

5. ONE KIND DEED

DIPCHAND KHIANRA

Be thankful to God for having enabled you to recognize His Cause. Whoever has received this blessing must, prior to his acceptance, have performed some deed which, though he himself was unaware of its character, was ordained by God as a means whereby he has been guided to find and embrace the Truth.

Bahá'u'lláh

The Dawn-Breakers, p. 586

NOTHING new or exciting ever seemed to happen in the village of Maryamábád, in the district of Yazd, in Írán. Although it was a fair size, the village was far removed from civilization and lacked the hustle and bustle of a large urban centre. The populace led rather quiet and simple lives. And in all the area there probably could not have been found a more simple, quiet and unsophisticated man than Mihrabán Rustam Bulbulán.

From the moment of his birth Mihrabán, whose name means 'Kind', had known only a rural life. Farming had been the occupation of his forefathers and it was to become his, as well. Even as a child he saw more of farm and field, mule and plough, tilling and cultivation, than he did of school. For a couple of years he attended the nearest Zoroastrian fire-temple where he learned the alphabet and, without truly understanding them, committed to memory some prayers from the Avesta, the sacred books of the religion of his forebears. But that was all the education he received.

As a young man Mihrabán began to work in the fields and from that time on he lost touch with the world outside his own immediate neighbourhood. At the break of day he would go to his fields and there he would remain until sunset, day after day, summer and winter. He had no companions except the birds that flew overhead making shrill cries and those which chirped from the trees as he worked.

Zoroastrians in Írán did not then enjoy the rights of first-grade citizens. They could not go about in the town unless they wore their coloured uniforms which served to identify and set them apart. They could not mount a donkey and pass through the bazaar without some ruffian taunting and abusing them. They dared not go out on a rainy day for it was

believed by their Muslim neighbours that they would pollute the rain, the symbol of God's mercy. On certain nights word would be passed in whispers through the Zoroastrian quarter: 'Tonight the sacred fire will be lit.' One by one, all would go to the fire-temple and pray in undertones in order not to arouse the wrath of the fanatical element.

With all Mihrabán's simplicity, rustic manners and lack of formal education, he had implicit faith in God. He would often look up at the sky and marvel at the greatness of the universe. The beauty he saw in nature confirmed his devotion to the Unseen. He would visit the fire-temple as often as he could and pray with a great intensity of heart and soul. Often he would ask the priests questions about God, the Prophet Zoroaster, Avestic Gathas, and the advent of Hooshidar and Shah Bahram Varjavand, but he found the replies of the priests confusing and his perplexity was compounded. Occasionally doubts would arise in his mind: Will the Promised One come? Will the Muslims accept Him or treat Him as they treat us? Will He come only to emancipate the Zoroastrians or to unite mankind? Are the priests offering us true spiritual guidance? Shall we adhere to our Faith or leave our ways and follow the Promised One as did those who chose to follow Zoroaster? Many such questions arose to trouble Mihrabán.

Then something happened which proved to be the turning-point in his life. One afternoon while he was working on the land Mihrabán's attention was attracted by two persons who were running towards him in obvious distress. He observed them silently. When they drew near they raised piteous voices saying, 'Save our lives; give us asylum; we are being pursued by assassins.' Without a word, he

took them into his barn, showed them a place of concealment and then locked the door. No sooner had he done so than an angry group appeared, their eyes glazed with violent hatred and excitement. They interrogated him as to the whereabouts of the two persons he had sheltered. Sensing their animosity he denied all knowledge of the existence of the fugitives, and the danger was averted.

Towards dawn, the two refugees borrowed Mihrabán's donkey and, with expressions of gratitude, left his fields in safety. They returned the next day in order to pay him the price of the animal but he would not accept. Instead, he requested them to accept it as God-sent. Then he asked them why they had been hounded and pursued. They explained that they were followers of Bahá'u'lláh, the Manifestation of God, Who was exiled and imprisoned in 'Akka; they were going to leave Írán in order to pay their respects to Him and seek His blessing. Mihraban really did not understand their explanation but in his simple and pure-hearted way said, 'When you reach your destination, be so good as to remember me to Him, as well.'

After a long and arduous journey the pilgrims at last reached 'Akka. Baha'u'llah was still in prison and it was not possible for them to attain His presence immediately. Consumed with love for Him they would gaze up at His prison cell, content with but a glimpse of His waving hand and yearning to gaze upon His adored countenance. For this they had exposed themselves to every risk and hazard, had journeyed for months, had walked hundreds of miles—just for one glance. They resolved to stay in the Holy Land as long as they could, content to glimpse Him when they could and longing to enter His presence and transmit messages from the friends.

When, at last, the pilgrims attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, they stayed for some days pouring out their hearts and relaying the messages of the friends who were unable to come. When they sought Bahá'u'lláh's permission to return home He astonished them by saying, 'But you did not deliver unto Us all that with which you were entrusted.' What was meant by that statement, the pilgrims asked themselves, and spent a sleepless night fearing that they had incurred the displeasure

of their Beloved. At last one of them recalled the Zoroastrian farmer who had saved their lives and had requested to be remembered to the Blessed Beauty. In their ecstasy at finding themselves in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh they had quite forgotten the incident and Mihrabán's act of kindness in sheltering them from their pursuers. They hastened to Baha'u'llah and narrated the whole episode.

The compassionate heart of the Beloved of the World was moved. He said to the pilgrims that one who wishes to love God must show love to the friends of God. Mihrabán had extended love spontaneously to these two and had risked his own life to protect them without thought of favour or reward. Now the ocean of divine grace surged and Baha'u'llah revealed a Tablet for Mihraban and arranged for it to be sent to him. Thus this simple farmer was immortalized in a Tablet of extreme beauty and forcefulness which has been given a place in a compilation of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets published under the title *Ad'iyih-i-Mahbub* (Prayers of the Beloved). The Universal House of Justice has approved the following English translation of this Tablet:

In the Name of God, the All-Loving

O Mihraban! One of the friends hath evoked thy remembrance; thus have We remembered thee.

In this glorious Day everything that can be seen is a witness, and calleth all men unto the one true God. Say! This is the Day in which the sun of spiritual discernment is shining forth in the heaven of true understanding. Blessed is he that hath perceived and recognized it. Whatsoever was foretold in former times hath now been fulfilled.

Say, O friends! Suffer not yourselves to be far removed from the ocean of heavenly grace. He is come astonishingly near unto you. He Who had been concealed from men's eyes is now come. How good is His coming! In one hand He is carrying the water of life and in the other the charter of true liberty. Cast ye away one thing and take hold of another. Cast away whatsoever pertaineth to the world and take firm hold of that which the hand of divine providence

imparteth unto you. Lo, that which no eye hath ever beheld is 'now revealed. O friends! Hasten ye, hasten ye, hearken ye, hearken ye!

The deeds of the high priests have caused the people to be estranged from Almighty God. Instead of evincing self-denial they have given themselves up to inordinate desires and strayed far from the path of the Lord God. They have grievously erred, yet fondly imagine themselves to be treading the right path. We have, however, warned the leaders of religion and taken them to witness, that they might in this day solemnly affirm His truth and guide His creatures unto the Spirit of Purity.

Say, O high priests! Shake off your slumber, rouse yourselves from unconsciousness, incline your inner ears to the melody of the All-Sufficing and conduct yourselves in a manner that beseemeth the Day of God Himself.

Great is the station of him who hath in this Day perceived and become aware of the truth, and wretched is he who hath failed to comprehend the utterances of the Lord of wisdom and to recognize the newly-arrived Friend in His new attire.

Behold, the Ocean of true knowledge hath appeared and the Day-Star of wisdom shineth resplendent. Incline your ears to the Voice of the Eternal Lord of Utterance and purge yourselves from whatsoever is deemed unseemly, that ye may become worthy to gain admittance into the court of your Creator. Say, in this Day the Almighty hath unloosed His tongue before the assemblage of men. It behoveth you to draw nigh unto Him and to grasp the truths of His weighty utterance. Indeed His utterance is a

messenger that beareth the token of His presence. It delivereth you from darkness and guideth your steps unto the effulgent light of His glory.

Thy name was mentioned before Us and We have remembered thee in Our Tablet. This remembrance is like unto a sapling that We have planted with the hand of loving-kindness. Ere long will it grow verdant and flourishing, laden with abundant fruits. Thus hath the Lord God ordained, and thus hath He shown the way;

He is the Mighty, the Seeing, the Lord of Utterance and Wisdom.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, too, ever thoughtful of the friends, immortalized Mihraban in a Tablet which He revealed in honour of his kinsmen and in which He bade them to become intoxicated with the love of God, to offer the wine of the Revelation to the people and to rest assured that this is the Day of Victory.

After a few years Mihraban Rustam Bulbulan, now a confirmed believer, settled in India where his daughter, also a staunch and firm Baha'i, had married and made her home. One of his grandchildren, Mrs. Shírín Núrání, was named by Shoghi Effendi a Knight of Baha'u'llah for her service in opening to the Faith during the Ten Year Crusade the territory of Karaikal in southern India. His grandson, Shápúr Khujastigán pioneered there as well.

Mihrabán was of a retiring nature and he loved Baha'u'llah above all else. He passed away in 1940 when he was past eighty years of age. From his life we glean the important lesson that a good deed performed selflessly may confer immortality upon a humble soul and result in his name being honoured throughout the ages.

KAUSHAL KISHORE BHARGAVA: AN APPRECIATION

BASED ON A MEMOIR BY DIPCHAND KHIANRA

DR. KAUSHAL KISHORE BHARGAVA was born in 1896 into an orthodox Brahmin family in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. At an early age he showed religious inclinations and reputedly ran away from home on several occasions to become a holy man (*sadhu*). He studied at Agra and then went on to earn his Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Allahabad. It was during this time, while still a young man, that he met Professor Pritam Singh¹ who was lecturing at the university. Under the influence of this renowned Baha'i teacher, he accepted the Baha'i Faith.

There was at once a change in his life. After obtaining his Master's degree at the Hindu University of Benares, he received a scholarship from the Indian government to study for his doctorate abroad. This he proceeded to do; but en route to Europe, he stopped off in Haifa and was received by the Master. 'Abdu'l-Baha advised him to change his intended field of study, and he became, as a result, a skilled technologist in the sugar industry. On his return to India from the United Kingdom, where he met Shoghi Effendi and Dr. John Esslemont, Dr. Bhargava began his career, and was instrumental in introducing the Baha'i Faith to many people, including the employees under him and the foreign technologists whom he met in the course of his work. His wife, Shyamdulari Bhargava, a pious and high-minded woman who came from a very orthodox Brahmin family, also became a follower of Bahá'u'lláh.

Dr. Bhargava became a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of India and served on that body for many years. He was fearless in his espousal of the Bahá'í Cause, even though this brought him the enmity of powerful figures. Yet this audacity also impressed, as in the case of Jawaharlal Nehru, who, having received books and information from Dr. Bhargava, was able to intervene to defend the Baha'is from persecution in Kamarhati village, near Calcutta. Although asked to join the Congress Party, Dr. Bhargava remained staunch in his adherence to



Kaushal Kishore Bhargava

Baha'i principles, and his stand was respected. When his wife died he insisted upon her being accorded Baha'i burial rites. She was the first Bahá'í from a Hindu background to be buried according to Baha'i law, though this action caused something of a stir at the time. Occurring as it did at the height of the impassioned riots between Hindus and Muslims, this was a courageous and dangerous act on his part.

Dr. Bhargava was active in speaking tours introducing the Baha'i Faith to the people of India. He was an excellent speaker who had made a deep study of the Sacred Scripture. He placed great store on prayer; for him the Baha'i Faith came first and last. On his passing the Universal House of Justice cabled on 20 March 1974:

SADDENED PASSING DR. BHARGAVA. LONG RECORD SERVICE INDIA LOVINGLY REMEMBERED. ASSURE RELATIVES FRIENDS OUR ARDENT PRAYERS SHRINES BESEECH PROGRESS SOUL ABHA KINGDOM.

¹ See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIII, p. 874.