

Muḥammad-‘Alí-i-Iṣfáhání

Muḥammad-‘Alí of Iṣfáhán was among the earliest of believers, guided to the Faith from its very beginning. He was one of the mystics; his house was a gathering place for them, and the philosophers. Noble, high-minded, he was one of Iṣfáhán’s most respected citizens, and served as a host and sanctuary for every stranger, rich or poor. He had verve, an excellent disposition, was forbearing, affable, generous, a boon companion; and it was known throughout the city that he enjoyed a good time.

Then he was led to embrace the Faith and caught fire from the Sinaitic Tree. His house became a teaching center, dedicated to the glory of God. Day and night the believers flocked there, as to a lamp lit by heavenly love. Over a long period, the sacred verses were chanted in that house and the clear proofs set forth. Although this was widely known, Muḥammad-‘Alí was not molested, because he was a kinsman of the Imám-Jum’ih of Iṣfáhán. Finally, however, things came to such a pass that the Imám-Jum’ih himself sent him away, telling him: “I can protect you no longer. You are in grave danger. The best thing for you is to leave here, and go on a journey.”

He left his home then, went to ‘Iráq, and entered the presence of the world’s Desired One. He spent some time there, progressing every day; he had little to live on, but was happy and content. A man of excellent disposition, he was congenial to believers and others alike.

When Bahá’u’lláh and His retinue left Baghdád for Constantinople, Muḥammad-‘Alí was in His company, and continued on with Him to the

Land of Mystery, Adrianople. Not one to be inconstant, he maintained his characteristic immutability of heart. Whatever happened, he remained the same. In Adrianople as well, his days passed happily, under the protection of Bahá'u'lláh. He would carry on some business which, however trifling, would bring in surprisingly abundant returns.

From Adrianople, Muḥammad-‘Alí accompanied Bahá'u'lláh to the fortress of Akká, was put in jail there, and was numbered among Bahá'u'lláh's fellow captives for the rest of his life, achieving that greatest of all distinctions, to be in prison with the Blessed Beauty.

He spent his days in utter bliss. Here, too, he carried on a small business, which occupied him from morning till noon. In the afternoons he would take his samovar, wrap it in a dark-colored pouch made from a saddlebag, and go off somewhere to a garden or meadow, or out in a field, and have his tea. Sometimes he would be found at the farm of Mazra'ih, or again in the Ridván Garden; or, at the Mansion, he would have the honor of attending upon Bahá'u'lláh.

Muḥammad-‘Alí would carefully consider every blessing that came his way. “How delicious my tea is today,” he would comment. “What perfume, what color! How lovely this meadow is, and the flowers so bright!” He used to say that everything, even air and water, had its own special fragrance. For him the days passed in indescribable delight. Even kings were not so happy as this old man, the people said. “He is completely free of the world,” they would declare. “He lives in joy.” It also happened that his food was of the very best, and that his home was situated in the very best part of Akká. Gracious God! Here he was, a prisoner, and yet experiencing comfort, peace and joy.

Muḥammad-‘Alí was past eighty when he finally departed to eternal light. He had been the recipient of many Tablets from Bahá'u'lláh, and

of endless bounty, under all conditions. Upon him be the glory of God the Most Glorious. Upon him be myriads of heavenly blessings; may God favor him with gladness forever and ever. His luminous grave is in Akká.