CHAPTER FIVE

VAHÍD AND THE NAYRÍZ EPISODES

Subsequent to the departure of His blessed Person [the Báb], the friends in Shíráz observed wisdom and lived in serenity and tranquility. No other event took place for a while until the episode of the honored Áqá Siyyid Yahyá Dárábí and the events of Nayríz transpired.

Earlier in these pages mention was made that the venerable Áqá Siyyid Yahyá, [surnamed] Vahíd, came to Yazd from the direction of Bávanát. It is important to describe briefly in these pages the occurrences associated with his stay in Yazd so that the sequence of events is clarified. Of a certainty, the full story of his visit and of the events of Yazd is either told in the history of that town [by other narrators], or it will be related.100

Vahíd in Yazd

After the illustrious Vahíd had believed and pledged submission, in accordance with His hallowed instruction [i.e., the Báb’s], he took leave of the Latter and set out in direction of Yazd for the edification of the people, the promulgation of the Word of the Almighty, and the teaching of the Cause of God. For a while during the earlier period of his mission in that city he had expounded and taught the doctrines of His Holiness in gatherings of only such among the accomplished and the learned as were prepared and fitted to hear them. But afterwards, according to the purport of the verse:

Prudence and love can ne’er walk hand in hand,

and the verse:

Love and fair fame must wage eternal war;
O lover, halt not at the beloved’s door!

100 For the most part, the remainder of this section correlates with the narrative of Siyyid Husayn Hámadání, and as such, to the extent possible, the present translation has followed the rendering in Tárikh-i Jadíd, pp. 115–26.
he began openly to proclaim the truth of the Cause and converted a great multitude, as well as leading many to profess devotion and sympathy who, not having reached the stage of conviction and the haven of assurance, were yet greatly attracted and manifested empathy. At length, through the officiousness of certain mischievous persons, the governor of Yazd was informed of what was taking place. The governor, fearing for himself, sent a body of men to arrest him [i.e., Vahíd]. A trifling altercation occurred, and thereupon the governor readied for battle and prepared to effect his capture by force of arms.

The esteemed Áqá Siyyid Yahyá retired with a number of his followers and friends into the citadel of Yazd, while the myrmidons of the governor surrounded it and commenced hostilities and agitation. At length, the matter escalated into actual warfare, in the course of which some thirty or more of the governor’s men and the rogues and vagabonds [of the city who had joined them] were killed, while seven of [Vahíd’s] friends and companions were also slain, the rest being besieged for some time until some, unwilling to endure further suffering or withstand trial, dispersed.

His honor [Vahíd] therefore determined to set out for Shíráz and said one night, “If one of you could manage to lead out my horse, so that I might defuse this incident and convey myself to some other place, it would be well.” A certain Hasan who had been for some time in attendance upon his honor and had performed his service with the utmost faithfulness and devotion, witnessing on the part of his august master many a display of miraculous and supernatural faculties, replied, “By your leave, I will lead out the horse.” “They will capture and slay you,” [responded Vahíd]. “In the path of your servitude,” rejoined [Hasan], “that is easy to bear. No ambition have I beyond it.”

So he was allowed to go and, even as had been foretold, they took the youth captive outside the citadel and brought him before the governor, who ordered him blown from the mouth of a cannon. As they bound him to the gun, he begged the gunners: “Bind me, I pray you, with my face toward the gun that I may see it fired.” Gunners and bystanders alike were astonished at his composure and cheerfulness, and indeed one who can be cheerful in such a plight must needs have great faith, capacity, and fortitude. It is seemly indeed that one be so joyous and jubilant at such an hour!