



Stories of children classes

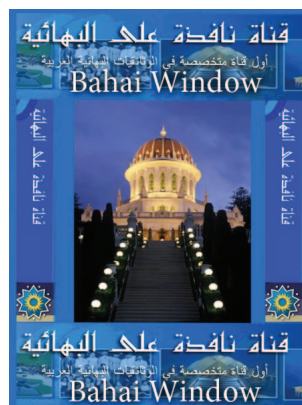
Gr2 new edition 2014



Stories of children classes

Gr2 new edition 2014

This book contains 22 educational illustrated stories from
Ruhi Book for Children's Classes Grade 2
This book is for free using not for commercial exploitation.



Graphic conception by bahai window



Stories of children classes

Gr2 new edition 2014

1) Ruhullah Varqa.....	p 4
2) The spiritual food.....	p 7
3) How to pray.....	p 9
4) The wise minister.....	p 11
5) Hájí Muhammad.....	p 12
6) The hunter.....	p 14
7) The true source of knowledge.....	p 16
8) Dr Susan Moody.....	p 19
9) Táhirih The Pure One.....	p 22
10) The village of Karu Karu.....	p 25
11) The way of friendship.....	p 28
12) The merchant of Akka.....	p 29
13) The cornerstone.....	p 30
14) God is sufficient unto me.....	p 32
15) Damon and Pythias.....	p 34
16) Mountain and Meadow.....	p 38
17) How to serve.....	p 41
18) The proud man and Abdul Baha.....	p 43
19) The nice peace of calligraphy.....	p 44
20) The lamp of consultation.....	p 47
21) The power of unified thought and action.....	p 49
22) Few words said with thoughtful care.....	p 50



Ruhullah Varqa



We have all heard of the heroes of the Bahá'í Faith who, in its early days, did extraordinary things in service to God. This is the story of a young boy, Rúhu'lláh Varqá, who lived during the time of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. So great was Rúhu'lláh's love for God, and so absolute his dedication to His Cause, that whenever we hear his name we think of a life of devotion and servitude.



When Rúhu'lláh was about seven years old, he traveled with his father to the Holy Land. There, he had the great privilege of meeting Bahá'u'lláh, Who had brought to humanity God's message for this day. Rúhu'lláh's heart became filled with love for Bahá'u'lláh, and he wanted nothing more than to serve Him.



Upon returning home to Persia, he spent his time sharing with others news of Bahá'u'lláh's coming. Rúhu'lláh was truthful, honest, courteous, and kind, and his words had a great effect on all who heard him. He rose at every dawn to pray and, with his heart turned towards God, passed each day in servitude to Him.

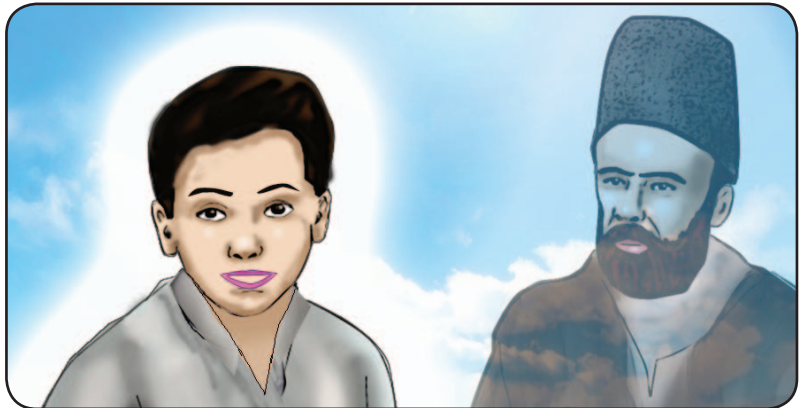


One day, Rúhu'lláh was summoned to appear before an official. At that time, many people were fearful of the new message that was being spread throughout the land. They clung to the beliefs of the past, and the followers of the new Faith often became victims of harsh punishments. For this reason, Rúhu'lláh's father was in great danger. As proof that he had raised his sons in this new Faith, Rúhu'lláh was asked to say a prayer in the presence of the official. This, it was hoped, would be enough to convince the official to condemn his father. Calmly, Rúhu'lláh prepared his heart to offer supplication to God.

Then, in a melodious voice, he chanted a Bahá'í prayer of exquisite beauty. The official was deeply moved. He dismissed the matter immediately, saying he would not condemn a man who had raised a child so wonderful. And so Rúhu'lláh's father was saved.

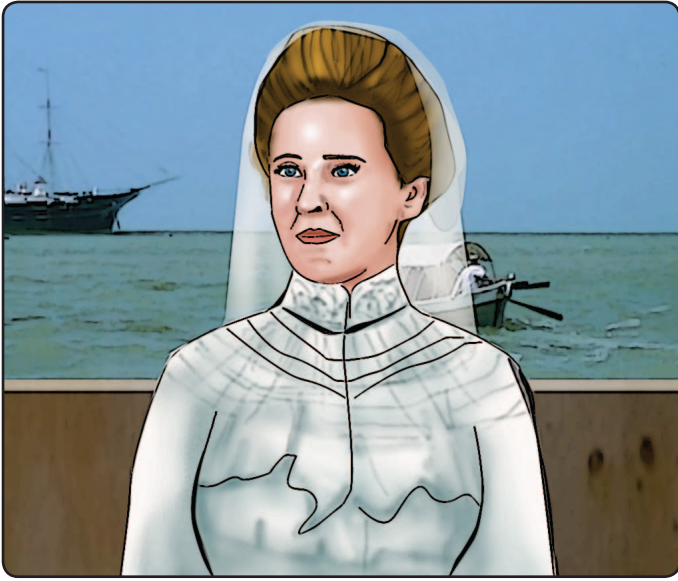


Later, when Rúhu'lláh was about twelve years old, he would once again set out with his father to visit the Holy Land. This time, he would be blessed to pass his days in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who loved Rúhu'lláh very much and especially enjoyed hearing him chant in his beautiful voice the many prayers he knew by heart. Rúhu'lláh would leave the Holy Land ablaze with Divine love, ready to sacrifice his all for the Cause of God.





THE SPIRITUAL FOOD



This is a story of one of the early Bahá'ís in the West, Lua Getsinger, and an important lesson she learned about prayer. Lua loved God very much, and she often turned to Him in supplication, that she might be enabled to live a life of service. She prayed, too, that her eager and enthusiastic spirit would learn to be patient. Of course, she wanted to learn it quickly, without having to wait too long!



Lua knew that 'Abdu'l-Bahá also wanted her to learn patience. One day, when she was visiting Him in the Holy Land, He helped her to see that there are some things for which we must always make time, no matter how hurried we might feel.



Rushing off to breakfast without having said her usual morning prayers, Lua met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the hallway. He looked at her, staring deeply into her eyes. And what do you think he said to her? “Lua,” He said, “you must never eat material food in the morning until you have had spiritual food.” So it was that Lua learned she must never fail to draw sustenance from God’s heavenly bounties, the source of true strength.



Lua Getsinger



shrine of Lua Getsinger Cairo

How to pray

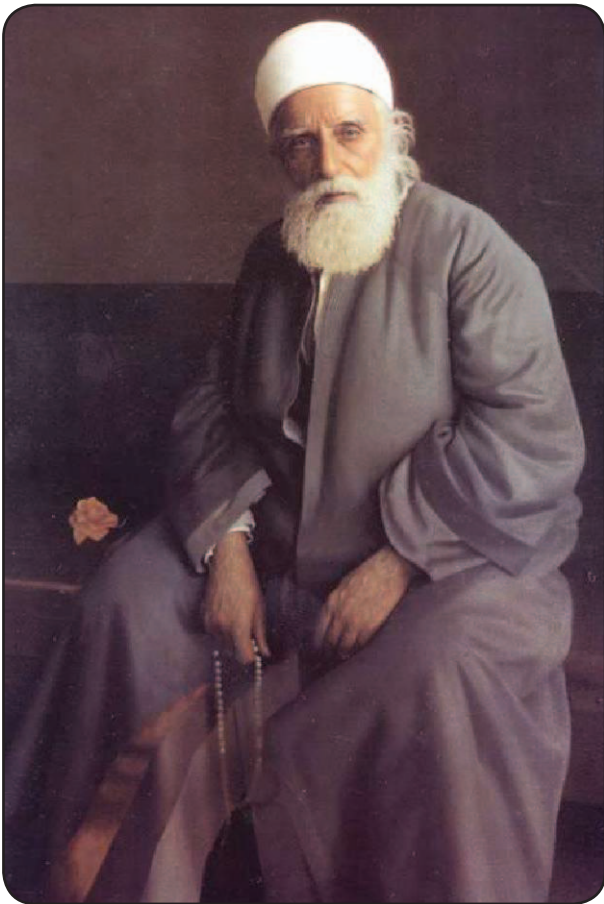


R.M.S. Cedric - The Ship 'Abdu'l-Bahá Arrived in New York City on 11 April 1912

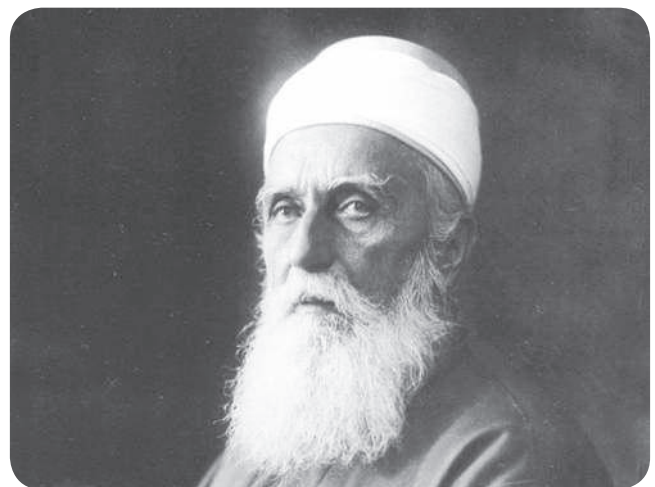
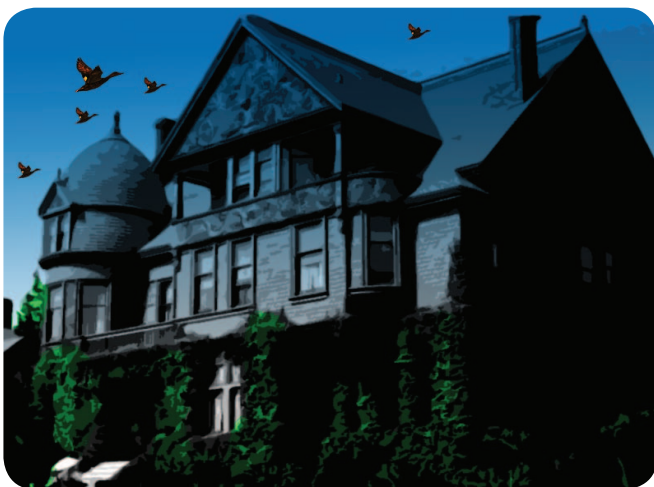
During His travels in America, 'Abdu'l-Bahá once accepted to teach a very devoted Bahá'í how to pray. He told him to come to His residence at daybreak the next day. The believer's heart was filled with joy. He rose at dawn and rushed to the residence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. When he entered the room of the Master, he found Him already in prayer.

Realizing that he could not ask the Master any questions, he decided to do the same. So he kneeled on the floor and began to pray. He prayed silently for his relatives, for his friends and for himself. When he finished, he looked up and saw that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was still deep in prayer. So he decided to pray some more. He repeated all the prayers he knew over and over. Still there was no movement from 'Abdu'l-Bahá.





Now the believer noticed that one of his knees was beginning to ache and that his back was feeling uncomfortable. Next he heard the birds singing outside. Glancing around the room, he observed a large crack in the wall. Then he looked at the Master again and, all of a sudden, the expression on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's face created in him a strong desire to pray. He forgot everything else. The only desire in his heart was to be close to God and to converse with Him. He began to pray in a way he had never prayed before. The Master had taught him how to pray.



At that very moment 'Abdu'l-Bahá arose, approached him with a smile and said: ***"When you pray, you must not think of your aching body, nor of the birds outside the window, nor of the cracks in the wall! When you wish to pray you must first know that you are standing in the presence of the Almighty!"***

The wise minister



A king once said to his minister, *"I have heard that cabbage can be bad for one's health."* To this, the minister replied, *"Fine, Your Majesty. I will forbid the cooks from serving it ever again in the household."*

Sometime later, the king said to the minister:

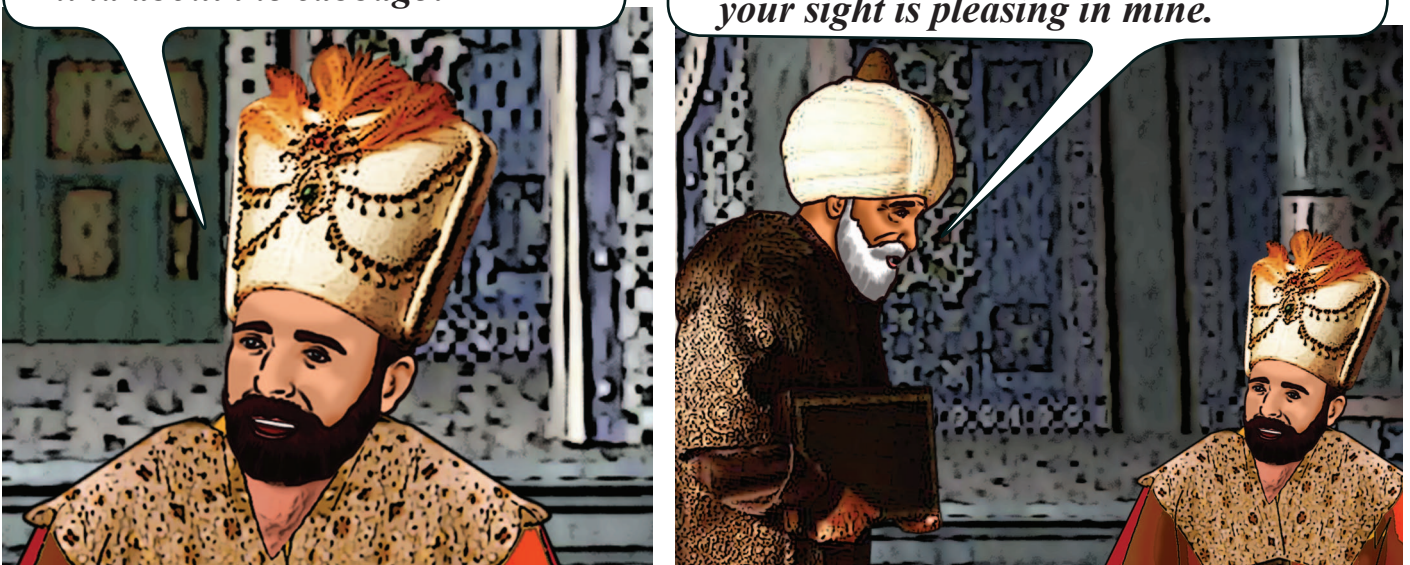


I have had the occasion to eat some cabbage and found it to be delicious and conducive to good health and spirits.

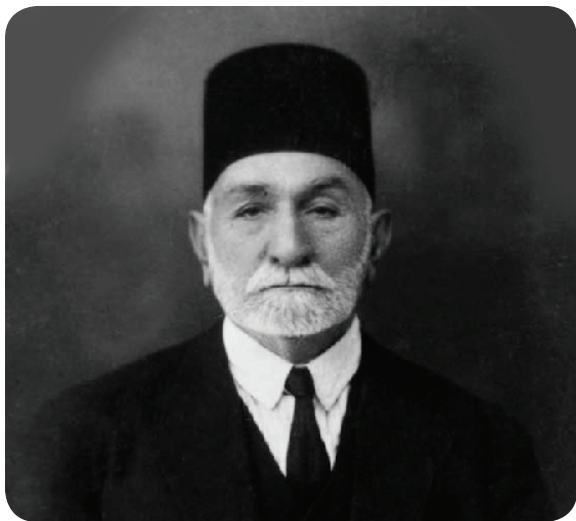
Fine, Your Majesty. I will run and tell the cooks to prepare a dish of cabbage for you now and to serve it to you often !

And what if the cooks ask you why you have changed your mind about the cabbage?

I will tell them that it is because I am the servant of the king, not the servant of the cabbage. What is pleasing in your sight is pleasing in mine.



Hájí Muhammad



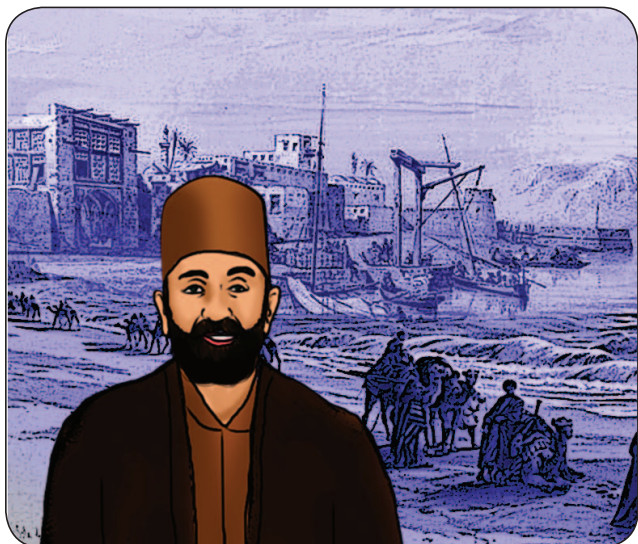
Hájí Muḥammad Yazdi



Hájí Muḥammad lived during the time of Bahá'u'lláh, Who, as you know, revealed God's teachings for today. Hájí Muḥammad was honest in all his dealings as a businessman and was known for his trustworthiness. For a period of time, his work brought him to

‘Akká. One day he was sitting in his office when ‘Abdu'l-Bahá entered, bringing an urgent message from Bahá'u'lláh. Hájí Muḥammad was to leave immediately for the city of Jeddah in Arabia. He asked ‘Abdu'l-Bahá whether he could have the bounty of attaining the presence of Bahá'u'lláh before departing. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá explained that there was no time as the ship was due to leave at any moment. Hájí Muḥammad closed the office at once and headed straight for the port to board the ship. His desire to obey was so exemplary that he had no other thought but to follow the command of Bahá'u'lláh





As soon as Hájí Muḥammad boarded, the ship set sail. Only then did he realize that, because of the great rush, he had not thought to ask ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the purpose of his trip to Arabia. Now it was too late! Still, he was not concerned. He was certain that, once he arrived in Jeddah, God would guide his steps.

The sea that day was unusually stormy, and the journey fraught with peril. Everyone was worried that the ship was going to sink—everyone, that is, except Hájí Muḥammad. He knew that he would be protected and the ship would arrive safely in Jeddah, for he had been entrusted by Bahá’u’lláh with a mission to carry out in that city. And the ship did indeed arrive at its destination.



After leaving the ship, Hájí Muḥammad heard two people talking in Persian among the crowds. Being Persian himself, he approached them and discovered that they, too, were Bahá’ís and were on their way to ‘Akká to visit Bahá’u’lláh. They had been unjustly imprisoned for their faith for ten years and had just been released. This was their first journey to the Holy Land, and they were in need of assistance. It then became clear to Hájí Muḥammad that the purpose of his mission in Jeddah was to help these two souls to find their way to ‘Akká and attain the presence of Bahá’u’lláh, a responsibility which he carried out with great care and attention.

The hunter



You remember the story of Ḥájí Muḥammad from our last lesson, how obedient he was to Bahá'u'lláh and what strength he drew from trust in God. But Ḥájí Muḥammad was not always so quick to obey. Perhaps you know that he was an excellent marksman. His bullets never missed their targets. He could even hit a small bird in full flight while galloping on horseback. One day, with his rifle on his shoulder, he came upon a group of Bahá'ís who were on an outing with Bahá'u'lláh and decided to join them.



When Bahá'u'lláh saw that Ḥájí Muḥammad was going to use his rifle, He told him not to kill innocent birds. Ḥájí Muḥammad did not pay any attention to what Bahá'u'lláh said because his mind was on shooting, which he loved very much. So, he continued shooting at every bird he saw. But he was quite surprised to find that none of his bullets hit. He shot once, he shot twice, he shot many times—but did not bring down even one bird. He shot at big birds and at little birds, without any success.



The group was returning from the outing when a large, beautiful, white bird caught Ḥájí Muḥammad's eye. It was so big that it could not fly quickly, and Ḥájí Muḥammad thought that surely it would be easy to hit this one. His first shot missed. Then he fired four more times, but he missed every time. In a panic the frightened bird flew near them. Ḥájí Muḥammad thought that now he could not possibly miss. He fired two more shots, but the bird escaped.



Ḥájí Muḥammad was astonished, and he began to think about the whole incident. All of a sudden, he understood something very important. He realized that Bahá'u'lláh had given him a clear command, but in his preoccupation with his own wishes and desires, he had ignored Bahá'u'lláh. That day Ḥájí Muḥammad made a firm decision to obey the commandments of God at all times.

The true source of knowledge

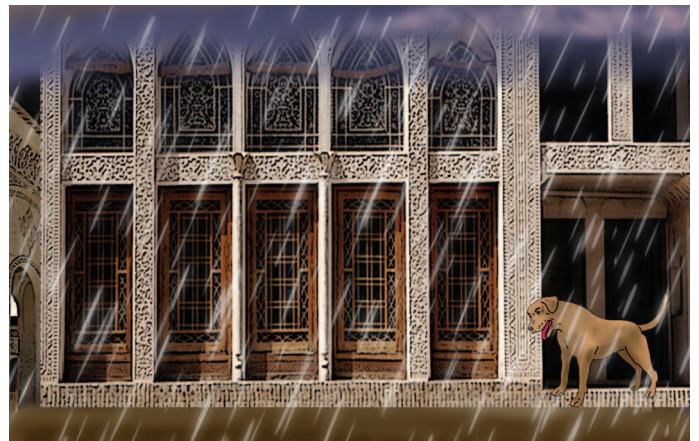
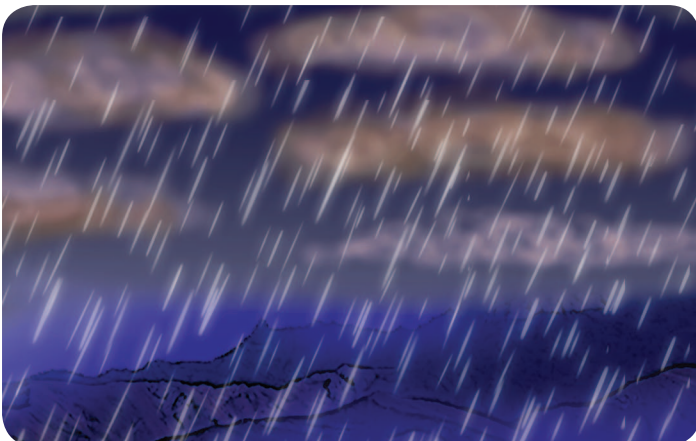


Perhaps you have heard before of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, one of the early believers who became a Bahá'í during the time of Bahá'u'lláh. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl was renowned for his penetrating insight, his wealth of knowledge, and his ability to understand and explain complex spiritual concepts. In his youth, he studied in depth such subjects as mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, and the Arabic language, which he mastered in addition to his native Persian. When he was still a young man, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl became a professor at one of the oldest universities in Tíhrán, the capital of Iran. This is the story of how he, while in that city, gained a knowledge beyond any he had acquired in all his broad studies—knowledge of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the Manifestation of God for this day.





One afternoon, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl and a few of his companions set out on donkeys to visit the countryside. On their way out of the city, one of the donkeys lost a shoe, and the party called at the nearest blacksmith's shop for help. When the blacksmith, who had very little formal education, saw Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl's long beard and large turban, symbols of his vast learning, he asked whether the scholarly man might be willing to answer a question that had perplexed the blacksmith for some time. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl consented. "*Is it true,*" began the blacksmith, referring to an old written religious tradition, "*that each drop of rain is accompanied by an angel from heaven, and that this angel brings down the rain to the ground?*" "*This is true,*" Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl responded, for it had long been held by the people in that region that this was so. After a pause, the blacksmith begged to be allowed another question, to which Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl gave his assent. "*Is it true,*" the blacksmith said once more, "*that if there is a dog in a house no angel will ever visit that house?*" Again, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl responded in the affirmative, for this, too, was a belief held by those who followed the written traditions. "*In that case,*" commented the blacksmith, arriving at his point, "*no rain should ever fall on a house where a dog is kept.*" Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl had no answer. He left the shop embarrassed and angry, for he had been stumped by a blacksmith with no formal schooling!





Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl had learned from his companions that the blacksmith was a Bahá'í. Now, it happened that he and the blacksmith shared a mutual acquaintance, a local draper who had a shop in the bazaar that Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl would sometimes visit. When the draper, who was also a Bahá'í, heard about the incident at the blacksmith's, he invited Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl to take part in some discussions. He accepted the invitation, and the meeting was arranged. In that meeting, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl posed numerous questions and raised many objections. Each one was answered in such simple terms and in such a wise manner that Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl found himself at a loss, for he had thought he could easily prove wrong the Bahá'í beliefs.



For several months Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl continued to meet many different Bahá'ís, some of them quite scholarly themselves. Finally, forever unable to deny the proofs offered by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, he turned his heart in earnest to God and begged to be shown the truth. Soon, he was overwhelmed with the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's mission, and became, after nearly a year of protest, a staunch and steadfast believer and an avid teacher of the Cause.

Dr Susan Moody



Susan Moody lived in Chicago in the United States in the early 1900s, about one hundred years ago. At that time, it was rare for women to be doctors, but, at the age of 52, Susan was inspired to study medicine. She soon completed medical school and started to work as a doctor. Around the same time, she was introduced to the Bahá'í Faith and became an active member of the Bahá'í community, teaching children's classes, like the one we are having today, and hosting visitors and gatherings in her home.



Now, in Iran, there was a team of doctors who were planning to establish a hospital in the capital city, Tīhrán. Perhaps you know that, because of the religious traditions there, many women considered it improper for them to show their faces to a male doctor, and female doctors in the country were very few. So this team of doctors made an appeal for a female doctor from the United States to join them, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged Susan Moody to go. Not surprisingly, her family and friends objected to the idea of her leaving her medical practice in the United States to help people in a far-off land, where she might have to deal with unfamiliar diseases and difficult problems.



But Susan was ready to respond to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s call. Now she realized why she had so strongly felt the desire to study medicine several years earlier.

Almost sixty years old, she set off at once. Of course, in those days, it took a long time to travel from one part of the world to another, and Iran was very far away from the United States. On her way to Iran, Dr. Moody was able to stay for a few days in the Holy Land, where she had the privilege of spending time in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He told her that she would need patience once she arrived in her new home but assured her that He would often pray for her and would always be with her. She then started out on the final part of her journey, sailing by boat across the Caspian Sea and arriving in a city in Northeastern Iran called Bandar-e Anzali. From there she traveled by horse and carriage across mountains to the capital, Tīhrán, stopping along the way to meet with the Bahá’í friends and to treat people who were ill. Already Susan began to see how pressing was the need for a female doctor, such as herself, for many women came to her for assistance.

When Dr. Moody finally arrived in Tīhrán, she immediately began caring for the sick, and soon became fluent in the Persian language. She established a medical practice in her home, in addition to working at the hospital. She was compassionate, kind, and tender-hearted, and everyone loved her very dearly. A local newspaper praised “*her good qualities and kind attributes*” and went on to say:

Every day from morning till noon she is in her office, No. 10 Avenue Aladauleh, receiving her patients for consultation, examination and treatment, excepting Friday and Sunday afternoons, when she goes to the Hospital Sehat.... We give the utmost thanks and gratitude to such a noble woman, to such a respected person, whose presence here is a great privilege to the country of Persia...



Not long after establishing a medical practice, Dr. Moody saw a need to help others learn about health issues and began to provide instruction to women in nursing and childbirth. Eventually, she also joined hands with others to set up a formal school called the Tarbiyat School for Girls. The school offered education to numerous young women, many of whom went on to become teachers themselves, making it possible to establish other schools for girls throughout the country. The Tarbiyat School for Girls became highly respected and was attended by young ladies from all backgrounds, until it was forced to close down by the government because of enmity and suspicion. That, however, is another story, and someday you may want to learn more about this remarkable school. But today you should know that Dr. Susan Moody died in Iran at the age of 83, after having spent some twenty years of her life applying the knowledge she gained to better her new homeland and helping others, especially women, to have the opportunity to do the same.



Táhirih The Pure One



There are many stories of those who have sought the truth and acquired knowledge in order to better understand and grow closer to God. This is the story of a brave and knowledgeable woman, to whom Bahá'u'lláh gave the name Táhirih, meaning “The Pure One”.

Táhirih was born in Persia in the early 1800s, some two hundred years ago. From a young age, she had a thirst for knowledge; she loved to study from books and was eager to learn as much as she could. She would listen to her parents and family as they discussed spiritual and religious matters, and her father, who was a famous clergyman in the country, would give her lessons, which she followed with great ease. At that time, it was rare for women to be educated, but Táhirih's desire for knowledge was so keen that her father eventually found a teacher for her who guided her studies of the arts and the sciences. As Táhirih progressed, her father even arranged for her to listen to his own religious classes, though she had to do so from behind a curtain, as customs would not permit her to mix with the male students. Such was the degree of her accomplishments that her father was heard to remark that, had she been a boy, she would have succeeded him.

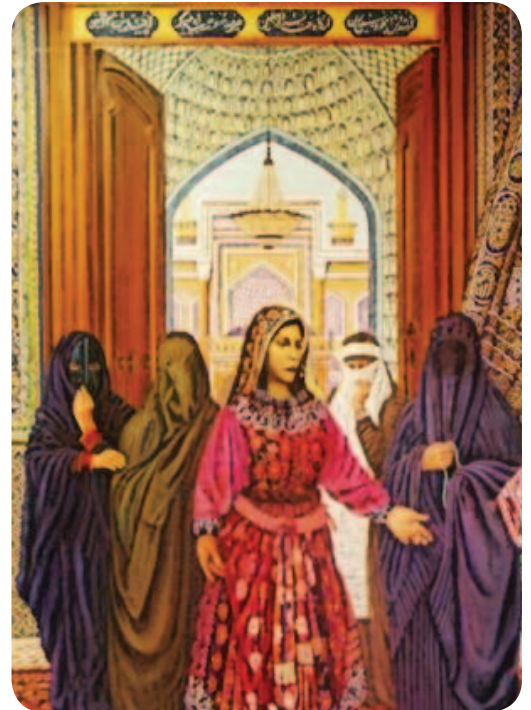




Of course, for everything she had learned, Ṭáhirih still had many questions and was eager to learn more. One day, while visiting a relative, she noticed some books in his library which interested her. They were written by Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kázim, two notable scholars of religion. Ṭáhirih's relative was hesitant to lend her the books, which he feared were not in line with her father's views. But Ṭáhirih was persistent and eventually persuaded her relative to give her the books to take home.



She read the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kázim with great care and attention and found in them many gems of wisdom. She tried to share their writings with her father, but he refused to listen to their words. Still, Ṭáhirih's heart was attracted to the beauty of their ideas, and she began to correspond with Siyyid Kázim, asking him the many questions that her studies had raised in her mind. She sensed that she was being led to a new spiritual truth and determined that she must go to the city of Karbilá to study with Siyyid Kázim. As a woman, she would not be permitted to travel alone, so she convinced her father to allow her to travel to Karbilá with her sister, and they set out on the long journey. When they eventually arrived, Ṭáhirih discovered that Siyyid Kázim had passed away just a few days earlier. Imagine her disappointment! She had traveled so far and had hoped to learn so much from him. Siyyid Kázim's family could see how disappointed she was and how sincere was her desire to learn. So they invited her to stay for a while and made available to her the writings of Siyyid Kázim that had not been published. What joy she must have felt to be able to study his words of wisdom and gain new insights. She was even able to share her understanding of profound matters with some of Siyyid Kázim's students, sitting behind a curtain, just as she had done in her father's classes.



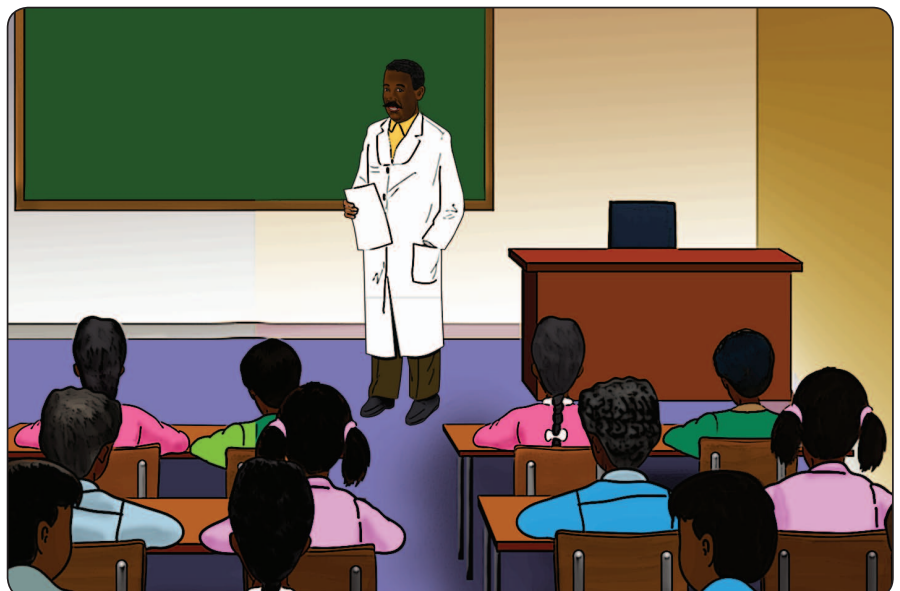
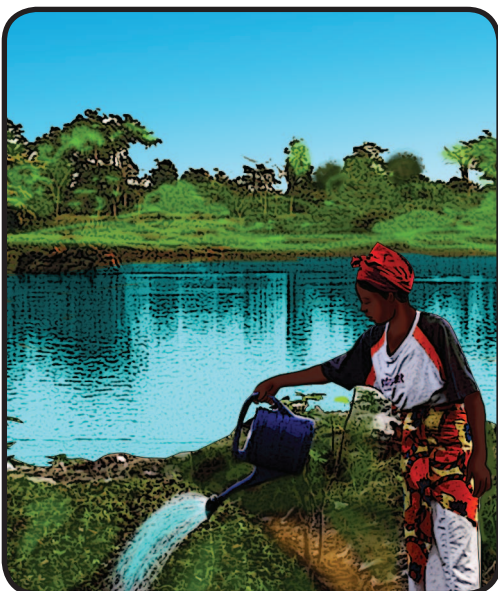
Ṭáhirih did not return home for several years. In the city of Karbilá her search for truth would, by the grace of God, eventually yield its most precious fruit. For in that city she would be blessed to recognize the truth of the Divine message which had been brought to the people of Persia by the person of the Báb. How she was guided to recognize the Báb is another story that we will hear in a later class. But you should know that, after declaring her belief in the Báb, Ṭáhirih went on to become one of the most outstanding heroines of the Bahá'í Faith and a champion of the cause for women. Her courage and strength were indomitable, and her breadth of learning vast. She dedicated the rest of her life to gaining knowledge, composing poems and articles that reflected her deep understanding of the teachings of God and leading many a searching soul to the truth they sought.



The village of Karu Karu

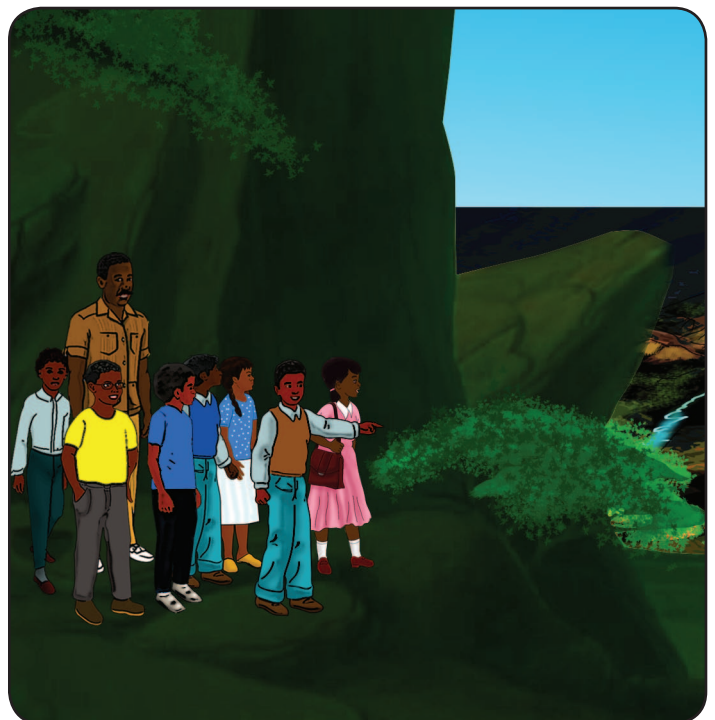


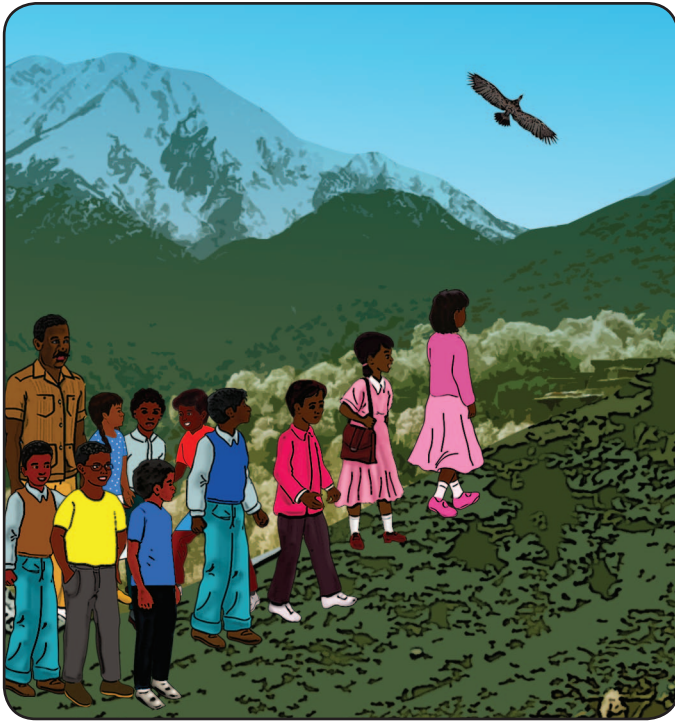
The village of Karu Karu was next to a beautiful river. All of the people in the village used the water from the river to cook, clean, and grow their crops. On very hot days the children from the local school would walk down to the river to swim in the cool water. One hot summer's day after their school lessons were over, the children ran down to the river. But when they arrived, to their surprise, they saw that there was just a trickle of water coming down the mountain, where once an abundance of water had flowed. They knew that if the water was drying up down river, there must be problems up river. With such little water available, the whole village would be in trouble. How would the farmers grow their crops? How would everyone cook their food? If only they knew what the problem was they could try to find a solution. They wondered whether perhaps the source of the water had dried up. In consultation with their teacher and their parents they decided that the next day they would set out on a journey with their teacher to walk to the top of the mountain to try and discover the problem and see what they could do.



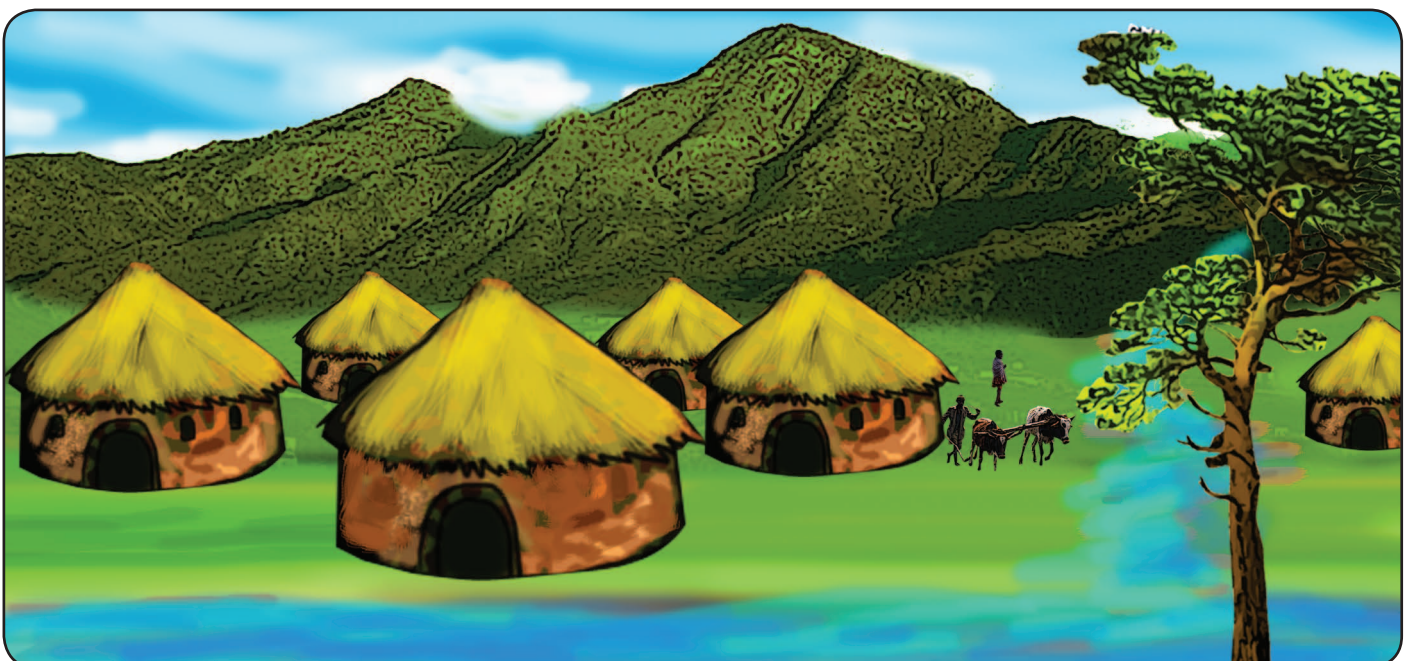


The next morning at dawn the children set out with their teacher and walked until they reached the foot of the mountain. Looking up at the mountain some commented, “***The top of the mountain is very far; how can we ever make it all the way up?***” The teacher explained, “***We will have to go slowly and be patient with each other and with ourselves***”. Taking each other’s hands, they hesitantly began to walk up the mountain. They climbed and climbed and the higher they went, the harder it became. But they learned to draw on their strength. Sometimes their feet would slip but they would help one another to keep going. They walked and walked and it seemed like the journey would never end. When they reached a muddy path, some stomped through it while others ran across as quickly and carefully as they could. After walking for some time, they suddenly came upon a tree fallen on the ground. At first each of the children individually tried different things to move the tree but nothing happened. Then, putting all their efforts together, and with all their strength, they pushed until the tree rolled out of the way.





The further up they went, the steeper the mountain became. They had to use their hands and legs as they climbed up the steep path leading to the very top. When one of them wanted to give up, the others would remind him or her that they had to keep going to help the village. Finally, they reached the top of the mountain and in their excitement they ran to the source of the river. But the water was flowing normally and there seemed to be nothing wrong. Realizing that the problem was not at the source, the children walked to another part of the mountain where they could look down at the river, and as they stared into the distance they suddenly saw that there was a blockage in the river, which was causing it to flow away from the village. At last, after their long journey, they had found the problem! The children started jumping for joy, for they finally knew what to do to help bring water back to the village.



The way of friendship



Every day many people came to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His home, and He welcomed them all with open arms. One day, a gentleman arrived at the house and was greeted warmly.

Sometime later, while this gentleman was still visiting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a second man came to call, and he, too, was warmly welcomed. Now, it so happened that these two gentlemen had a disagreement, and they were not at all happy to see each other. In fact, they did not even want to be in the same room together. What would happen? Both wanted to be with the Master. Would one of them decide to leave?

'Abdu'l-Bahá resolved the matter immediately. He started by telling some funny stories and, before long, both men were laughing. Then He said that His home was a home of peace and joy, a home of laughter and exultation. He did not want them to leave with feelings of enmity in their hearts. The gentlemen listened carefully, thinking about the Master's words. After a while, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave them each some sweets and a silk handkerchief. These were to be, He indicated, a token of their pledge of friendship. The two men smiled. They recognized that it was God Who had directed their steps to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home that day. And they went away from His presence joyous and full of laughter.



The merchant of Akka



In the days of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the people of 'Akká had been misled about the Bahá'ís and did not think they deserved to be treated fairly. But 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with His great wisdom and love, changed the hearts of many of these people. He showed kindness to the people of all religions and helped them become united.

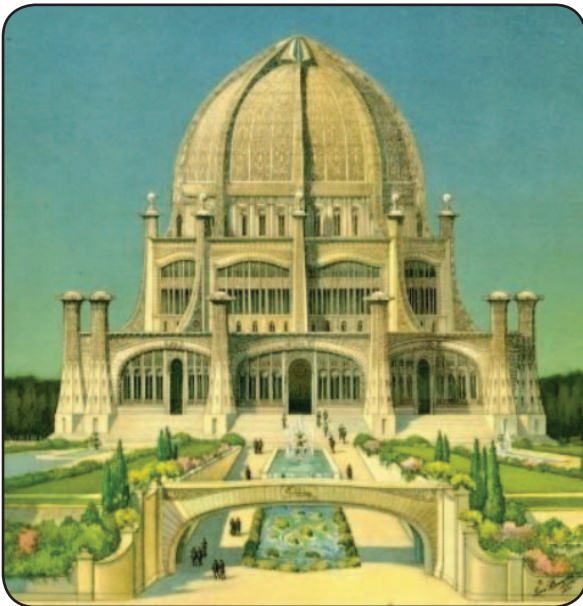
There was a Christian merchant in 'Akká who, like his fellow citizens, did not respect the Bahá'ís. One day, outside the gates of the city, the merchant saw a camel-load of charcoal that belonged to the Bahá'ís. He stopped the driver and said, "This is better charcoal than I can get!" Without paying any money, he took the charcoal for himself.

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá heard of this incident He went to the merchant's shop to ask for the return of the charcoal. There were many people in the office, and the merchant did not pay Him any attention. 'Abdu'l-Bahá sat there and waited patiently. Finally, after three hours, the merchant turned to Him and asked coldly, "***Are you one of the prisoners? What have you done that you were imprisoned?***" 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied that His crime was the same one for which Christ was persecuted. The merchant was surprised. "***What do you know about Christ?***" he asked. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá calmly and kindly began to talk to him about Christ and His teachings. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke, the merchant's heart began to melt and his pride and arrogance disappeared. At last, he explained to 'Abdu'l-Bahá that unfortunately the charcoal was gone, but he would gladly pay for it. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá rose to leave. The merchant also rose and walked with Him to the street, treating Him with great respect and honor.

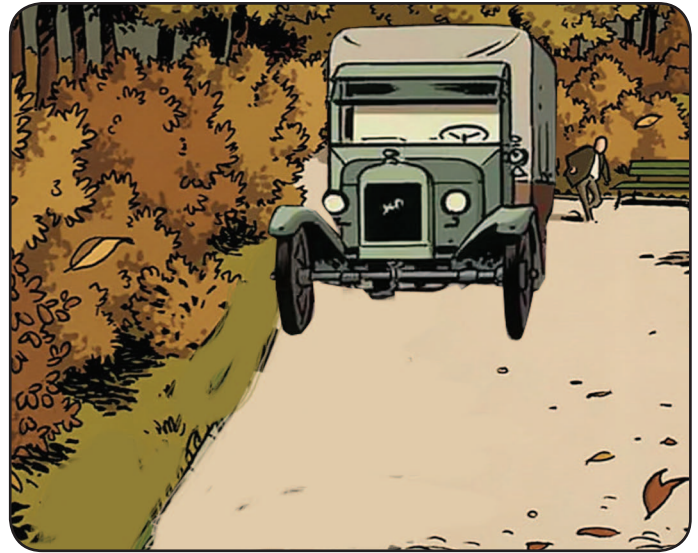
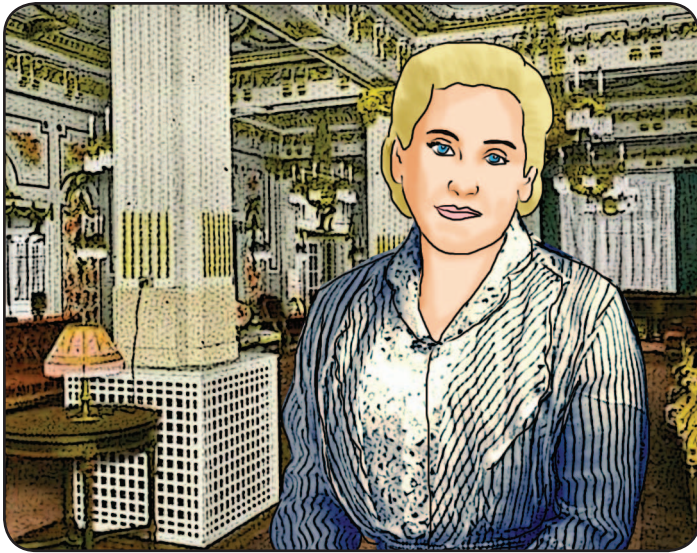
The cornerstone



During ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s travels in America, one of the places He visited was a special piece of land that had been purchased in order to build a Bahá’í House of Worship, a beautiful edifice where all people could come and commune with God. Before construction on the House of Worship began, a gathering was held to say prayers on that spot, after which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would lay with His own hands the first stone of the building—the cornerstone.



One of the friends, a lady named Nettie Tobin, longed to give something to help build the House of Worship. She did not have any money to offer, but the day before the meeting, she had an idea. She went to a building under construction near her home. Cast off to the side was a pile of large stones, and she asked whether she might take one. “*Help yourself,*” said the builder. “*These are rejected.*” You see, the builder needed a particular kind of stone, and the ones in the pile could not be used. Nettie chose a stone but discovered that it was too heavy for her to lift. So, she went home and got an old baby carriage, loaded the stone into it, and wheeled it home. That was as far as she could manage on her own.

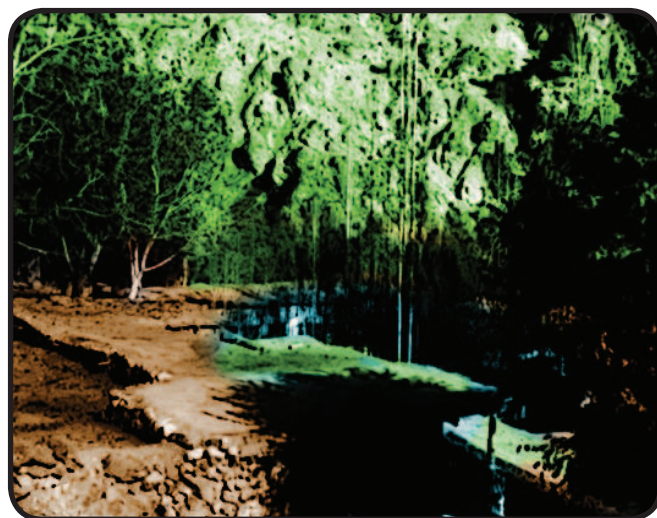
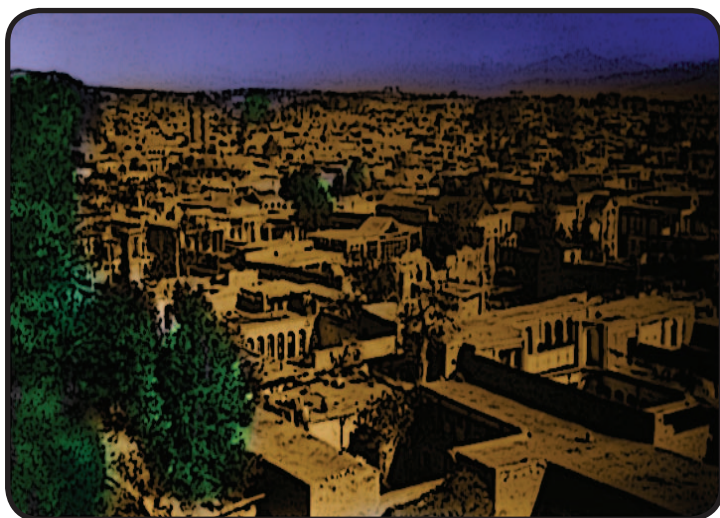


Now, in those days, many cities had streetcars to take people from one place to another, much like we have buses today. And, with the help of a friend, Nettie took the stone on three streetcars the next morning. Together, they lifted the baby carriage onto the first streetcar, then off again. They waited for the second streetcar, loaded the carriage onto it and then off again, and finally heaved it onto the third streetcar, which took them close to the spot where the House of Worship was to be built. There was still some distance to walk, and the two friends started pushing the baby carriage over the broken pavement. But suddenly it collapsed. They were at a loss what to do. Even together the two of them could not carry the heavy stone the remaining distance. It was late, and the gathering had already started. After such a long journey, it seemed that Nettie and her friend would miss everything.

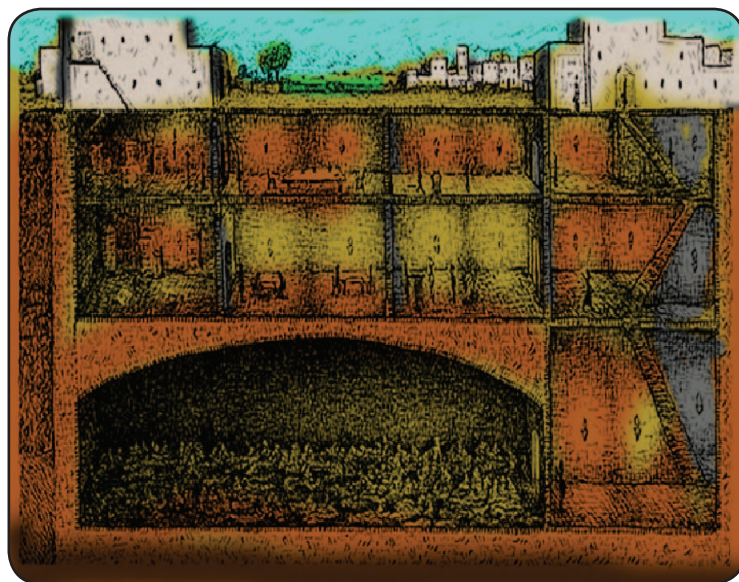


Just then, two boys with an express wagon came along. With their help, the stone was loaded into the wagon, and off they all went to the gathering—Nettie, her friend, the two boys, and the stone. Imagine Nettie's joy when 'Abdu'l-Bahá chose that stone to be the cornerstone and laid it in the ground. In time, a beautiful House of Worship was built on that piece of land, and the stone which Nettie and her friend and the two boys worked together to bring to that spot is still there to this day.

God is sufficient unto me



You already know that, before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and His family were forced to leave their homeland, His Father, Bahá’u’lláh, was arrested and sent to prison by an unjust government, which was fearful of the truth of the Divine message He proclaimed. During that time, not only Bahá’u’lláh, but many of those who responded to the call of this message were taken from their homes and families and locked in the most terrible prison, an underground dungeon, where they were bound in heavy chains.



The prisoners could breathe no fresh air and the floor was covered in filth and crawling with rats and insects. No light reached the dungeon; it was always icy cold. As the prisoners sat facing each other in that horrible place, Bahá’u’lláh taught them to chant verses that reaffirmed their trust in God and helped to remind them that God would never ask more of them than they could give, that He would grant them the strength they needed to withstand whatever oppression they might suffer and to cling fast to the truth they held in their hearts.



As evening came on, they would begin to raise their call. “God is sufficient unto me;” one row would call out, “He verily is the All-Sufficing!” Then the other row would respond, “In Him let the trusting trust.” Throughout the night, they would repeat these words, so loudly that the sound of their uplifted voices reached even the king in his palace nearby.



When he heard the sound of the prisoners, the cruel king asked from where it came. He was told that this was the sound of the prisoners who were locked in the dungeon with Bahá’u’lláh. The king said nothing more. It was clear that, no matter what horrors he might inflict on these prisoners, there was nothing he could do to turn them away from the truth of the Cause they had embraced.

DAMON AND PYTHIAS



Ever since they were children, Damon and Pythias had been friends. They played together and studied together and shared many of their thoughts with each other. They were so close that they trusted each other completely. There was a true friendship; they would do anything to help each other.



Now, Damon and Pythias traveled to a city called Syracuse, which had a powerful king named Dionysius. There Pythias began giving public speeches that called into question the king's unlimited power. Any king who took power without the permission of the people was an unjust tyrant, he told the crowds that stopped to listen. When he learned of Pythias' growing influence among his people, Dionysius became convinced that he was trying to overthrow him. Angry and fearful, the king had Pythias and his friend Damon brought before him.

King Dionysius questioned Pythias

Why are you causing unrest among the people?

There is nothing wrong in what I do! I speak only the truth!

I do not believe you.
You are trying to overthrow me. Tell the people you were not speaking the truth!!

Then you must die!
What is your last request?

I will not!



Pythias asked that he be allowed to return to his family to say good-bye and put his things in order. Dionysius scoffed at him, saying he would be a fool to let Pythias leave Syracuse and expect him to return. Pythias pledged to return, but the king would not hear of it. Just then Damon suddenly broke in.

Pythias will return if you keep me as your prisoner while he is away And if he breaks his promise, you may kill me instead. Surely you have heard of our friendship. You must believe, as I do, that Pythias would never allow his friend to be executed in his place.



Dionysius thought about this unusual proposal and decided to accept it. But he gave a warning. Pythias must return by a set day; otherwise Damon would be killed. As the days passed and Pythias did not return, the king was sure that Damon would regret his selfless act. He decided to visit Damon in jail to see whether he thought himself a fool for trusting Pythias. But Damon confidently replied, “*Pythias must be delayed. He will return.*” The king laughed scornfully, “*We shall see.*” On the appointed day, Pythias still had not returned. The king had Damon brought before the executioner.

Smugly, Dionysius said to Damon

The time has arrived, and yet your friend has not come for you. What do you say now?!

I trust my friend completely!!

At that very moment, the doors opened and a bruised and breathless Pythias staggered into the room towards Damon's open arms.

Thank God, you are still alive! I was afraid I would not reach here in time. My ship was wrecked in a storm and bandits attacked me on the road, but still I could not give up hope that I would make it

I'm ready to die!!

The king was so astonished by the fidelity and steadfast trust of the two friends that he could not bring himself to carry out the unjust execution. ***“Never in my life have I seen such devotion and faith in friendship. Because you have shown me that I was wrong to have doubted you, I have decided to pardon you Pythias—on one condition.***

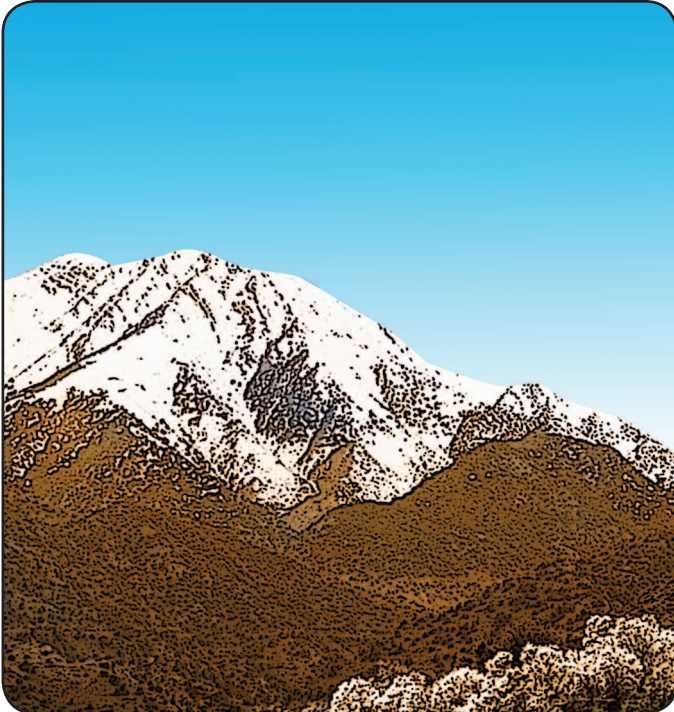
“What is that?” asked the two friends in unison.

The king said :***“That you teach me how to be such a friend.”***

mountain and meadow



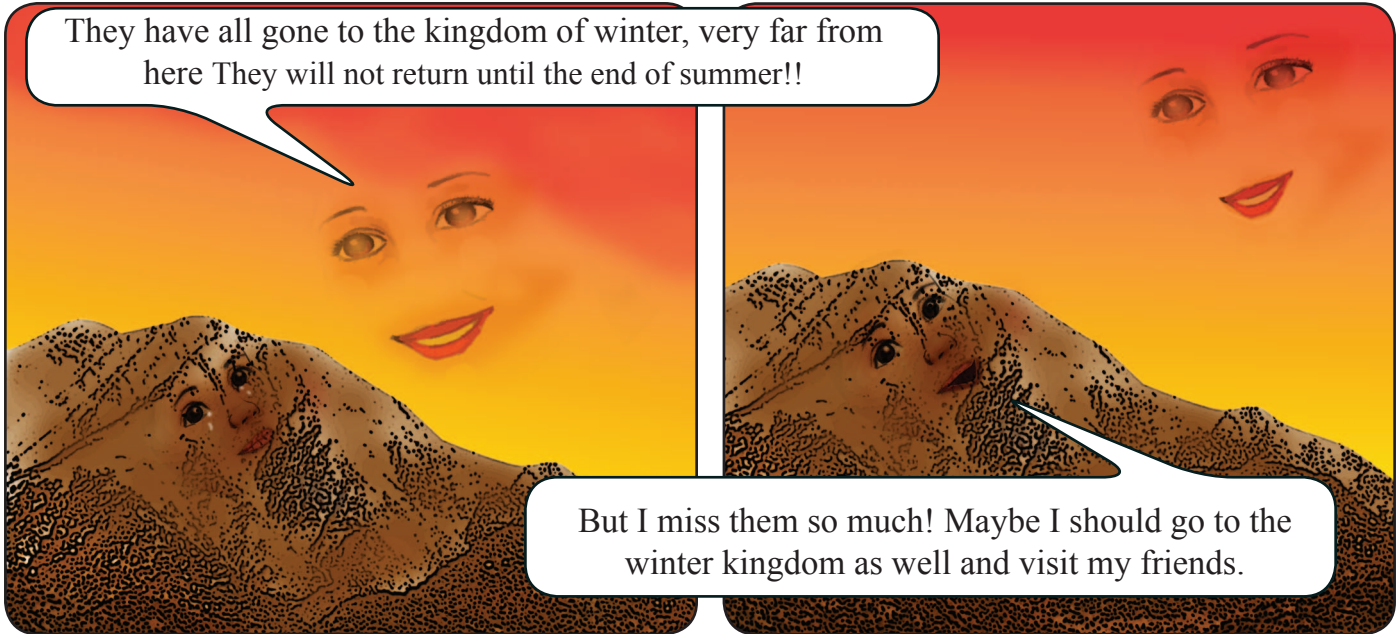
Once there was a mountain whose peak was so high that it might have been the tallest mountain in the world. It was so tall that the clouds were its only company. But how the mountain enjoyed playing with its big billowing friends! And the clouds, too, were happy to gather around the mountain's snowy peak. Sometimes they would laugh so heartily that they would cry, raining tears on the earth below.



Then one hot summer the mountain found itself alone for many days. Not a single cloud could be seen in the sky, and the mountain felt very sad, missing its blustering friends.

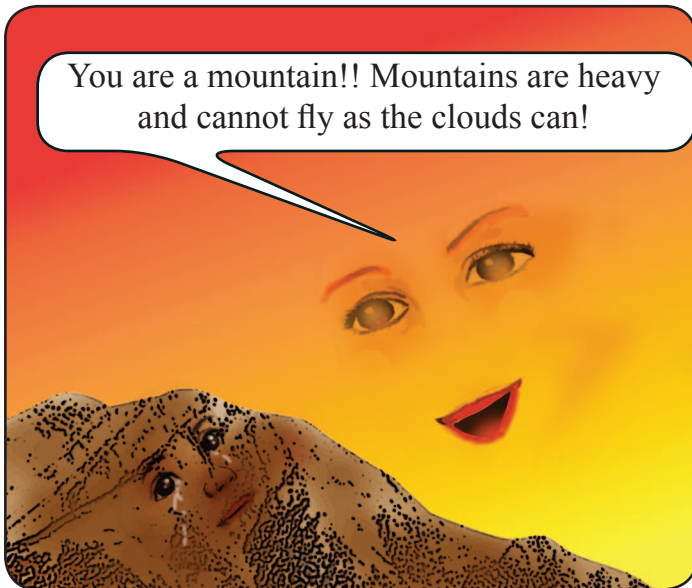
"Why don't the clouds run and play in your big bright blueness anymore?" it asked the wide sky.

They have all gone to the kingdom of winter, very far from here They will not return until the end of summer!!



But I miss them so much! Maybe I should go to the winter kingdom as well and visit my friends.

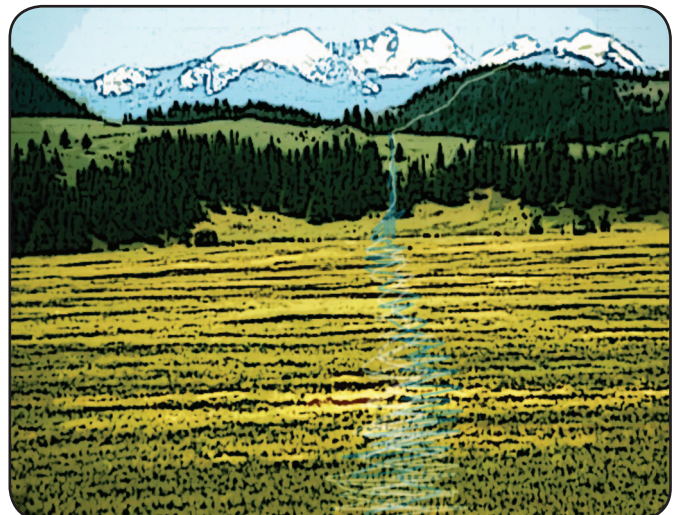
You are a mountain!! Mountains are heavy and cannot fly as the clouds can!



You must remain in the same place.!



Now the mountain became very sad indeed and started to cry. Huge tears ran down its face, and soon streams and rivers were flowing from its snowy peak. Then something wonderful happened. The dried, cracked soil in the plain far below began to drink up the mountain's tears. Before long, the plain was covered in fresh green growth.



The grateful plain called up to the mountain.

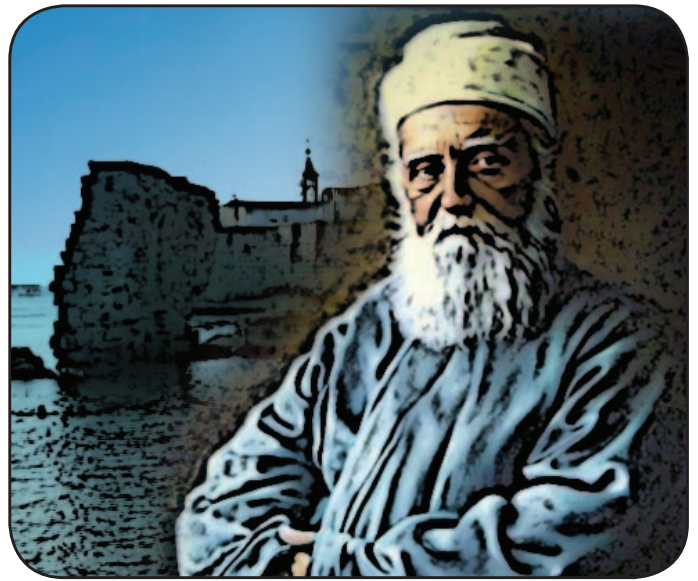
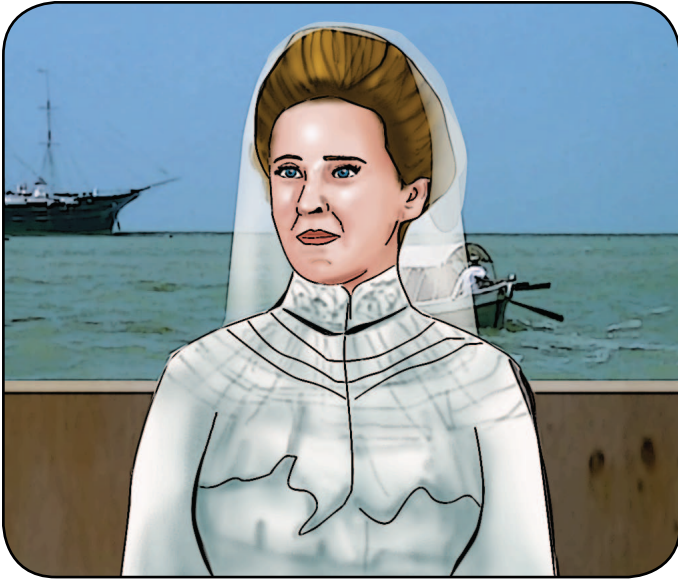
Kind mountain!" it said, "Thank you for saving me from a terrible fate! Your pure water has healed all my wounds. Look at how it has helped me!



The mountain was so surprised that it stopped crying. Until then nobody had ever spoken to the mountain from below. It looked down and gasped when it saw the flourishing green meadow, shining and fresh. To see its beauty made the mountain content. How happy it was to have found a new friend in the meadow.



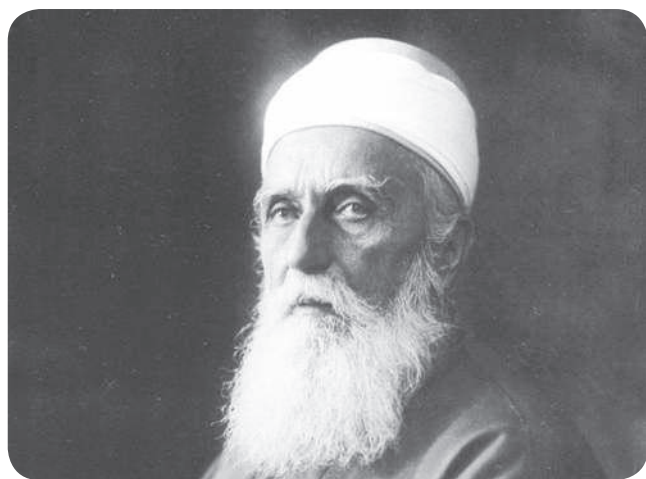
HOW TO SERVE



Lua Getsinger was one of the early Bahá'ís in the West who visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the prison-city of 'Akká. One day during her visit, the Master took her aside and explained to her that He had many pressing matters to attend to and would not be able to call upon a friend who was very sick. He wished Lua to go in His place. He told her to take some food to the sick man and care for him as He had been doing.



Lua learned the address of the man and immediately set off to do as 'Abdu'l-Bahá had asked. She felt proud that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had entrusted her with a task that He would usually have carried out Himself.



But, only a short while later, she returned to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in a state of excitement. “Master,” she exclaimed, *“surely you cannot realize to what a terrible place you sent me. I almost fainted from the awful stench, the filthy rooms, the degrading condition of that man and his house. I fled lest I contract some terrible disease.”*



‘Abdu’l-Bahá gazed at her sadly and sternly. If she wanted to serve God, He explained, she must serve her fellow man, because in every person she should see the image and likeness of God. Then He told her to go back to the sick man’s house. If the house was dirty, she should clean it. If he was hungry, she should feed him. He asked her not to come back until all of this was done. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had done these things for His friend many times, and she should be able to do them this once, He told her with firmness. That is how Lua learned an important lesson about what it means to serve her fellow human beings.

The proud man and Abdul Baha



There once was a very proud man who did not understand the Station of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. One day, he approached the Master in the street and said, “So, You are called the Servant of God.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied that, indeed, that was His name. You know, of course, that the name ‘Abdu’l-Bahá means “Servant of Bahá” or Servant of God.

“Well,” said the man proudly, “I am Moses.” Now, the man was referring to the Prophet of God, Moses, and it was not really his name at all. We will learn more about Moses in a later class, but for today you need to know that Moses was one of the Messengers of God that came long before Bahá’u’lláh. The man was trying to annoy ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but the Master did not respond to his jest. Instead, He told the man to meet Him the next morning at the same spot on the street, and they would go together and serve the people like the great Moses had done.

The man agreed, and the next day from morning to evening he accompanied the Master as He visited the sick and the suffering, served the needy and met with the people who were thirsty to receive His love and His wise counsel. By evening, the man who called himself Moses was extremely tired. Yet, he would not let go of his pride, and when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked him to accompany Him the next day, he accepted.

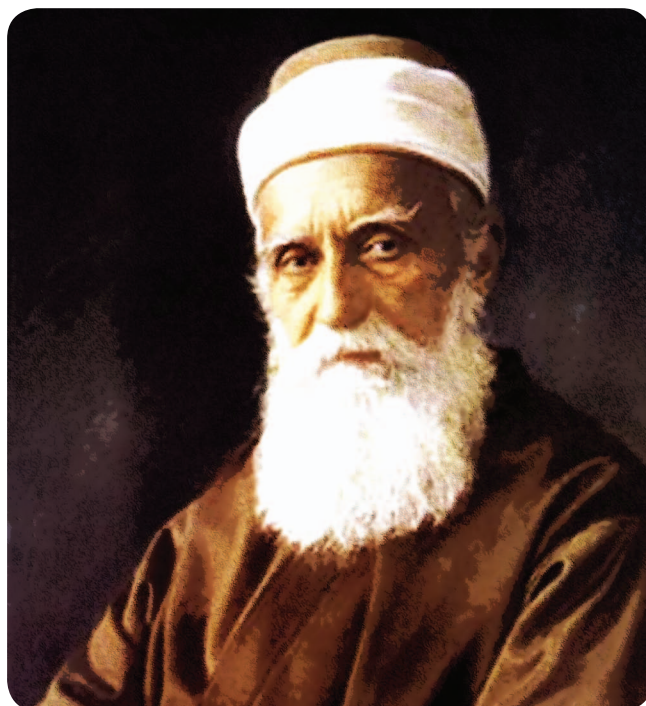
Again by the evening of the second day the man was exhausted, but he accepted to accompany ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for yet another day. On the third day when they returned from their arduous work, the man could not bear the thought of working so hard, not even for another minute. He had learned his lesson and had caught a glimpse of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s greatness. So as they went to part ways, and before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá could invite him for another day of work, the man said with great humility: “*‘Abdu’l-Bahá, tomorrow morning I will no longer be Moses.*”

The nice peace of calligraphy



In 'Akká, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had organized a small school for the Bahá'í children who lived in the Holy Land. There were very knowledgeable Bahá'ís in 'Akká at the time, so the children had the opportunity to learn from a most wonderful group of teachers. Among the subjects taught at the school was calligraphy, which is an art highly esteemed by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It is the art of writing profound and meaningful phrases, poems and tablets in a most beautiful way, almost as if they were paintings.

On Thursday afternoons the children of the Bahá'í school had a special bounty. Each would take the best piece of calligraphy he or she had written during the week and show it to 'Abdu'l-Bahá who would inspect it, praising and encouraging the child as He saw fit. If the calligraphy piece was particularly well done, He would write a short sentence of praise at the bottom of the paper in His own handwriting. For the children, a sheet ennobled by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's handwriting was a treasure they would cherish for the rest of their lives.





One year, there was a young boy of twelve or thirteen in the school who was intelligent, but eager to avoid unnecessary exertion. He loved to play and, as a result, did his homework hastily and poorly. Now this young boy, whose name was Muḥammad, had an ardent desire to win the good pleasure of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. But when it was time to sit down and practice his calligraphy, he would get the urge to go out and play. Then one week Muḥammad managed to show tremendous willpower. He worked hard, and when Thursday came, he presented to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá a very nice piece of calligraphy. The Master was delighted and wrote at the bottom of the sheet words of commendation.

As you can imagine, Muḥammad was beside himself with happiness. He looked at the handwriting of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá under his calligraphy, convinced he was the most fortunate boy in the whole universe. “Why could I not do this every week,” he thought, “and receive this honor every Thursday?” So the next week he tried again, but unfortunately his willpower was not strong. He did not produce a single piece of calligraphy that could possibly win ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s approval a second time. Then Muḥammad said to himself, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá is so busy. He has so many things to do. He would never remember the calligraphy of a little boy.” So he took a fine pair of scissors and cut off the bottom of the sheet that he had presented the week before, removing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words of praise.

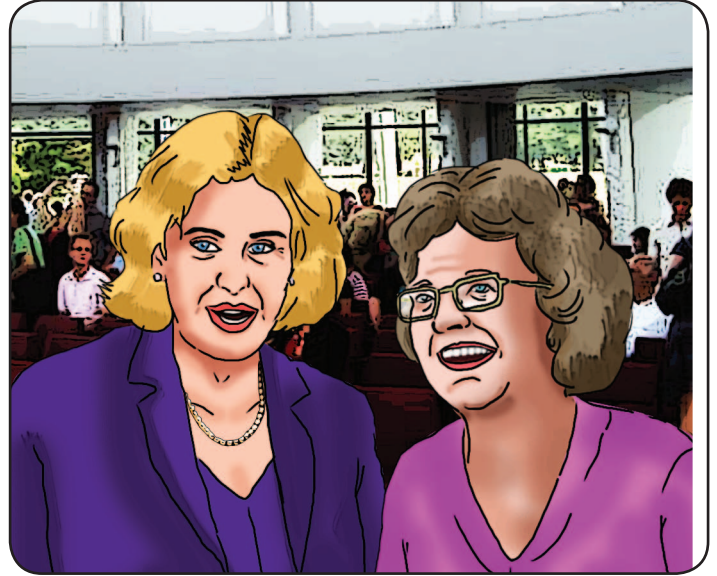
You can see what Muḥammad’s intention was. He was going to show the same piece of calligraphy to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá again. This was a blameworthy act, although Muḥammad had always been a truthful and trustworthy child. He tried to forget his plan, but could not. His mind had been poisoned by a dishonest thought, and he was not strong enough to overcome it.



On Thursday afternoon, Muḥammad stood in line with the calligraphy piece from the previous week in his hand. He was already feeling the pangs of remorse. He was so ashamed of himself that he could hardly look at ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Then finally, his turn came. As always, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was loving and kind. But, of course, the moment He saw the calligraphy, He knew what had happened. How do you think the Master reacted? Did he announce Muḥammad’s wrongdoing to his companions and shame him before the others? Not at all. With great love, but also with unmistakable firmness, He noted how closely the piece of calligraphy matched the one that Muḥammad had presented the week before. He said no more, but patted the boy in such a way that made it perfectly clear to Muḥammad that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá realized what he had done.



The lamp of consultation



This story is about something that happened not too long ago in a Bahá'í community in a very big city in Europe.

It was an exciting time for the Bahá'ís. They had prepared themselves well and were at last ready to start a special project to invite the people of their city to join them for devotional gatherings, study circles, and classes for children and junior youth. To make a plan, all the friends came together and consulted. They decided to form teams that would be able to move around the whole city, going to different neighborhoods to tell people about the various activities and invite them to take part. As the meeting finished and the friends were going home, a few flakes of snow began to fall from the sky. No one thought much of it until after a couple of days, when the whole of the city was covered by a huge blanket of snow! It was quite unexpected and everyone in the city was taken by surprise.

All the schools were closed because the teachers and children could not get there through the heavy snow. Shops were closed because the shopkeepers could not reach their shops. Buses and trains had stopped running and cars were stuck with so much snow covering them that you could not even see them. No one could travel anywhere in the city.





So a few of the Bahá'ís consulted again about what to do. Here were all these wonderful plans that just could not be carried out. At first everyone felt very sad and discouraged.

What was to be done? Should they give up? How could the obstacle of the snow be turned into an advantage? As they prayed together and consulted about these ideas, a new plan came to light..

*“If the friends can’t leave their homes to travel across the city, why don’t we all visit the people who live right next to us, on our own streets or in our own apartment blocks?”*said one of the friends.

“That’s right!” exclaimed another, *“We wouldn’t need any transport—no car or bus or train—we would just need to put on our warm boots and take a few steps through the snow!”*

Everyone began to get excited about this new plan. As soon as the consultation finished, they telephoned all the teams to share with them this new idea. The friends were delighted! They had not thought about this possibility before, but visiting their neighbors and inviting them to join activities seemed like the perfect thing to do. Now the project could go forward! Everybody was able to carry out the plan and their hearts were filled with joy.

The people receiving visits in their homes were very happy, too, that their Bahá'í neighbors were visiting them during this difficult cold winter. One family said that their children would like to come to children’s classes, but even without snow it was hard for them to travel around the city. So they decided to start a new class in their own home and invite their relatives and neighbors.

Because of the visits these teams made to people who lived close to them, within a short time, many new friends joined devotional gatherings and study circles, and four new children’s classes, just like the one we are having today, were started.

The power of unified thought and action



Not long ago, in a country where many people farmed the land, heavy rains caused flooding across an entire region. The rivers overflowed their banks, and the flood waters destroyed houses, bridges, and schools, roads and fields, sweeping away the crops that had been planted. When the floods were over, most people were left with nothing. They had no homes, and there was little food available.

Now, the Bahá'ís who lived in other parts of the country, knowing that the people of the region were suffering, came together to consult to find a way to assist. They realized, of course, that the people needed food. But, as the Bahá'í friends discussed the matter, it became clear that it would not be enough to simply send food. It would be important for the people to be able to grow crops again. How could they help this happen? If they could only get seeds, the people of the region could farm and grow food for themselves as they had before the flood. Everyone could see that this would be a good way for them to help. So what did they do? They decided to use money contributed by their community to buy many tons of corn seeds. Trucks were piled high with sacks of seeds and transported to the areas that had been worst affected by the floods.

The people were gathered, waiting to receive the seeds. As the sacks were unloaded, people expressed joy and gratitude, singing and playing drums. With these seeds, they could start farming again, and in spite of the suffering caused by the floods, everyone felt hopeful, strong and happy.

Few words said with thoughtful care



During His visit to the West, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and a group of friends met with a man who was writing an article about the Bahá’í Faith. The man had many long and complicated questions, mainly about the history of the Faith. Throughout the interview, the Master sat quietly, listening with patient attention to the man’s inquiries. Now, his questions were quite lengthy indeed, and the man seemed to talk on and on. He did not seem to realize the importance of moderation. Only every so often did he pause long enough for others to say a few words, sometimes no more than a yes or no. Most of the friends in the room grew impatient—but not ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He sat perfectly relaxed, His eyes full of love and understanding. If the man hesitated for a moment, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke briefly in reply to his question and then waited courteously for him to continue.

At last the man finished speaking, and there was a long silence. Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed the man with great dignity and care. His melodious voice filled the air. In only a few short minutes, the man was transformed. His heart had been touched by the Master’s gentle and loving words. Now he could see the spirit of the Faith. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá rose, warmly embraced the man, and walked with him to the door.

At the doorway He paused. A large bunch of roses brought by one of the friends had caught His eye. So large was the bunch and so long the stems that they had to be placed in a stand for umbrellas.

No vase was big enough to hold them. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gathered the flowers in His arms and presented them to His guest. The man’s head could barely be seen peeking out above the mountain of flowers, but the joy radiating from his face could not be missed. Sometimes a few words said with thoughtful care are all that is needed.

