

IN MEMORIAM
SPIRITUAL FATHER OF PERU: MENTOR AND COUNSELOR

MAS'ÚD KHAMSI
(1922 -2013)



Mr. Mas'úd Khamsí was born in the city of Rasht, in the province of Gílan, Iran, near the old border with Russia. He was from a distinguished Bahá'í family. His grandfather was one of the five Báqir-Uf (Báqiroff) brothers called by Bahá'u'lláh's Pen the "Sádát-i-Khamsí" (five brothers, in Arabic). Siyyid Ahmad Khamsí, Mr. Khamsí's father, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and also a distinguished Bahá'í, had attended to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris, later accompanying him in his historic travels to Stuttgart (Germany), Vienna (Austria) and Budapest (Hungary) in 1913.

Since his youth, Mr. Khamsí was very active in the Faith. For example, he was on the National Youth Committee of Iran together with Dr. Muhájir, who would later be a Hand of the Cause of God. Mr. Khamsí also arose at age 18 as a home-front pioneer in his own country. He was always ready to do the bidding of the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi. He received part of his education in Germany.

Mr. Khamsí also had the opportunity to visit the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, in Haifa. He often told the friends about incidents on his pilgrimage. He would say that, when Shoghi Effendi embraced him, he received as much love as all the hugs of all the mothers in the world. It was on that occasion when the Guardian intimated the future international nature of his services to Bahá'u'lláh's Cause.

In 1951, Mr. Khamsí married Jane Snyder, who was from New York, United States, and was at that time working for the US Embassy in Teheran. The Khamsís went from Iran to Africa to serve the Faith, where Jane accepted the Faith through Hand of the Cause, Mr. Enoch Olinga. They then moved to Bahía Blanca in Argentina, South America, where they lived for two and a half years. After attending a conference in Chile about teaching the indigenous people, they decided to move, with their family,

to La Paz, Bolivia. They lived there for two and a half years, supporting new teaching projects. The Khamsís have had four children, Ahmad, Dorothy, Bahía and Gary, who were born in Iran, United States, Argentina and Bolivia, respectively. Some traveling teachers once wrote: "The Khamsí family's hospitality is one of the wonders of the South American continent... Jane fed us so well to prepare us for the rest of our travels".

In 1960, Mr. Khamsí was elected to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. The next year, when independent national assemblies were formed in each South American country, Mr. Khamsí was elected to the National Assembly of Bolivia and to the Local Assembly of La Paz. At the end of that same year, Mr. Khamsí was appointed as an Auxiliary Board member by Hands of the Cause Jalál Khazeh and Zikrullah Khadem, and had to resolve, in several countries, outbreaks of Covenant-breaking, following the passing of the beloved Guardian.

In Bolivia, Mr. Khamsí began working systematically on mass conversion in indigenous communities, finding great receptivity and success, leading into the process of entry by troops envisioned by the beloved Guardian. In 1963, Mr. Khamsí participated in the first election of the Universal House of Justice as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Bolivia.



In 1969, the Khamsís took a ship to Peru, to settle in that country. For their first year, they lived in the National Bahá'í Center. They became a great source of encouragement, particularly for the Lima community, especially because of the picnics and conferences they generously held in their ample home. He also accompanied Hand of the Cause Ruhíyyih Khánúm in 1975-1976 on her long trip down the rivers of the Amazon region and the Andes of Peru and Bolivia, visiting no fewer than 36 tribal groups in those countries and also including Colombia and Brazil, in what she called the famous Green Light Expedition. He said, of this expedition, that "it was unique in the Bahá'í history of South America; there has never been anything like it: 100% results have been produced by putting in 100% effort".

While living in Iran for a short while to deal with personal matters, Mr. Khamsí was appointed a member of the first Continental Board of Counselors for Protection and Propagation of the Bahá'í Faith in Western Asia in 1968. This happened when the institution of the Counselors was created by the Universal House of Justice for the first time in June 1968. On their return to South America, Mr. Khamsí was appointed a member of the Continental Board of Counselors for South America in June of the next year. In that capacity, he traveled extensively around the entire sub-continent, encouraging teaching work, meeting with local, regional and national authorities, being interviewed by newspapers, radio and television, visiting communities and attending summer and winter schools as well as national and international conferences and conventions. He was a great speaker, promoting summer schools, and always emphasizing the importance of placing youth at the center of the Bahá'í community life.



The Bahá'í Radio stations established in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Chile, as well as a large number of Bahá'í institutes in rural areas, are also a tribute to his work devoted to the indigenous peoples in their efforts to respond to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's promise, which he often quoted: "You must attach great importance to the Indians, the original inhabitants of America. Should these Indians be educated and properly guided, there can be no doubt that through the Divine teachings they will become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illumined".

(Ruhíyyih Khánum, *The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith*, p. 60)

In 1973, he was appointed Trustee of the Continental Fund for South America. He was alongside Hand of the Cause, Dr. Muhájir, his childhood friend, when he passed away in December 1979 in Quito, Ecuador, during an international tour. Later, his travels extended tirelessly throughout the continent once the Universal House of Justice expanded the Continental Board's jurisdiction to all three Americas in 1981. One believer wrote of him: "Mr. Khamsí is so calm, so loving and wise that he inspires pioneers to carry on and win goals we never dreamed we could attain".



In 1983, Mr. Khamsí was appointed a member of the International Teaching Center in Haifa, Israel. The National Convention of Peru joyfully cabled the Bahá'í World Center: "... the friends applaud the appointment of Mr. Khamsí". He remained there for nearly a decade, directly serving the Universal House of Justice in that position, and visited national Bahá'í communities the world round. In Ridván 1992, he represented the Universal House of Justice during the first National Convention of Azerbaijan. On his return to Peru, Mr. Khamsí served for several years on the National Spiritual Assembly despite his advancing age.

When asked what he wished for, he would answer that he wanted his bones buried in Peru as a pioneer. If Eve Nicklin (1895-1985) is considered Peru's Spiritual Mother, Mr. Khamsí may justly be called Peru's Spiritual father. On his arrival, and under his guidance, Peru received a powerful boost, consolidating many local communities, both in cities and in indigenous zones, with native believers taking the lead in the teaching work. Mr. Khamsí will linger in the hearts of several generations of friends as their affectionate mentor, friend, and counselor. These generations have galvanized their faith under the aegis of his wise, loving company.

" They that have forsaken their country in the path of God and subsequently ascended unto His presence, such souls shall be blessed by the Concourse on High and their names recorded by the Pen of Glory among such as have laid down their lives as martyrs in the path of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsistent".

Bahá'ú'lláh

(Compilation, Quickeners of Mankind, p. 41)

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