CHAPTER ELEVEN

EVENTS OF EARLY 1890s

After Zahrá Bagum’s passing, the Blessed Beauty granted permission to Áqá Mírzá Áqá Núri’d-Dín to bring his family and kin from Shíráz [to Port Said, Egypt] and in their company to journey to the Holy Land. In accordance with His command, the Afnán wrote to Áqá Mírzá Áqá<53>, the celebrated son of Hájí Mírzá Muhammad-ʿAlí Afnán, in Shíráz and asked him to arrange the family’s immediate departure.

Thereupon, the holy leaf Maryam-Sultán Bagum arranged for the marriage of Áqá Mírzá Jalál<75>, her second son, and placed him in charge of the protection and maintenance of the Blessed House of the Báb in Shíráz. The remainder of the household, that is, Hájí Mírzá Buzurg<76>, Hájí Mírzá Habíbu’lláh<71>, Hájí Mírzá Diyá<72>, Hájíyyih Tubá Bagum<73>, Hájíyyih Zívar-Sultán, who was the mother of Áqá Mírzá Hádí Afnán<96>, together with two attendants, Áqá Muhammad-ʿAlí Káshání and Hájí Subráb, departed on Friday, 24 Safar AH 1308 [9 October 1890].

From Búshihr, we sailed for Port Said and then to the Holy Land. At that time, the present writer was only fourteen years of age. The leader of our travel party was my brother, Hájí Mírzá Buzurg, who was sixteen years old.

*Martyrdom of Murtidá*

During this interval, Muhammad-Taqí Mírzá, the Ruknuʾd-Dawlih, was appointed governor-general of Fárs and came from Tihrán to Shíráz. By then, the celebrated Murtidá had been in prison for five years. When in AH 1310 [1892] the news of the Blessed Beauty’s ascension had reached Fárs, Murtidá—that singular thrall of his Divine Beloved—lost all restraint and begun to lament and sob most intensely. This detail was reported to Siyyid ʿAlí-Akbar [Fál-Asír] who congregated with certain other ʿulamá of the period, including Shaykh Ahmad Shánh-Sáz, Mullá Ahmad Mahalláti, Shaykh ʿAbduʾl-Jabbár, Shaykh Táhir ʿArab, and Mírzá Hidáyatu’lláh Dast-Ghayb. Collectively and unanimously, they signed a fatwá for Murtidá’s martyrdom in the presence of the Ruknuʾd-Dawlih, stating, “You must
slay him this very day.” Having the required religious ruling in hand, the governor-general ordered the martyrdom of that wronged-one.

It was a blistering summer afternoon that day. The executioner went to the dungeon to retrieve the prisoner and to accompany him to Maydán Tūp-Khánih for the discharge of the sentence, which was for the prisoner to be blown from the mouth of a cannon. Upon seeing his victim, the executioner informed that brave lover of the field of sacrifice of his expected fate and in chains extracted him from his cell. At the prison gate, Murtidá paused and, with utmost delight and serenity, removed his hat and presented it to the executioner, saying, “Of all the worldly possessions, I have but this hat. As a reward for bringing me this most wonderful tidings, I wish to present it to you as a gift!” Then, with the utmost affability, he handed his offering to the executioner.

Soon that wronged-one was brought out to the Maydán, where a multitude had gathered to witness the event and a cannon was readied. Murtidá asked for water. Thinking that he wished to have his last drink of water, the executioner brought him some. That love-intoxicated soul took the water and with it performed his ablutions and then stood facing the Holy Land [ʿAkká], and freely and with a resonant voice recited his obligatory prayer, followed by the chanting of a long prayer. Thereafter, he turned to the executioner, saying, “I have completed my duties. You must now discharge yours.”

As is customary, the executioner placed a short stool in front of the cannon-mouth, placing that wronged-one with his back to the gun, and he was about to tie him with ropes, when the latter said, “There is no need to tie me. Tying is for thieves, wrongdoers, and highwaymen. Indeed, I have been yearning for this day and this blessed hour! My sole request is that you place me facing the cannon that I may see it discharged.” On hearing that true lover speak so bravely and with such constancy of purpose, the executioner and the multitude of people were overcome with marvel and astonishment.

As requested, the executioner placed Murtidá facing the cannon. Upon firing, the entire area was filled with the din of the roaring gun, and the cannon ball tore its target to pieces, scattered throughout the city-square. The only recognizable part was his blessed head, which the heartless

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222 City’s central square where cannons are kept on permanent display.
223 Since Imám Husayn had been refused water during His final moments, it is customary in Iran that victims are given water before their execution.