

Bahá'u'lláh's Four Tablets to Maryam

Lawh-i-Maryam, Maryama Isiy-i-Jan, Hurufat-i-'Ali'in and Ziyárat-Námih-i-Maryam

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“In one of the older neighbourhoods in Tihran, there exists a beautiful, large house, which belongs to the relatives of Mirza Buzurg-i-Nuri. A young woman, by the name of Maryam -- who is well endowed with beauty and perfections -- is the bride of the household. An Immortal Beauty, Whose luminous Countenance can easily steal the hearts of the world's inhabitants and Whose blessed heart can attract all those around Him, has been released from the darksome and stench-filled prison of the Siyah Chal, and, freed from the heavy chains that had been weighing on Him, lies in His sickbed in that house. He slips in and out of consciousness as He rests in bed gravely stricken with ill health.

Maryam, enthralled with love, circles moth-like round that Peerless Flame and weeps tears of anguish. She sings out with heavenly melodies the odes of love that stream forth from the pure plains of her delicate heart as she circles in adoration around His Blessed Person and attends to his ails. She sees the luminousness of His Countenance, discerns the Glory of His majesty and grandeur, and recognises in His Countenance the all encompassing transformations derived from divine inspiration!”¹

These are the words by which Furugh Arbab introduces her short chapter on Maryam, Baha'u'llah's cousin, sister-in-law, friend, and faithful follower. Unfortunately other works by other historians such as Malik-Khusravi, Bayda'i, and Ishragh-Khavari present even shorter accounts on the life of Maryam. In a maximum of two pages, they all introduce her ancestry and outline her relationship to Baha'u'llah; assert that she lived a short life of pain and agony; indicate that beautiful Tablets were revealed in her honour by the Pen of the Blessed Perfection; refer to the great bond of love and devotion between her and the Ancient Beauty; and mention the month she spent nursing Baha'u'llah back to health – with the help of Assiyih Khanum -- after His release from the Siyah Chal.

Reading these short chapters, one is left thirsting after the truth of this woman's existence. The mystery behind her unbearable life of hardship, her character, her obscurity, and her station as a historical figure so closely

¹ . Furugh Arbab, *Akhtaran-i-Taban v1*, p109

associated with the Person of Baha'u'llah all leave one question mark after another in the reader's mind!

Who was this woman other than being the daughter of Mirza Karim-i-Namadsab and Maliku'l-Nisa Khanum, Baha'u'llah's paternal aunt? Or the sister of Fatimih Khanum (Mahd-i-'Ulya), Baha'u'llah's second wife?² What other social status did she hold than being the wife of Baha'u'llah's half brother, Mirza Rida-Quli who was a Haji by his pilgrimage to Mecca and a physician?³ And what purpose did she serve in the history of a Faith she had espoused so early in its development?⁴ What services did she render surrounded by a husband who tried his best to conceal his association with Baha'u'llah and sister-in-laws who were staunch supporters of Mirza Yahya and who tried everything in their powers to keep her mute in praise of her Lord and to make sure that she was not to attain her heart's desire of attaining the presence of Baha'u'llah after His exile from Iran.⁵

The dates of her birth and death are not conclusively clear from any of the aforementioned historical works; however what can be fairly decisively assumed from them is that she – in most probability – died around the year 1868 or 1869 at around the age of 41 or 42. It is also said that she married Baha'u'llah's brother Mirza Rida-Quli a couple of years before the Declaration of the Blessed Bab at around the age of 15; which makes her about 10 years younger than Baha'u'llah.⁶

There is no indication anywhere of her formal education, but since she was obviously literate, it can be assumed that she received some sort of home-schooling. Regardless, however, of the sort of training she received, her poetry is testimony to the fact that she was not only eloquently literate; but that she was also knowledgeable in matters of religious history, theology and classical poetry.

One of her poems reads:

“A rare heart -- bewildered and bleeding -- is my lot;
Flowing out rivers -- Euphrates and Tigris -- from the crimson sea
that is my heart.

There once was a time when peculiar I found Majnun's tale;
In my heart now two hundred Layli and Majnun epics prevail.

To the wilderness, withdrew His tent from this town, my heart's
Desire;

² . Muhammad-'Ali Malik-Khusravi, *Iqlim-i-Nur* p137

³ . H.M. Balyuzi, *The King of Glory* p13

⁴ . Adib Taherzadeh *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah* v1, p12

⁵ . Adib Taherzadeh *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah* v3, p212

⁶ . Furugh Arbab *Akhtaran-i-Taban* v1, pp110, 112

And so -- enamoured as the mad Qays – to the wilderness is set my gaze.

One luminous Moon may have had doleful Zulaykha in captivity;
What I have in bondage are two hundred suns shining brightly.

Nine heavens shall I burn to naught;
Should I tell of all the world's ails that lie in my heart.

At the Ka'ba of the Beloved, I held refuge for many years;
Yet I am now separated from Him by more than a journey of a hundred years.

O thou whose abode is now set across from the deep sea;
My heart's vessel do Thou witness, so filled with Thee.

So grieved I am with pain of separation from thee;
That saddened I shall make the hearts of all maidens -- both angels and houris.

Untold doth remain my heart's secret, though to its end the page hath arrived;
Oh, how I lament this blazing fire that within the core of my being remains enwrapped."⁷

In the first four verses of this poem, she unveils her inner knowledge of such subjects as the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which, in addition to being geographical elements, have profound theological significance and deep roots in religious history; her knowledge of poetical epics such as the story of Layli and Majnun; her knowledge of the name of Majnun, the mad "Qays"; and her knowledge of the Qur'anic account of Yusuf and Zulaykha.

One may assume -- at first glance -- that her usage of such metaphors may simply be out of a common familiarity with popular epics and stories; however, a deeper study of this and her other poems and a systematic analysis of the context in which she uses these familiar words or names will prove her deep understanding of their place in history; their symbolism in religion; and their effects on society.

Her poems are, however, generally written with the fire of her devotion for her Lord and with the tender eloquence of a handmaiden wholly enthralled with the love of God.

Lovers' melodies echoed thoroughly enchanting;
Flames of love filled the world wholly energizing

⁷ . Bayda'i, *Tadhkariy-i-Shu'aray-i-Qarn-i-Awwal-i-Baha'i* v3, p337

The lover's plight perceiveth not, but a lover's mind;
For a lover's plight is of a peculiar kind

A fare so splendid wherein kings of the day;
Like unto beggars bare and forlorn at its way

So enticingly played Love's flute;
Liberating my soul from both worlds' loot

Ah! If only Love's scorching blaze;
Bestirred me at every breath with its flame ever more
ablaze⁸

Fascinating as Maryam's poetry may be, however, the purpose of this paper lies in the introduction of her character and identity as portrayed by Baha'u'llah in His four Tablets addressed to her; for given the brevity of all historical accounts on her life, the answers to the questions pertaining to this blessed handmaiden may only be attained in these Tablets.

The Tablet of Maryam

One of these Tablets, known as "the Tablet of Maryam", is the one that is translated in part by Shoghi Effendi and starts with "O Maryam! The wrongs which I suffer have blotted out the wrongs suffered by My First Name from the Tablet of Creation". It is written in the same poetic language as the other Tablets addressed to her and – like all the other ones – it is clearly indicative of the most tender affection cherished by the Manifestation of God for this cousin and obviously loyal friend and trusted confidant.

This Tablet is a heartrending account of Baha'u'llah's pre-exile trials in Tihiran and of the actual exile from Tihiran to Baghdad, as well as what befell him during His sojourn in Sulaymaniyyih, the details of his being discovered and His return to Baghdad. It recounts His triumphant victory in reviving the perishing Babi community of Baghdad in the mid 1850s, and the sufferings He endured at the hands of those from within and outside of His own community. And ultimately, it reveals the adversities that are yet to come and His further banishment to remote lands.

Baha'u'llah cries out in this Tablet with eager affection, confiding His heart's ails in a devoted relative, a cousin, a sister-in-law, a friend and a faithful believer. He shares His agonies almost as if seeking comfort in her unquestionable understanding and her absolute willingness to be party to

⁸ . Bayda'i, *Tadhkariy-i-Shu'aray-i-Qarn-i-Awwal-i-Baha'i* v, p 336

His sufferings, and bestows upon her the ultimate bounty of sharing in His own tribulations

Maryama Isiy-i-Jan [O Maryam, the Spirit of life ascended to the domain of placelessness...]

The date of the Revelation of this Tablet has not yet become clear, and therefore one cannot conclude with certainty where it was revealed; although Adib Taherzadeh alludes to the fact that all the Tablets addressed to Maryam -- except the Tablet of Visitation -- were revealed in Baghdad.⁹ This Tablet, like the other ones, speaks of clamours and afflictions in the path of the Beloved, however it seems rather different in tone to the other Tablet in that it appears to have been revealed by Baha'u'llah mainly to comfort Maryam in times of adversity, perhaps soon after His settlement in Baghdad and in appreciation of her tireless efforts in nursing Him back to enough health for Him to undertake the journey, and while she must have been agonizing over the separation.

Hurufat-i-'Ali'in [Exalted letters]

Another tablet, which in reality is a prayer because it is entirely addressed to God, is Hurufat-i-'Ali'in or Hurufat-i-'Aliyat (Exalted Letters) or Musibat-i-Hurufat-i-'Aliyat, which means the sufferings of the Exalted Letters. This tablet was revealed by Baha'u'llah in 8 sections first in Arabic and then translated by Himself into Persian. In a prologue to the tablet, He explains that at the request of some believers He translated the tablet into Persian; but that the translation is that of the essence, because a word for word literal translation would not have been seemly.¹⁰

The tablet was dedicated to the memory of Mirza Muhammad-i-Vazir, Maryam's brother. Mirza Muhammad and his wife Havva (Baha'u'llah's niece from one of His half sisters from His mother's side) were both devoted believers. In fact according to Adib Taherzadeh, Mirza Muhammad may have been the first in Baha'u'llah's family who was converted by Him to the Cause of the Bab in 1844.¹¹

Mirza Muhammad died in Nur when Baha'u'llah was still in Baghdad, and the Blessed Beauty revealed this Tablet in his honour and sent it to Mirza Muhammad's sister (Maryam) and his wife (Havva) to console them in their time of sorrow.¹²

⁹ Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah v1*, p12

¹⁰ Baha'u'llah, *Ad'iyiy-i-Hadrat-i-Mahbub p.?*

¹¹ Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah v1*, p122 [He was presumably the first in Baha'u'llah's family to be converted by Him to the Cause of the Blessed Bab after Mirza Musa]

¹² Ibid

Adib Taherzadeh and John Walbridge both explain the contents of this tablet in very similar words;¹³ but both explanations are minimal in the extreme. The tablet covers a whole array of things in a unique tone, and although the general purport of the tablet is about life -- and it paints a vivid picture of the journey from pre-conception to death (or the destruction of the temporal body as the tablet explains it) -- it touches on so many various aspects along the way.

It praises God; recounts the bounties of God showered upon the believers from the moment of creation; explains the soul and its eternal nature, elucidates the nobility of man and his being created in God's own image, and speaks of the greatest bounty bestowed upon man which is his ability to recognize God's Manifestation and gain eternal life.

The tablet also speaks of the believer's path towards certitude and how he is to endure tremendous sufferings and persecutions in the path of God, renounce the world and become wholly detached from all else except Him.

After an elaborate and eloquent description of the station of the soul, Baha'u'llah speaks of the physical death and the afflictions that befalls the human temple upon its destruction after death. He also explains how this physical destruction can be mournful to the loved ones who are left behind; but ultimately His attention reverts in several part of the tablet to the limitless sufferings with which the believer is afflicted in his path toward eternal glory.

The last section of the tablet was revealed specifically for Maryam and Havva, where Baha'u'llah ever so tenderly and lovingly showers these women with the utmost of affection and consoles them in the loss

Tablet of Visitation

The Tablet of Visitation revealed by the Pen of the Blessed Perfection in her honour can certainly serve as a comprehensive introduction to the life and character of Maryam; one that defines her beginnings, her life, and her end well beyond the confines of parental ancestry and social standing. It speaks of time immemorial, pre-existence, the beginnings of love, of her being a sign of love, and much more.

In the prologue to this tablet, Baha'u'llah states that it was revealed for one who was named Maryam, and who was ablaze with the fire of the love of her Lord before the flames even touched her.

¹³ Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah v1*, p122 – John Walbridge, *Exalted Letters, The Overview* (published in *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, pp267-8

The analogy of being lit without coming into contact with the light or fire goes back to the Qur'an, where in Surih 24:35 it is said:

“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.
The Parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche
and within it a Lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass:
the glass as it were a brilliant star:
Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive,
neither of the east nor of the west,
whose oil is well-nigh luminous,
though fire scarce touched it:
Light upon Light !
God doth guide whom He will to His Light (*núr*):
God doth set forth Parables for men: and God doth know all
things.”¹⁴

And so Bahá'u'lláh says that the Fire scarce touched Maryam, and yet she was ablaze with the Fire and thus she was one whom God hath willed to guide.

Baha'u'llah indicates in the prologue that Maryam's station had remained concealed throughout her life time, but that after her death God unveiled her (through this Tablet of Visitation, it may be assumed) and revealed her to His servants. The prologue also states that should one wish to pay homage to Tahirih, one can do so with this same Tablet.

It is most interesting that the same tablet is for both Tahirih and Maryam: the first woman so well-known in Babi/Baha'i history, so bold in character and so revolutionary in nature; while the second woman so obscure, so subtle and so concealed.

Nevertheless, if one were to paint a portrait of the lives of these two women, it would almost be the exact same drawing, but done in different colours. Here are two women who were both instantly confirmed believers – both poetesses. They were both married, while in both cases, they were not in the least supported by their husbands in their acceptance of their newfound Faith.

They each lived their lives for their Beloved and would give it up in a twinkling of an eye for Him. They both died at a young age: Tahirih died a martyr's death, while Maryam, dying after a lifetime of anguish, was named by Baha'u'llah Himself “a martyr in the path of Bahá”.

They were both persecuted by their relatives, and kept at some point captive in their own homes against their will.

¹⁴ . Yusuf Ali translation

However, within all these similarities there exists the stark difference in their lives and character.

Tahirih was very much famous for her poetry; while Maryam's was written in the seclusion of her home and chanted out as a means of soothing her own bereaved heart. Tahirih's fame of scholarship, poetry, lectureship, faith, bravery and martyrdom were almost instant and far-reaching; resulting in her celebrity status throughout time and beyond the geographical limits of Iran. Her poetry has been translated into other languages. She lives in many homes across the globe, while Maryam is pretty much still envisioned in that same beautiful house on Khadim Street, where she looked after her noble Guest -- her Lord -- for a short time, and where she died in her longing desire to be near Him.

The study of the differences between these two women and that of the common thread between them -- which is their reciprocated love for their Lord -- makes for a very interesting discussion. However, since the focus is intended to be on Maryam alone here, space does not afford the present writer a further examination of this matter.

What stands out, however, and is addressed by Baha'u'lláh Himself in His prologue is her obscurity. Baha'u'llah says that her station was concealed throughout her lifetime and revealed by God only upon her death! So, according to Baha'u'llah, this Tablet of Visitation is in fact a discovery of her life and station which was concealed prior to her death -- perhaps in order to protect her from even further jealousy and hatred by her unfaithful relatives.

This Tablet of Visitation is not dated; however it had to be revealed in Akka, because it was revealed after Maryam's passing to the Realm on High, which was about the year 1868-69. Therefore, depending on how soon after her death Baha'u'llah revealed this Tablet; it could very well have been while He was still inside the Prison Cell within the barracks. The Tablet is written in a poetic and highly symbolic style, and consists of three distinct parts with three distinct addressees.

Baha'u'llah starts out by addressing the "Supreme Pen". This in itself -- at the very first sentence of the Tablet -- is at once captivating.

In the Suratu'l-Qalam (the Tablet of the Pen), Baha'u'llah asserts that the divine blessings were bestowed upon the Exalted (or Supreme) Pen (Qalam-i-'Ala) before the creation of letters and words and that of the kingdom of names and attributes, and before God's mighty Tablets were revealed.¹⁵ In Islam, The Supreme Pen is of the highest station. It is the station of "the

¹⁵ . Kavian Milami and Nafeh Fananapazir, *A Study of the Pen Motif in the Baha'i Writings*, March 1999

reality of realities” [Haqiqatu’l-Haqa’iq]; or the reality of Muhammad as the Prophet of God. In Surah 96:1 of the Qur’an it is said:

“Read, in the name of your Lord, who created. He created man from an embryo. Read, and your Lord, Most Exalted teaches by means of the pen.”¹⁶

The Pen is then a symbol for the creative forces of the manifestation of God. And here Baha’u’llah -- a captive in the great citadel of Akka -- is calling out to “The Supreme Pen” to console It for the calamity of Maryam’s death.

Turning His attention to Maryam herself, Baha’u’llah laments her death and confers upon her the title of “Crimson Leaf”.

Baha’u’llah referred to His male off-springs as “branches” and to the females in the family as “leaves”; however many outstanding women outside the family were also honoured by being addressed by Him as a leaf. In the case of Maryam and Tahirih, they were both blessed with the title of “*crimson leaf*”! The word crimson appears frequently in Baha’u’llah’s Writings -- and is symbolic of all things pertaining to Baha’u’llah’s Own Dispensation -- such as the Crimson Ark¹⁷ (His Cause), the Crimson Book or Scroll¹⁸ (The Book of His Covenant), the Crimson Spot¹⁹ (the Most Great Prison), the Crimson Wine²⁰ (His Revealed Word), The Crimson Cup²¹ (one’s portion of God’s Decree), the Crimson Light²² (testimony-evidence of the His Revelation), the Crimson cloud²³ (Throne of Revelation), the Crimson Ink²⁴ (the blood shed in His path – martyrdom). And of course “the shores of the crimson seas” which in the tablet of the Holy Mariner is identified as a “sacred strand” from where those upon the Ark of God can attain a station (ethereal invisible station):

“... Wherein the Lord hath in the Flame of His Beauty appeared within the deathless tree.”

“...Wherein the embodiments of His Cause cleansed themselves of self and passion.”

“...Around which the glory of Moses doth circles with the everlasting hosts.”

¹⁶ Baha’u’llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, translated by Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Bahai Publishing, 1988), 32.

¹⁷ Baha’u’llah, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, p215

Baha’u’llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p135, 139

¹⁸ Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p238

¹⁹ Baha’u’llah, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, p56

²⁰ Baha’u’llah, *Suriy-i-Haykal*

²¹ ‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Baha’i World Faith – ‘Abdu’l-Baha Section*, p440

²² Baha’u’llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha’u’llah*, p282

²³ Baha’u’llah, *Tablets of Baha’u’llah*, p182

²⁴ Baha’u’llah, *The Arabic Hidden Words*

“...Wherein the Hand of God was drawn forth from His bosom of grandeur.”²⁵

Thus a “crimson leaf” may be characterised by any and all things for which the aforementioned stations stand: A leaf belonging to the new Dispensation and so cherished as belonging to the Tree of God, moving by the Will of God -- a leaf signifying the crimson blood and a martyr’s life, and a leaf who has attained to a station of utter servitude, utter annihilation and eternal glory.

Baha’u’llah honours her in this Tablet with such appellations as: “an adorning sign of guidance on the faces of women” and “a light unto the brow of piety”!

Through her, Baha’u’llah affirms, the veils of superstition were rent asunder from the eyes of women and their beings were adorned with the remembrance of the Lord of earth and heaven, and characterises her as:

Someone who upon hearing the call of God hesitated – not even for a moment, but hastened towards Him detached from all else save Him.

Someone who embraced Him and His great signs and recognised the manifestation of God in His Days.

Someone who was a stranger in her own land and a prisoner in her own home! One who was far from the presence of His Holiness even in her eagerness to be near, and forbidden to attain His presence even in her fervid desire to behold Him.

Someone who was moved by the winds of the will of God in such way as was desired and willed by Him.

Someone who had no movement or rest save by His command and permission.

Someone who annihilated her own will in the will of her Lord and her desire in His Decree.

Someone whom the whisperings of the stirrers of sedition failed to keep back from the Daystar of the world; and whom the opposition of the promoters of sedition deterred not from the Lord of the Day of Reunion.

Someone who remained firm in the Covenant on a Day in which the eyes of men were stilled with bewilderment.

²⁵ . Baha’u’llah, *The Tablet of the Holy Mariner*

Baha'u'llah's Pen is moved again and again in this Tablet by the calamities that had befallen Maryam, and He is transported back to pre-existence, poetically relating a great shock as a result of Maryam's sufferings.

He expresses sorrows at the death of this friend in poetic hyperbole of cosmic catastrophes such as the disconnections of the letters at the beginning of the surihis of the Qur'an and the essence of being taking the form of the temple and becoming a historic Manifestation. He speaks of multiple existences coming about from a primal state of unicity, of the words of negation and affirmation ("La-Ilaha Illallah"), of the most great colourless river being divided into four rivers and acquiring various shades and earthly limitations; of the Primal Point becoming all letters and words; and of the point of knowledge being multiplied by the ignorant.

This differentiation of multiple existences, coming forth from a primal state of unicity, is clearly explained in 'Abdu'l-Baha's *Tafsir-i-kuntu Kanzan Makhfiyan* [Commentary on "I was a Hidden Treasure..."] where He considers the "dot" [a mere point] and how all the letters and words are concealed within this mere "dot". But all these letters and words are within the dot in absolute annihilation. By looking at the dot, no trace can be discerned of these words and letters and there is no difference between them.

In the same way He explains that the names and attributes of God are also absolutely and entirely obliterated and annihilated in the station of Primary Oneness.²⁶

And it is thus that as humans we are exhorted to attain the utmost of self-effacement and submit to complete self annihilation in order that -- according to 'Abdu'l-Baha in the same commentary -- one may shine forth from the dawning place of perpetual existence.

So in understanding the poetic hyperbole of Baha'u'llah's words describing the shock of the agonies suffered by Maryam, one can merely begin to imagine this essence of detachment in her annihilation of a pre-existence shining forth from the Dawning Place of perpetual existence as Baha'u'llah Himself has described her in His Tablet of Visitation for her!

Concerning the station of love, in the same aforementioned Commentary, 'Abdu'l-Baha states that this station is over and above the world of estimation or description, and that the power of intellect and reasoning can

26 . Makatib-i-Hadrat-i-'Abdu'l-Baha, v2. p4 [Tafsir 'Kuntu Kanzan Makhfiyan'](#) "Tafsir 'Kuntu Kanzan Makhfiyan'" (Commentary on the Saying 'I was a Hidden Treasure.' *Makatib Hadrat 'Abdu'l-Baha*, Vol. 2 (Cairo: Matba'at Kurdistan al-Ilmiyyah, 1330 A.H./1912). Reprinted, East Lansing, H-Bahai, 1998. [a provisional translation of this commentary is available by Moojan Momen, "[Abdu'l-Baha's Commentary on the Islamic Tradition 'I was a Hidden Treasure.'](#)" *Baha'i Studies Bulletin* vol. 3, no. 4 (December 1985), pp. 4-64.

never attain an understanding of this station. He calls it an eternal mystery. This eternal Mystery, He says, is identical to the Essence of the Absolute and is the origin of all love and affection.²⁷

Therefore, these cosmic catastrophes are expressed by Baha'u'llah poetically at the shock of the sufferings inflicted upon a leaf who was touched by the origin of all love and affection – or rather a leaf who was ablaze by the fire without the fire even touching it!

The last section of the Tablet is a prayer in which Baha'u'llah, while extolling God's attributes, confers even greater blessings upon His cousin Maryam.

Postscript

Upon her death, Maryam was survived by one, sole, faithful relative, that being her daughter, Zahra Khanum, who was referred to by 'Abdu'l-Baha as Thamarieh [thamarieh literally meaning fruit]. Zahra Khanum gave birth to three children two daughters and one son. One of the daughters passed away at an early age, and when the son passed away as well, the other daughter, Zibandih Khanum came to be the only surviving member of the family who remained faithful to the Cause.

Like her mother and grand-mother, Zibandih Khanum was surrounded by relatives who were mostly followers of Azal. According to Furugh Arbab, who actually had the privilege of interviewing her, Zibandih Khanum survived their oppression and persecution and was able through a loving approach to reduce their animosity to some degree.

In one of His Tablets addressed to Zibandih Khanum, 'Abdu'l-Baha writes:

...Hadrat-i-Thamarieh [thamarieh literally being fruit], in whose bosom thou wert reared, was the one blessed fruit and the only shell of steadfastness in the Covenant, and a brilliant star favoured and distinguished at the Holy Threshold....²⁸

Zibandih Khanum had heard stories of Maryam's incredible love for Baha'u'llah from her mother and knew of the calamities she had suffered in her life. She often retold those stories to other friends.

From a very early age, Zibandih Khanum – like her grandmother -- was consumed with a burning desire to move to the Holy Land and to live in close proximity to 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Holy Family; but her father would not grant her permission. According to Furugh Arbab, from as early as age 9

²⁷. Ibid

²⁸. The complete Tablet is quoted by Furugh Arbab in *Akhtaran-i-Taban* v2, p2

she had increased her desperate pleas for permission to go and had wept uncontrollably, expressing her longing desire to undertake the journey; but still her father had not given consent for the trip.

Eventually in later years, she was finally able to realise her own desire – as well as her grandmother’s desire -- of travelling to the Holy Land to visit ‘Abdu’l-Baha and the Holy family; however she arrived after ‘Abdu’l-Baha had passed away.

Although in great pain while mourning the loss of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, the Greatest Holy Leaf rushed out to meet her. Welcoming her, the Greatest Holy Leaf told Zibandih Khanum that they were all awaiting her arrival.

She was in the Holy Land for 19 days, and then she was to leave like all other pilgrims; however, she went into the presence of Shoghi Effendi and with great longing said that she did not want to go. She was given permission to stay for another 19 days. Finally after 85 days she left the Holy Land deeply touched with the loving affections of Shoghi Effendi and the Greatest Holy Leaf who referred to her as “Dokhtar-Amih” [paternal cousin]. Shoghi Effendi also referred to her as “Mansub-i-bavafa” [the loyal relative] and a “reminder of Hadrat-i-Thamarih”.

At age 35, she married Sani’ ‘Ata’i [Sani’us-Sultan]. Her husband passed away in 1322, leaving her a good inheritance, which she left for the Baha’i community after her death at age 100.²⁹

Tablet for Cousin Maryam: Provisional Translation

O Maryam! The wrongs which I suffer have blotted out the wrongs suffered by My First Name (the Bab) from the Tablet of Creation, and showers of tribulations have rained from the clouds of God’s decree upon this Manifest Beauty. My banishment from My home was prompted by naught else but the love of the Beloved, and My exile from My land for none other reason than attaining the good pleasure of the Desired One.

Like a candle, I remained radiant and luminous before the biddings of His decrees, and stood as firm as a mountain in the face of divine tribulations. I was even as a torrent of rain amidst the revelations of the tokens of His Grace, and a flame of fire in staying the enemies of the Sovereign Lord of Eternity.

The manifold evidences of My might gave way to the envy of the enemies, and the revelations of My wisdom brought forth their malice and perfidy.

²⁹ All the information on Zibandih Khanum is drawn from Furugh Arbab’s *Akhtaran-i-Taban*, v2. pp 1-

Not for one night did I rest in a place of safety, nor did I lift my head from my couch on any morn with ease. I swear by the beauty of the True One that Husayn wept at my meekness and the Friend of God (Ibrahim) cast Himself into the fire for My afflictions. Shoudst thou observe plainly; thou shalt witness that the Eyes of Majesty are shedding tears beneath the Tabernacle of Purity, and the men of glory are wailing in the Realm of Grandeur; to which beareth witness the Tongue of Truth and Glory.

O Maryam! From the land of Ta (Tihran), after countless afflictions, We reached 'Iraq at the bidding of the Tyrant of Persia, where after the fetters of Our foes, We were afflicted with the perfidy of our friends. God knoweth what befell Me thereafter. Until such time as I renounced My home and all therein, and my life and all its attachments; and unaccompanied and alone chose to set out into retirement. I roamed the wilderness of resignation, travelling in such wise that in my exile every eye wept sore over Me, and all created things shed tears of blood because of My anguish. The birds of the air were My companions and the beasts of the field My associates.

I traversed the mortal world in a flash of the sprit, and for two years or rather less, I shunned all beside God, and closed Mine eyes to all except Him, that haply the fire of hatred may die down and the heat of jealousy abate.

O Maryam! It is not befitting to divulge the divine mysteries, nor is it seemly to reveal heavenly secrets; and by this is meant the mysteries enshrined within the treasury of My being and naught else! As God is My witness, I endured what the oceans, waves and fruits -- and all that hath ever been or will ever be -- could never bear to endure.

During this period of retirement, none from amongst my brothers or others ventured to enquire into this matter; nor did they seek to understand it, whilst this was a matter greater than the creation of the heavens and the earth. By God! One moment of this journey is far greater than pious worship in both worlds. Although this journey was a most great testimony and the mightiest and clearest evidence; yet it requires a man of insight to behold the scene of His Transcendent Glory. He, who is bereft of insight, perceiveth not even his own beauty; what recourse does he have then of attaining the most sacred Divine Beauty.

What can the shadow discern of the object who sheddeth the shadow; or a handful of clay perceive of the subtle reality of the heart?

At length, divine providence prompted some of His spiritual servants to think of this Canaanite Youth, and they set out with a bundle of letters to search Me out everywhere and from everyone, until they discovered a trace of this Traceless One in a cave of a mountain. And He guideth all things unto the straight, sacred, path.

I swear by the Sun of Divine Reality that this poor forsaken One was so utterly amazed and mystified by their arrival that this Pen is unable to recount. Perhaps a keen Pen must needs step forth from within the eternal realm to rend asunder the veils and reveal all the mysteries with absolute sincerity and utmost certitude, and to speak with such tongue that would draw out the heavenly pearls from the shell of silence. And this indeed would not be difficult for Him.

At last, the Hand of Glory broke the seal of mystery; but alas, ignorant remained the wise, save those who were truly detached.

Then, the Day-star of the World returned to Iraq. We found no more than a handful of souls, faint and dispirited; nay utterly lost and dead. The Cause of God had ceased to be on any one's lips; nor was any heart receptive of its message.³⁰

Hence, this Servant, arose to safeguard the Cause and exalt it to the heights of glory in such wise as though a new resurrection had come to pass. The loftiness of the cause became so evident in every city and so manifest in every land that all sovereigns conducted themselves with forbearance.

O Maryam! Arising before all enemies of different sects and tribes by this Servant, increased the fire of jealousy of Our foes, to such degree that is not possible to mention; nor is it imaginable -- thus hath it been decreed by the Exalted, the Almighty.

O Maryam! The Pen of Him who is the Ancient of Days sayeth that the greatest of all deeds is to purify the heart from all else but God. Sanctify thy heart then from the ungodly, that thou mayest be worthy of the Realm of Eternal Reunion.

O Maryam! From the limitations of vain imitation, step thou into the vast immensity of the realm of detachment. Purify thy heart from the world and all that is therein, that thou mayest attain unto the sovereign Lord of faith, and not be deprived of His Divine Sanctuary. Rent asunder the veils of idle fancies through the power of detachment, and enter thou into the sacred court of certitude.

O Maryam! Though a tree may bear a hundred thousand leaves and harvest a hundred thousand fruits; yet all these leaves and fruits shall disappear and be destroyed with one movement of the autumn breeze or the cold of the winter. Waver not away thy gaze then from the very Root of the Divine Tree and of the branches of the Tree of Transcendent Oneness. Witness thou the

³⁰ This and the preceding sentence translated by Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, (Willmette::Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1944),126

sea abiding secure in its spot with the utmost poise and dignity; yet how innumerable shapes and figures form on its surface through the stirring of breezes of the will of the Everlasting Beloved. All these waves appear to be different one from another and run contrary to each other; yet the people are all busy with the waves and are veiled from the sovereign Might of the Sea of Seas, from Whose movement have appeared the signs of the Unconstrained.

O Maryam! Seek thou companionship with the Self of the All-merciful, and, barring thyself from association with evil, abide under the unerring protection of the Most Bountiful; so that perchance the Hand of divine blessings may draw you away from the path of selfish desire to the vast immensity of exaltation and glory.

O Maryam! From beneath the shadows of mortality repair thee unto the Sun of Eternal Glory. All shadows remain and move about by reason of the existence of the sun; in such manner that -- were the sun to withhold its bountiful rays for only a moment -- all created things would return to utter nothingness.

Alas, how pitiful and regrettable that one should busy oneself with the manifestations of the mortal world and remain deprived of the Dawning-Place of Sacred Immortality.

O Maryam! Cherish thou these days, for soon thou shalt not see the Celestial Youth in the earthly pavilion, and shalt behold the signs of grief in all things. They shall bite their fingers' end in wonder and regret; yet they shall not find the Youth even if they were to search for Him to the uttermost limits of the heavens and the earth. Thus hath it been revealed from the Kingdom of Exalted Glory.

Yea, soon thou shalt see thyself biting thy fingers' ends, and endeavour to seek Him in all the heavens and the earth; but alas thou shalt not attain the presence of the Youth.

In short, such was ultimately the state of affairs that this Servant decided to leave from amongst the stirrers of sedition, separated from all except for a few women who perhaps have to remain with this Servant. I shalt not even take with me the maids of the household; until such time as God may desire otherwise.

This Youth begins His journey, whilst My tear drops are My only comfort; the sighs of My heart are My only companion; My pen is My only friend; My Beauty is My only solace; My army is my reliance and My people are my trust. This is what I divulged unto thee from the mysteries of the Cause, that thou mayest be of them that are endued with understanding.

O Maryam! All the seas of the world and the rivers that flow out from them are pouring down from the eyes of the Youth that hath appeared as a cloud and is weeping at His Own meekness.

Alas, this Life and this Head, We offered in the path of the Friend from all eternity to all eternity, and shall be wholly resigned to whatever that may transpire.

At one time this Head was raised on a spear; and at another time it was delivered to the hands of Shimr. I was cast into the Fire at one time, and suspended in the air at another time. And this is that which the infidels have wrought against Us.

And thus, O Maryam, We named this Tablet with wondrous wailings and showers of tears; and dispatched it towards thee; that thou mayest bewail with ease and share with the Ancient Beauty in His anguish.

Furthermore, since Jinab-i-Baba was in our presence in the first year, he is aware of certain matters. God willing, the Holy Spirit will inspire his tongue to speak of the undoubted truth, and cleanse the world with a dewdrop from the story of the Youth.

Tablet for Maryam on Sorrow and Love: Provisional Translation

O Maryam, The Spirit of life ascended to the domain of placelessness; the Cage of Being was bereft of its Ever-blessed Cageling; the Bird of eternity took its flight to the wilds of evanescence; and the Divine Nightingale let out its cry on the Celestial Tree. The Tabernacle of Glory was rent asunder; and the Phoenix of Grandeur winged its way from the boughs of delight.

Spheres, lofty and transcendent, descended on the darksome dust; and ailing hearts let out clamours of affliction. Wholesome waters were turned into blood, and with blood was tinged the Courtyard of the All-highest Paradise. Yea, the gleaming hearts of the friends are alone befitting of the darts of His decree, and the throats of those that love Him are alone yearning for the mesh of limitless anguish.

Wherever a spear flies, it strikes the breasts of the friends; and wherever sorrow is dispelled, it descends on the hearts of the companions.

Wells of tears are the eyes of the lovers, whilst charming indifference is the response of the objects of their desires. Shouldst the lover cry out with pain hundreds of times over, the beloved shall only add to the anguish of the lover. Shouldst thou desire to drink of the Cup of Reunion, thou must submit to evanescence; and if thou wishest to partake of the Wine of His beauty, thou must enter the valley of privation.

O Maryam, taste thou joy in sorrow and drink thou anguish from the cup of gladness. Shouldst thou desire to advance into the wilderness of search, endure patiently and do not tear away at thy face. Shed thou not tears from thine eyes and be not of the anxious ones. Put on the robe of submission and quaff from the wine of acquiescence; and sell the entire world for a mere derham³¹. Give thy heart to God's irrevocable decree and submit to that which hath been ordained for thee.

Open thine eyes of discernment and turn away from all else but the Friend, for erelong we shall gather round together at the Court of Eternal Holiness and gain admittance to the Presence of the Lord of Mercy. We shall hear the Harp-Player of Persia sing out in the melodious language of Hijaz, and come together with the Friend. We shall speak of the unspoken, behold the unseen, and give ear to that which is unheard.

We shall bring to dance the Tabernacle of Spirit with the hymns of light and array the sanctuary of the heart with a delightful feast. We shall obtain the Chalice of Beauty from the Cupbearer of Glory and drink from its Matchless Wine in the memory of the Countenance of the Lord of Majesty.

Dry up thy tears then, sanctify thy soul from sorrow, free thy heart from anguish, and sing out with thy melodious voice:

Should there be swords raining down in the path to the abode of the all Beauteous; Our necks we shall offer on their edges at the behest of the all Glorious!

Exalted Letters: Provisional Translation

Verily, Thou seest, my best Beloved, how trials and tribulations have appeared from the horizon of Thy will. The fury of Thy wrath is pouring in from all sides, and the winds of sorrow have begun to blow. Numerous the lives that were sacrificed in the path of the Friend, and countless the illustrious heads that were hung on gallows. Neither a moment's repose was attained; nor a night's fete possible. The rope of Thy love has firmly fastened the necks of such as have recognized Thee, and the darts of Thy affection have been fired into the breasts of Thy lovers.

Fourteen years have elapsed since tranquillity ceased and the means of comfort were sealed. Not one pleasure did they embrace from the favours of the world; nor a breath did they inhale from the merciful breezes of the spirit. At times, they were afflicted with the degradation of captivity and, at other times, with banishment in the plains of remoteness -- cast out from every home, exiled from every land, and debarred from every comfort.

³¹

What indissoluble bonds were torn apart, and what cords of constancy were rent asunder!

Deprived they remained of every portion of their lot, and empty handed they persisted of their share. Blessings of the lands were turned into pernicious vengeance; the orb of the dayspring of divinity was veiled beneath the twilight of obscurity; the light of omnipotence was held hidden within the lamps of men's hearts; the eternal flame was concealed within the tree of mystery; the everlasting pearl lay sheltered in the invisible shell; and the dawning place of Thy Godhead was enwrapped within the veil of holiness.

How then can the pen move or the tongue recount? O Thou my Lord and my Master, thou knowest of the sufferings inflicted upon this Servant and the afflictions heaped upon this Wronged One. Not for a fleeting moment did I rest in an abode of safety; nor did I secure a refuge at any time. I quenched not My thirst but with the blood of My heart, and received not for sustenance but a token of the lamentations of My soul.

At times, I roamed the cities, captive in the hands of the unbelievers; yet, at other times, I was accompanied by chains and fetters. And in these days, I have, in particular, become a target for the arrows of both parties [Shi'ites and Azalis] and the object of retribution from both sides. Friends glory in My abasement and rejoice in My sorrow; whilst foes have their hearts' fill of ill-will for My existence. Ample is the malice concealed in their breasts and plentiful the animosity hidden in their hearts.

Having left the outward dungeon, I was taken captive in the prison of the ungodly. Shafts of idle fancies are flying from all sides, and swords of rivalry are rushing-in like torrents of rain. Yet in the face of all these trials and adversities and weighty afflictions, may there be no pause in servitude; may the steps not waver from steadfastness, and the eyes take stand in service in place of the feet. At this time when tears are flowing from My cheeks, and crimson blood is pouring out from My heart, I call on Thee to cause My anguished heart to turn away from all things except Thee, and to fix it wholly upon Thyself; so that it may be severed from all else and enter in Thee. For he who holds fast unto Thee will never be put asunder, and he who is accepted by Thee will never be scorned. A king shall he remain even if condemned by mankind; victorious he shall be rendered even if no-one cometh to his aid; and dearly cherished shall he prevail even if he be an outcast. Then shall the flame of oneness be set ablaze; the tabernacle of divine unity shall shine forth from the mirror of singleness; and the pipe of the Persian shall sing out in the Arabic tongue the verse "all things shall perish, except His countenance";³² inasmuch as the out-stretched arms of those that have recognized Thee are wanting and Thou art securely established upon the exalted court of glory. The longing hearts of those who

³² Qur'an 22:88

thirst after Thee are perplexed, and Thou art ever-abiding with absolute sovereignty upon the repository of grandeur.

How then can mortal conception find its way to soar in the vast immensity of Thy firmament; or the mind advance into the realm of sacred evanescence? How can the vain imaginings of men, tarnished with dark and dreary clouds of dust, ever touch the hem of Thy sanctified and holy vesture; or narrow vision ever settle on Thy most luminous Countenance? Thou hast ever been and shall ever remain unfathomable, even though Thou art more manifest than any manifestation. And Thou shall remain veiled for eternity, even though Thine evidence is more evident in every object than the object itself. Thus Thou art unseen in Thy revelation and manifest in Thy concealment. Aye, O my beloved, not every breast is deserving of Thy love; nor is every heart worthy of Thy affection. Thy love is a burning flame and the bodies of men are like unto firewood. How can firewood remain unmoved in near proximity to the flame, unless Thy eternal bounties are sent forth to hoist the banner of peace and to move the Almighty pen across the luminous tablet of the heart with Thy tender affection? Such is Thy ancient grace, for Thou bestowest unto thy servants whatsoever Thou willeth.

I swear by Thy majesty, O my Lord, that these calamities are sweeter than the sweetest nectar, and more desirable than the breath of life; for unless those longing after the Ka'ba of reunion transcend the limits of grandeur, they shall not delight in the joy of the manifestation of Thy beauty. Unless they quaff their fill from the chalice of selflessness, they shall not enter the threshold of immortality. Unless they attire themselves with the garb of poverty in the path of Thy good pleasure, they shall not be blessed with the exalted cloak of riches. Unless they are afflicted with the ailment of fervid love; they shall not discover the abode of healing. Unless they renounce their earthly home, they shall not ascend to the land of divine holiness. Unless they die to the perpetual desert of desire, they shall not attain life eternal. Unless they take refuge in the land of abasement, they shall not find the path to the heaven of exaltation. Unless they taste of the venom of separation, they shall not savour the sweetness of divine presence; and unless they traverse the wilds of remoteness and bereavement, they shall not abide secure in the cities of nearness and reunion.

Although, O my Lord, calamities have surrounded all thy loved ones, two of Thy handmaidens -- one by the name of Havva and the other by the name of Maryam -- have, in this day, been especially afflicted with extreme adversity. This great calamity was heaped upon them whence Thy handmaidens had no mother to tear away her garment in despair and throw dismal dust upon her head for their anguish. They had no companions to dry up their cheeks from their tears and shield their tresses from gloomy tarnish; nor did they have loving friends to console their sadness and fill

their hearts with gladness. And they had no confidant to offer affection, or to brush their locks and tinge their hands after their loss.

They drank their fill from draughts of blood and took their sustenance from provisions of grief; inasmuch as Thou didst purpose for them that which was willed by Thee, and ordained upon their fate Thine all-compelling behest in whatsoever thou didst desire.

Thus, O my best Beloved, clothe them with the garb of patience and constancy, and with the attire of mercy and forbearance; that their eyes may be illumined by Thy new-found bounties and their hearts may be consoled by Thy boundless blessings. Enter them into the rivers of nearness and cities of reunion; and shelter the homeless within the precincts of Thy mercy and under the pleasant shadows of Thy forgiveness and grace. Comfort these bewildered ones in Thy sacred assemblages and give these thirsty ones a taste of the unseen streams of Thy life-giving waters and the preserved wine that is life indeed. Let the breezes of the city of Thy love waft over them, and cause them to enter the everlasting lands of Thy affection; so that they may stray far from all else and draw nigh unto Thee, and busy themselves in the glorification of Thy name and take pleasure in remembrance of Thee. Plant the tree of Thy affection in the luminous fields of their hearts and nurture it with the waters of Thy love, so that its branches may grow, develop, and bear fruit; and so that they may remain steadfast in Thy love, walk upon the land of Thy good pleasure, lay in the cradle of Thy divine presence, traverse the plains of Thy reunion; soar in the firmament of Thy nearness; renounce the tokens of worldly limitations and be ennobled by entering Thy gatherings of divine singleness; and inhale the breezes of unity in the realm of detachment. Thus they may close their eyes to all and open them to Thee, flee from aught else and seek Thy presence.

Then bestow upon them and upon Thy newly-arrived guest, O my Lord, all that hath been described herein and all that hath been set aside, and everything that belongeth neither to the former nor to the latter.

The day is soon approaching when Thou shall grant that which is implored of Thee, for such are Thy all-embracing favours that have encompassed all Thy creatures, O my God.

Ziyárat-Námih-i-Maryam: Provisional Translation

This Tablet was revealed for one who was named Maryam. Verily she was ablaze with the fire of the love of her Lord, before its flames approached her. And We concealed her station during her life time. Upon her ascension to the realm on High, God unveiled her and revealed her to His servants. Should one desire to pay homage to the Great "Ta" [Tahirih], who was martyred in the years passed, he may do so with this Tablet of visitation.

In the name of God, the Exalted, the Most High

O Supreme Pen, joyfulness did not take hold of Thee in the days of Thy Lord, the Exalted, the Most High, whereupon Thou didst sing with the melodies of Bahá upon the twigs of the divine Lote-tree; yet there descended upon thee a great calamity that hath caused the lamentation of those between heaven and earth. Speak out therefore of that which befell Thee from the rulings of His decree, that the tears of all in the oceans of names may begin to flow for a calamity that hath caused the trembling of heaven, the quaking of the earth and the agitation of the inmost essence of being; and hath brought tears to the Eye of Grandeur on the Throne of His Mercifulness.

And say: May the first outpourings of the showers of bounty that descended from the clouds of the Will of God -- the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious -- and the first glimmerings of light that dawned from the Horizon of Eternity; and the first salutation that was revealed from the Tongue of Grandeur in the Kingdom of His irrevocable decree rest upon thee O thou great sign, exalted word, luminous pearl and countenance of unity [*tal'at-i-ahadiyyih*] in the dominion of His decree.

How can I make mention of thy afflictions, O thou Crimson Leaf! I swear by God that through thy fall from the Tree of the Cause, the leaves of the divine Lote Tree fell; the twigs of the tree of eternity were severed; the branches of the Tree of Blessedness were seared; the hearts of His loved ones were sorely afflicted; the faces of the chosen ones of God were bereft of colour; and the hearts of the godly were torn apart in the highest paradise. Gabriel [Ruhu'l-Amin – the Faithful Spirit] wailed in the Court of Grandeur, and the inhabitants of earth and heaven cried out:

O thou who were an adorning sign of guidance on the faces of women and a light unto the brow of piety. Through thee, the veils of superstition were rent asunder from the eyes of women, and their beings were adorned with the remembrance of the Lord of earth and heaven.

Thou art she who – upon hearing the call of God – hesitated not, even for a moment, but hastened towards Him detached from all else save Him. Thou didst embrace Him and His great signs and recognised the Manifestation of the Self of God in His days, while all that were in heaven or on earth were terror stricken except for those who were aided by the hand of the Will of God and saved from the abyss of self and desire. Thou wert a stranger in thine own land and a prisoner in thine own home; one who was far from the Presence of Holiness even in her eagerness to be near and forbidden to attain His presence even in her fervid desire to behold Him.

Thou wert moved by the winds of the will of thy Lord, the All-Merciful, in such way as was desired and willed by Him. There was no movement or

rest for thee save by His command and permission! Blessed art thou for annihilating thine own will in the Will of thy Lord, and thy desire in His Decree.

Thou art she whom the whisperings of the stirrers of sedition failed to keep back from the Day-star of the world; and the opposition of the promoters of sedition deterred not from the Lord of the Day of Reunion.

Verily, thou didst remain firm in the Covenant on a day in which the eyes of men were stunned with bewilderment and the sinners fled from the presence of the Manifestation of the Self of God, the Unconstrained -- except for a few amongst the righteous.

Ah, ah, for thy calamity, the Pen ceased in its flow and breezes of sadness wafted over the inhabitants of paradise. The foundations of His all-encompassing Word were torn asunder and its members appeared as isolated letters at the beginning of the surih of the book [Qur'an], through which understanding accepted the decree of limitation in the world of God's command, and the Essence of Being was dressed in the form of the Temple in the kingdom of God's irrevocable decree.

By God, O eternal leaf, perplexing indeed it is for Me to witness the world and not behold thee; and to hear the voice of the heavenly dove and hear not thy sweet melodies in praise of thy Lord, the Exalted, the All-Glorious. As God is my witness, by thy afflictions all who have come into being in the kingdom of creation were stricken with sorrow, and all in the kingdom of names robed themselves with black garments. How I recall, O beloved of Bahá, the days in which thou wert engaged in singing the praises of the All-Merciful with thy sweet melodies upon the boughs and branches; within which was raised the voice of the Tree of Utterance, the cooing of the dove of understanding, the melodies of the waters of life, the whisperings of heavenly breezes and the song of the bird of heaven!

Thou art she with whose song of praise all created things arose in glorification of the All-Loving God. And after thee, the dove crept away in silence, the winds remained still, the lights of salvation were extinguished, and the waters of prosperity stood frozen.

Blind be the eye that beholdeth not in thy face the beauty of the Countenance of the Lord, and shedeth not tears of anguish for the sorrows that befell thee; and mute be the tongue that doth not make mention of thy name in the world of being.

Hail unto the days, during which thou wert rustling upon the tree singing verses of the unity of God; thereby was attracted the heart of every submissive woman who desired to turn to her Lord with a countenance

joyful and radiant. How sad were the days, in which thy face was veiled and thy revelation was hidden, and nearness to thee was not possible.

Ah, ah, O leaf of singleness, O primal word, O imperishable essence, O divine fruit, O effulgent beauty, O celestial sign and heavenly soul! By the calamities that were heaped upon thee, the oceans were banned from surging forth their waves, the trees from bearing fruit, verses from being revealed, words from carrying meaning, the sky from its ornaments, the earth from its vegetation, the water from running forth, and the wind from blowing. And were I to describe thy tribulations, the world of being would turn to utter nothingness, and the shrill voice of the Pen of the Ancient of Days would raise its cries.

I know not which of thy calamities I should make mention of before the Concourse on High: those that were heaped upon thee by thy friends or those that came from the enemies of God. Thou art she who suffered in the path of thy Lord what no other faithful woman could bear to suffer; through which came to flow the tears of maidens in the celestial chambers, the huris of heaven fell upon the dust in prostration, and heavenly countenances shorn their heads of the tresses.

O Crimson Leaf, through thy calamities, the face of Revelation was changed, joy was overturned, the foundations of the frequented fane were shaken, and the outspread roll was rolled up. Then alas, alas, by the calamities that befell thee all created things both visible and invisible accepted death and the Primal Will donned the robe of names and attributes.

When thy tribulations were poured into the most Great River, which was sanctified of all colour, it divided into four rivers and acquired various shades and earthly limitations. And as they [the calamities] were released onto the primal pillar of the word of piety, the letter of affirmation delayed in its sorrow, while the letter of negation raced ahead, from which appeared what set the heart and soul of Bahá afire. And no sooner were [thy calamities] recited unto the Primal Point than it let out a cry and was seized with perplexity and agitation, thereupon letters were revealed and appeared over the pages.

When the Point of Knowledge heard of thy calamities, it began to wail and cry and became scattered and disconnected, from which there appeared diverse sciences and various exponents, through which the learned manifested pride towards God on a Day whereon all created things bore witness to the truth that the dominion belongs to God, the Almighty, the All-Compelling.

By God, on account of that which was heaped upon thee by thine enemies, His mercy was well-nigh overtaken by His Justice, and His bounties -- which have transcended all created things -- by His wrath!

Ah, ah, O word of Baha, and martyr in the path of Baha, how many a night didst thou shed tears on thy pillow in thy eagerness for nearness to Bahá; and how many a day wert thou consumed with the fire of desire for reunion with Bahá and fixed thy gaze on the Countenance of Glory, in which naught else could be beheld but God, the exalted, the Most High, and desired naught from its Countenance save the Countenance of thy Lord! To this bear witness the inhabitants of the Concourse on High; nay those of the realm of Eternity. Blind be the eye that beholds not in thee the sign of His oneness and the manifestations of His singleness, O thou who hast been mentioned by the tongue of Bahá. As God is my witness, the station of womanhood is abashed to be bestowed thee, O thou who art the pride of all men.

Blessed art thou O manifestation of beauty. Blessed art thou indeed, for God hath – from time immemorial -- sanctified thee from the idle fancies of the people of perdition, and protected thee from wavering. Verily, He is the Best-Beloved, the All-Glorious, and onto Him shall return the realms of the beginning and of the end.

I bear witness that thou wert a leaf that was moved only by the breezes of the Will of God; and that the vain imaginings of the people of sedition -- who broke the Covenant of God and turned against Him who is the Lord of the Day of Judgement -- did not take hold of thee.

Blessed is the woman who attained thy companionship and hearkened to thy praise, and held fast unto the robe of thy love, and drew nigh unto thee and unto the Lord thy Maker and Creator. Verily, he who did not recognise thy love -- wholly for the sake of God -- remained deprived of the special favours which God had purposed solely for thee. Paradise is for him, who hath turned unto thee, shed tears for thee, and visited thee after thy death. O thou who art hidden within the layers of the earth, verily thy corpse is a trust of God, the All-Bountiful, latent beneath the earth while thy soul hath ascended to the All-Glorious Horizon and the realm of the Most High.

O God I beseech thee to confer Thy bounties upon whomsoever gazeth with affection upon her, and to turn away from whomsoever ariseth against her. Aid thou whomsoever cometh to her aid; and ordain for whomsoever cometh to visit her the good of this world and of the next and all that hath been decreed for those of thy creatures who are near unto Thee and those of Thy servants who are wholly devoted to Thee. Verily Thou art the King of Kings and One whose mercy is bestowed upon the down-trodden. In Thy grasp are the kingdoms of earth and heaven. Thou doest as Thou willest. None other God is there but Thee, the Lord of the Throne on High and of the earth below; the Lord of this world and of the next.

Holy and sanctified art Thou, O my God. I entreat Thee by the Manifestation of Thine Own Self -- the Exalted, the Most High -- and the revelation of Thy wondrous signs; and by Thy manifold evidences which have encompassed heaven and earth, and by this grave which Thou hast designated as the home of Thy love and the resting place of a leaf from the leaves of Thy Tree of Revelation, not to turn me away from Thy Gate and not to deprive me of that which hath been decreed for Thy chosen ones.

O God, I beg of Thee by Thy Name, and by her name, and by the revealers of Thy Names not to leave me to myself and not to number me amongst those that have turned aside from Thee and repudiated Thee on the Day Thou didst seat Thyself upon the Throne of Thy Mercy and revealedst Thyself with all Thine attributes unto all created things.

Give me to drink then O my God from the soft-flowing waters of Thy knowledge and the heavenly rivers of Thy loving kindness, so that I may become independent of all things except Thee and turn towards the Sanctuary of Thy divine presence and nearness. Thine is the authority to do as Thou pleasest. There is none other God but Thee, the Most Exalted, the Almighty, the Most Bountiful.

O God, I beg of thee by the fire which was set aflame in the heart of this handmaiden -- who was stirred by the breezes of Thy Will and gave utterance to Thy praise -- to set ablaze the hearts of Thy servants by the fire of Thy love; that they may sever themselves from those who are numbered amongst the infidels and may turn towards Thy Countenance.

Send down then O God upon me and upon those of Thy servants who are detached from all things and are Thy steadfast friends, the good of this world and of the next.

Forgive us then and forgive our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and our dear ones; and forgive those who have believed in Thee and in Thy signs, have testified to Thy Oneness, have acknowledged Thy Unity, have obeyed Thy behest and have spoken out in Thy praise.

Verily Thou art Him who hast been from everlasting and wilt ever be the Supreme Ruler. No name shall ever hinder Thee from another name and no attribute from another attribute. All names serve Thine own Self, circle around Thy Holy Threshold, are submissive to Thy Sovereignty, are lowly before the revelation of the evidences of Thy Might, and humble before the glimmerings of the light of Thy Countenance.

Verily Thou hast forever been and wilt forever be sanctified from Thy creation and Thy servants. And to this beareth witness my soul, and every atom of my being and that of all who are between heaven and earth. There

is none other God but Thee, the Almighty, the Most-High, the Most-Exalted,
the All-Bountiful.