

Our Beloved Bahá'u'lláh  
Remembrances of the Leaves of the Holy Family  
Part I – The Early Years (1817–1853)

Monologues for Commemorating  
the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Birthday  
on 22 October 2017

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Cast

Khadíjih Khánum

The mother of Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí (Bahá'u'lláh)

Ásíyih Khánum

The Most Exalted Leaf, entitled Navváb, the wife of Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí  
(Bahá'u'lláh)

Narrator

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Khadíjih Khánum

I am Khadíjih Khánum, the mother of the One whom you call Bahá'u'lláh but whom I would always think of as my beloved son, Husayn-‘Alí. Let me tell you some stories of Him as a child and young man.

My husband, Mírzá Buzurg, and I were both born in the region of Núr in Mázindarán. I was most fortunate to be wedded to Mírzá Buzurg because he was renowned for his character, charm and artistic and intellectual attainments. My husband came from an ancient and noble family and he held high positions in service to the Sháh.

We were blessed with five children. Husayn-‘Alí, our third child, was born in Tihrán at the hour of dawn of October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1817. In later years, the great chronicler, Nabíl, wrote that the world, while unaware of its significance, had nonetheless witnessed the birth of One who was destined to confer upon it incalculable blessings.

Simply as a mother, however, I counted myself lucky to have such a Child. Naturally, I loved all my children, but I could not bear for a moment to be separated from this One. His demeanour never failed to amaze me. Even as an infant, He had none of the behaviours expected of a baby: He never cried or screamed nor did He ever show any impatience or restlessness.

One day, when Husayn-‘Alí was seven years old, my husband and I were watching Him walking in the garden. I admired His gracefulness but remarked to Mírzá Buzurg that our Son was slightly short for His age. My husband replied that I was overlooking His capacity and aptitude and intelligence. He said that our Son was like a flame of fire and that even at His tender age, He was more mature than those who had reached adulthood. I readily conceded that whether He was tall or not mattered not in the slightest.

We knew, of course, that He had a special destiny. Some two years earlier, Husayn-‘Alí had a strange dream. After He described it to his father, my husband realized the dream had great significance and he summoned a man who could interpret dreams. Our Son related that He had been in a garden where huge birds flew down to assail Him, but the birds failed to hurt Him. Then He went to bathe in

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the sea and there He was assaulted by fishes, but they too were unable to injure Him. The dream interpreter explained that the birds and fishes represented peoples of the world attacking Him. They would, however, be powerless to harm Husayn-‘Alí and He would triumph over them to achieve a momentous matter.

We did not engage the usual tutors nobly-born male children would normally have. But Husayn-‘Alí showed remarkable aptitudes for horseback riding and calligraphy and He amazed everyone with His innate knowledge of our Holy Book, the Qur’án. Indeed, as He grew older, none could help but see His keen intelligence, alert mind, upright character, his compassionate and benevolent nature. This is not just a fond mother speaking. By the time Husayn-‘Alí was 14 years old, even learned adults noted His complete mastery of argument and unparalleled powers of exposition, always expressed with kindness and patience. I was so proud of Him.

Now, every mother wants little more than to have her children make advantageous marriages. In 1832, my daughter, Sárih Husayn-‘Alí’s older sister, made such a marriage into a noble family in our region. Sárih’s new sister-in-law was a vivacious and exceedingly beautiful young girl named Ásíyih. I was so happy when Ásíyih Khánum came of age and she and my beloved Son were united in marriage. The wedding took place in October 1835, just before Husayn-‘Alí turned 18 years old.

My dear husband, Mírzá Buzurg, passed away in 1839. After than, virtually nothing more is known of me. Even the date of my death is lost in the shadows of history; our culture simply paid no attention to the role of women. However, I always knew, in my heart of hearts, how blessed and privileged I was to have given birth to Husayn-‘Alí. While I may not have known that future generations would come to know Him as Bahá'u'lláh, the Promised One and the Glory of God, every sign indicated that He had a divine mission that only Allah could have destined.

### Ásíyih Khánum

I am Ásíyih Khánum and Husayn-‘Alí, later known as Bahá'u'lláh, was my beloved Husband. Let me tell you something of our life together.

We both came from wealthy families that lived in the same region of Núr. My

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father adored me. He indulged me by allowing me to learn how to read and write, skills almost unheard of among women in our society. When I was still a child, my older brother married a wonderful young woman named Sárih Khánum and we became fast friends. She had a younger brother named Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí and almost immediately, she conceived of the plan for Husayn-‘Alí and I to be married. Sárih Khánum said it was because I had “rare physical beauty and wonderful spiritual qualities” but I think it was because she loved her brother so much and wanted this extra tie between our families.

Pre-wedding negotiations for an elaborate wedding were soon completed to everyone’s satisfaction. For six months prior to the ceremony, a jeweller moved into our home and created beautiful and costly pieces for my dowry. Even the buttons of my garments were made of gold, set with precious jewels. My dowry also included two maidservants, one male servant, a considerable sum of money and a large piece of property. Forty mules were loaded with my clothing and other possessions when I moved to my husband’s home. And as soon as I was of age in October 1835, the marriage ceremony took place

We lived a quiet life. Neither of us were interested in an ostentatious life style or the lavish State functions attended by noble families of our rank. Such worldly pleasures held no meaning for us. Rather, we cared for the poor and those in distress. By extending such comfort and assistance, my Lord came to be called “The Father of the Poor” and some even referred to me as “The Mother of Consolation”.

Husayn-‘Alí’s father, who had by this time lost a great deal of the family wealth through the machinations of jealous government officials, died in 1839 and my Lord Husband subsequently took on the added responsibility of looking after the large extended family of His mother, step-mothers and siblings. Although younger than many of these dependants, I shouldered the burden along with Him of caring for the family and managing the household.

Sadly, I lost my first two babies, but our son ‘Abbás, named after his paternal grandfather but whom later generations would call ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, was born in May of 1844, and survived to adulthood. Praise God, because even as a young child, He was my most stalwart helper whenever my Husband was away on His travels and later when He was imprisoned. I was blessed with two additional surviving

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children, my pure-hearted daughter, Bahíyyih, who was born in 1846, and my sweet little son, Mírzá, born in 1849.

For the first nine years of our marriage, my beloved Husband and I enjoyed peace and tranquility in what I think now was a time for building our strength and capacity for the turbulent years to come. I was utterly devoted to Him.

When ‘Abbás was a new-born infant, a courier named Mullá Husayn travelled from Shíráz to give Husayn-‘Alí the “Hidden Secret”. Soon we all came to know that the One entitled the Báb had revealed Himself as the promised Qá’im of Islam. My Husband accepted this Revelation instantly.

Rapid changes engulfed us. Our home became the focal point of the followers of the Báb, who were known as Bábís. Of course, social norms were such that I could not mingle with male guests or participate in their gatherings in our home, but from behind the curtain of my adjacent private parlour, I followed the developments. In other changes, my Husband began guide and inspire the Bábís and to travel extensively in aid of the Cause of the Báb.

Then Husayn-‘Alí invited Táhirih, the noted Persian poetess and ardent supporter of the Báb, to live in our house for a time. I heard her speak fearlessly of the advent of the Herald. One day the two of us sat in my parlour, with my little son ‘Abbás sitting on her lap. We were listening to the men’s discussion in the next room. Suddenly, Táhirih exclaimed from behind the curtain. “O Siyyid, this is not the time for arguments, for discussions, for idle repetitions of prophecies or traditions! It is the time for deeds! The day for words has passed! The Promised Herald has come! He has come, the Qá’im, the Imám, the Awaited One has come!”

How could I remain untouched by the spiritual ferment surrounding me? Of course, it was impossible for me to travel forth as Táhirih did or drink the cup of martyrdom as she was called to do. But I gladly accepted my role to be the helpmeet of my Husband and did everything in my power to provide a stable, loving home for our family and a welcoming atmosphere for His guests.

Turmoil and persecution increasingly afflicted the Bábís and then the Báb Himself was unjustly executed in 1850. My Husband left for Iraq to keep the Báb’s followers from despair. He was gone for over a year and even when He returned to

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Persia, He continued to travel to outlying areas, despite the unrelenting persecutions against the Bábís.

Then the unthinkable happened. My Husband was arrested, beaten, suffered the agonies of the bastinado, forced into heavy chains and thrown into the foulest prison in Tihrán, the infamous Síyáh Chál. You may have heard it called the Black Pit.

And then, it got worse. Every friend abandoned us and everybody in our household – every relation and every servant except one manservant, Isfandíyár, and one maidservant – fled from our house in terror. Then hearing of Husayn-‘Alí’s imprisonment as a Bábí, the mobs plundered our mansion and other properties and stripped them of every piece of furniture and all our goods, our kitchenware, our clothing.

We were destitute in an instant. Here I was a young noblewoman with three young children. ‘Abbás was 9, Bahíyyih 6, and little Mihdí barely 3 years old. I managed to rent a small house with two mean little rooms in an obscure quarter of the city. We lacked even the barest necessities of life. One of my aunts and one of my Husband’s sisters provided us with a few cents on some days. One day, we were in such dire straits that I had only a tiny amount of flour left in the house. I put it in the hand of ‘Abbás and He ate it like that.

Meanwhile, I lived in a state of constant terror over the prospects of my Husband. Thank God for Mírzá Majíd, the husband of one of my Father’s aunts. Mírzá Majíd was a Russian citizen and a secretary in the Russian consulate. He helped us get food to my Husband and brought us news as to which Bábí was to be executed next. You cannot imagine the crushing anxiety I felt in those days, from fearful expectation each dawn that it would be the last day of my beloved Husband’s life to sheer relief on learning that He would live one more day.

After four months of this torture, representations from the Russian Minister resulted in the release of my Husband, on the condition of His exile to ‘Iráq within a month. He had no time to properly heal and recuperate, but we did our best to nurse Him. I had managed to secure a few jewels and embroidered garments when we fled from our mansion. I sold them now for the sum of some four hundred túmáns so we had a little money to prepare for the journey to ‘Iráq.

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The four months in that unspeakable hellhole had an odd effect on my Husband. While He was broken in body, His spirit had soared to a new plane. Even my children noticed a new radiance enfolding Him like a shining cloak. Of course, at that time we were so worried about restoring His health, and so harassed with getting ready for the exile, we did not comprehend the significance of this new plane of His spiritual essence. It was another decade before we learned the actual details.

We departed our homeland in the early days of January 1853, the midmost days of a brutal winter, and faced an arduous journey through snow-clogged mountain passes to an uncertain future.

### Narrator

Thus we have accounts of Khadijih Khánum, the mother of Bahá'u'lláh and Ásíyih Khánum, His wife, upon whom He bestowed the titles of the Most Exalted Leaf, and Navváb, a title of honour meaning 'noble'. Their recollections have described the early years of the life of Bahá'u'lláh.

In an undated prayer revealed for His mother, Khadijih Khánum, Bahá'u'lláh wrote, "The most honoured, esteemed and respected mother. He is God! Praised be Thou O Lord, My God! This is My mother who hath acknowledged Thy oneness, [and] confessed Thy unity.... I beseech Thee, therefore, O My God, to grant her the honour of beholding Thy Beauty, and vouchsafe unto her the gift of Thy Presence. Give her to drink then from the ocean of Thy mercy and the chalice of Thy forgiveness. Make her to dwell, O My God, in the precincts of Thy mercy in the Heaven of eternity. Grant her to hear Thy holy melodies that she may cast the veil from her head in her eagerness to meet Thee and speed through the domains of Thy nearness and union. Thou art verily powerful over all that Thou desirest, and Thou art verily the Mighty, the Most Luminous."

In one of several Tablets revealed by Bahá'u'lláh to honour Ásíyih Khánum, He wrote, "O Navváb! O Leaf that hath sprung from My Tree, and been My companion! My glory be upon thee, and My loving-kindness, and My mercy that hath surpassed all beings. We announce unto thee that which will gladden thine



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eye, and assure thy soul, and rejoice thine heart. Verily, thy Lord is the Compassionate, the All-Bountiful. God hath been and will be pleased with thee, and hath singled thee out for His own Self, and chosen thee from among His handmaidens to serve Him, and hath made thee the companion of His Person in the daytime and in the night-season.”

In a Tablet of visitation revealed after her death, Bahá'u'lláh testified that Ásíyih Khánum had gazed upon His Countenance, circled round His throne, gave ear to His Call, resided in His House and clung to the Cord of His Covenant. He bore witness that she endured patiently in the path of her Lord and that God had elevated her to a glorious station.

We esteem the legacy of Ásíyih Khánum to this day. Bahá'u'lláh informed His followers that, were they to visit her tomb, they are to say, “Salutation and blessing and glory upon thee, O Holy Leaf that hath sprung from the Divine Lote Tree! ...” Her enduring fidelity to Bahá'u'lláh at every stage of their lives must have been one of the few private joys and comforts during His Life.

And we honour the legacy of Khadíjih Khánum who gave birth to, lovingly raised and then released her Son to the world, a Son Who was destined to be the Manifestation of God whose advent all past religions had promised, the Light of the World, the Sun of Truth, the Prince of Peace, the Glory of God.

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Script taken primarily from *Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees, An In-Depth Study of the Lives of Women Closely Related to the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh* by Baharieh Rouhani Ma'ani, and *Bahá'u'lláh The King of Glory* by H.M. Balyuzi.