 262*)