

From the Writings of SHOGHI EFFENDI

Shoghi Effendi

Original English



O ye who burn in the flames of bereavement! By the Day-star of the World, my bereaved and longing heart is afire with a grief that is beyond my description. The sudden, the grievous and calamitous news that the Most Exalted, the pure, the holy, the immaculate, the brightly shining Leaf, the Remnant of Bahá, and His trust, the eternal fruit and the one last remembrance of the Holy Tree—may my life be offered for the wrongs she suffered—has ascended, reached me like live coals cast into a frail and afflicted heart. The foundations of my serenity were shattered, and tears of desolation came like a flood that carries all away.

Alas, that I was prevented from being with her at the close of her earthly days, at that moment when she ascended to her Lord, her Master, and when her delicate body was placed in the tomb. Not mine that honour, that high privilege, for I was far away, deprived, bereft, excluded.

O brothers and sisters in the spirit! In this solemn hour, from one direction we can hear the sounds of loud weeping, and cries of mourning and woe, rising out of the throats of the people of Bahá throughout this nether world, because of their separation from that rich mine of faithfulness, that Orb of the heaven of eternal glory—because of her setting below the horizon of this holy Spot. But from another direction can be heard the songs of praise and holy exultation from the Company on High and the undying dwellers in Paradise, and from beyond them all God's Prophets, coming forth to welcome that fair being, and to place her in the retreats of glory, and to seat her at the right hand of Him Who is the Centre of God's Mighty Covenant.

The community of Bahá, whether in the East of the world or the West, are lamenting like orphans left destitute; fevered, tormented, unquiet, they are voicing their grief. Out of the depths of their sorrowing hearts, there rises to the Abhá Horizon this continual piercing cry: 'Where art thou gone, O torch of tender love? Where art thou gone, O source of grace and mercy? Where art thou gone, O symbol of bounty and generosity? Where art thou gone, O day-spring of detachment in this world of being? Where art thou gone, O trust left by Bahá among His people, O remnant left by Him among His servants, O sweet scent of His garment, shed across all created things! O ye who loved that luminous face! The oil within that shining lamp was used up in this world and its light was extinguished; and yet, in the lamp-niche of the Kingdom, the fingers of the Lord of the heavenly throne have kindled it so bright, and it has cast such a splendour on the maids of Heaven—dwelling in chambers of red rubies and circling about her—that they all called from out their souls and hearts, 'O joy upon joy!' and with shouts of, 'Well done! Well done! Upon thee be God's blessings, O Most Exalted Leaf!' did they welcome that quintessence of love and purity within the towering pavilions of eternity.

At that time, as bidden by the Lord, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting, did the heavenly Crier raise up his voice and cry out: "O Most Exalted Leaf! Thou art she who did endure with patience



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in God's way from thine earliest childhood and throughout all thy life, and did bear in His pathway what none other hath borne, save only God in His own Self, the Supreme Ruler over all created things, and before Him, His noble Herald, and after Him, His holy Branch, the One, the Inaccessible, the Most High. The people of the Concourse on High seek the fragrance of thy presence, and the dwellers in the retreats of eternity circle about thee. To this bear witness the souls of the cherubim within the tabernacles of majesty and might, and beyond them the tongue of God the One True Lord, the Pure, the Most Wondrous. Blessedness be thine and a goodly abode; glad tidings to thee and a happy ending!"

To one who was reared by the hands of her loving kindness, the burden of this direst of calamities is well nigh unbearable; and yet praised be the God of glory that her fragile frame has escaped from the prison of continual ordeals and afflictions which, with an astonishing forbearance, and for more than eighty years, she accepted and endured. Now is she free; delivered from her chains of care and sorrow; safe from all the suffering and pain, released from the ills of this nether world. She rolled up and packed away the years of longing for her mighty Father, and for Him, her loving and well-favoured Brother, and departed to her abode in the midmost heart of the Heavens.

This heavenly being, during all the turmoil of her days, did not rest for a moment, nor ever did she seek quiet and peace. From the beginning of her life, from her very childhood, she tasted sorrow's cup; she drank down the afflictions and calamities of the earliest years of the great Cause of God. In the tumult of the Year of H̱in, as a result of the sacking and plundering of her glorious Father's wealth and holdings, she learned the bitterness of destitution and want. Then she shared the imprisonment, the grief, the banishment of the Abhá Beauty, and in the storm which broke out in 'Irāq—because of the plotting and the treachery of the prime mover of mischief, the focal centre of hate—she bore, with complete resignation and acquiescence, uncounted ordeals. She forgot herself, did without her kin, turned aside from possessions, struck off at one blow the bonds of every worldly concern; and then, like a lovelorn moth, she circled day and night about the flame of the matchless Beauty of her Lord.

In the heaven of severance, she shone like the Morning Star, fair and bright, and through her character and all her ways, she shed upon kin and stranger, upon the learned, and the lowly, the radiance of Bahá'u'lláh's surpassing perfection. Because of the intense and deep-seated sorrows and the manifold oppressive trials that assailed her—never failing spring of grace that she was, essence of loving-kindness—in the Land of Mystery her lovely form was worn away to a breath, to a shadow; and during the Most Great Convulsion, which in the years of 'Stress' made every heart to quake, she stood as a soaring pillar, immovable and fixed; and from the blasts of desolation that rose and blew, that Leaf of the eternal Lote-Tree did not wither.

Rather did she redouble her efforts, urging herself on the more, to servitude and sacrifice. In captivating hearts and winning over souls, in destroying doubts and misgivings, she led the field. With the waters of her countless mercies, she brought thorny hearts to a blossoming of love from the All-Glorious, and with the influence of her pure loving-kindness, transformed the implacable, the unyielding, into impassioned lovers of the celestial Beauty's peerless Cause.

Yet another wound was inflicted on her injured heart by the aggressions and violations of the evil-doers within the prison-fortress, yet another blow was struck at her afflicted being. And

then her anguish was increased by the passing of the Abhá Beauty, and the cruelty of the disloyal added more fuel to the fires of her mourning. In the midst of that storm of violation, the countenance of that rare treasure of the Lord shone all the brighter, and throughout the Bahá'í community, her value and high rank became clearly perceived. By the vehement onslaught of the chief of violators against the sacred beliefs of the followers of the Faith, she was neither frightened nor in despair.

In the days of the Commission of Investigation, she was a staunch and trusted supporter of the peerless Branch of Bahá'u'lláh, and a companion to Him beyond compare. At the time of His absence in the western world, she was His competent deputy, His representative and vicegerent, with none to equal her. In a Tablet from the pen of the Centre of the Covenant, addressed to His consort, are these words referring to His brilliant sister: "To my honoured and distinguished sister do thou convey the expression of my heartfelt, my intense longing. Day and night she liveth in my remembrance. I dare make no mention of the feelings which separation from her has aroused in my heart, for whatever I should attempt to express in writing will assuredly be effaced by the tears which such sentiments must bring to my eyes."

After the ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the realm of the All-Glorious, that Light of the Concourse on High enfolded me, helpless as I was, in the embrace of her love, and with incomparable pity and tenderness, persuaded, guided, and urged me on to the requirements of servitude. The very elements of this frail being were leavened with her love, refreshed by her companionship, sustained by her eternal spirit. Never for a moment will her kindnesses, her favours, pass from my memory, and as the months and the years go by, the effects of them on this mourning heart will never be diminished.

O Liege Lady of the people of Bahá! Broken is our circle by thy going— Broken our circle, broken too, our hearts.

That my tongue, my pen could thank thee were a hopeless task, nor can any praise of mine befit thine excellence. Not even a droplet of all thine endless love can I aspire to fathom, nor can I adequately praise and tell of even the most trifling out of all the events of thy precious life. In the courts of the Almighty, for this frail being thy sacred spirit intercedeth, and in this darksome world, the sweet memory of thee is the succourer and friend of this lowly one. Thy comely face is etched for ever on the tablet of my grieving soul, those smiles that refreshed my life are forever and safely imprinted in the innermost recesses of my stricken heart. Let me not be forgotten by thee in the glorious precincts on high; leave me not despairing, nor excluded from the never-ceasing reinforcements that come from the living Lord; and in this world and the Kingdom, help me to reach what thou knowest to be my dearest hope.

O faithful friends! It is right and fitting that out of honour to her most high station, in the gatherings of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, whether of the East or the West, all Bahá'í festivals and celebrations should be completely suspended for a period of nine months, and that in every city and village, memorial meetings should be held, with all solemnity, spirituality, lowliness and consecration—where, in the choicest of language, may be described at length the shining attributes of that most resplendent Leaf, that archetype of the people of Bahá. If it be possible for the individual believers to postpone their personal celebrations for a period of one year, let them unhesitatingly do so thus to express their sorrow at this agonizing misfortune. Let them

read this letter, this supplication, in their memorial gatherings, that perchance the Almighty will lighten my burden, and dispel the clouds of my bereavement; that He will answer my prayers, and fulfil my hopes, out of His bounty, His power, His grace.