



ḤAYDAR 'ALI EŞFAHĀNI, ḤĀJJĪ MIRZĀ

ḤAYDAR 'ALI EŞFAHĀNI, ḤĀJJĪ Mirzā, Bahā'i polemicist (b. Isfahan, ca. 1830; d. Haifa, 7 December 1920). Ḥaydar 'Ali's father, a merchant who followed the Šayḳi school, took him as a young boy to Kerman to become a personal attendant to the Šayḳi leader Moḥammad Karim-Ḳān. Ḥaydar 'Ali states that, after becoming disappointed by what he found there, he soon returned to Isfahan. After meeting some Bābis he became a follower of the new religion. In about 1866, he traveled to Edirne where he met Bahā'-Allāh and became his devoted follower.

Ḥaydar 'Ali was sent by Bahā'-Allāh to Istanbul and Cairo. He was arrested by the Persian Consul, Mirzā Ḥasan-Ḳān Gerānmāya, in Cairo in January 1868, together with six other Bahā'is. The Persian consul succeeded in persuading the Egyptian authorities that the Bahā'is were dangerous revolutionaries, and in getting them sentenced to exile in Khartoum. While in Khartoum Ḥaydar 'Ali was able to earn a living through his skill in calligraphy and handicrafts. When General Charles Gordon became governor of Khartoum in 1877, Ḥaydar 'Ali presented him with an engraved mirror and was able in this way to bring his case to the governor's attention. As a result, he was freed in about 1880 and traveled to Akka, where Bahā'-Allāh had been imprisoned.

On Bahā'-Allāh's instructions, Ḥaydar 'Ali spent the next decades traveling extensively, mostly in Iran. Professor E. G. Browne, who met him in Isfahan in



1888, writes of the great respect in which he was held by the Bahā'is: "I had plenty of time to observe his countenance attentively, and to note the combination of decision, energy, and thoughtfulness which it expressed. His manners were pleasing, and his speech, when he spoke, persuasive. Altogether he was a man whom one would not readily forget, even after a single interview, and on whose memory one dwells with pleasure" (Browne, 1926, p. 229).

After the passing of Bahā'-Allāh, Ḥaydar 'Ali remained loyal to 'Abd-al-Bahā'. He traveled to Egypt, India, and the Caucasus on missionary activities, and made further journeys in Iran. Finally in 1903, at 'Abd-al-Bahā's invitation, he settled in Haifa to live out his last years there. He is frequently mentioned in accounts by Western Bahā'is visiting 'Abd-al-Bahā', to whom he was known as the "Angel of Carmel." He is buried in the Bahā'i cemetery in Haifa.

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