



In 1909, an appeal reached the Bahá'ís of Chicago from a small group of Iranian Bahá'í doctors who were starting a hospital in Tehran, Persia, for an American woman doctor to come and work with them so that the new hospital's services would be available to women. The appeal was endorsed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Moody agreed to go.

Moody travelled to Tehran in late 1909, breaking her journey at 'Akka, Palestine, to spend several days visiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She arrived in Tehran November 25, 1909, and within a few weeks had a flourishing private practice as well as her work with the group of doctors at the hospital.

Moody was particularly concerned with the health needs of women. She saw many of the health problems she encountered among them as exacerbated by lack of even the most basic knowledge of hygiene and nursing skills and she began to instruct some Iranian women in practical nursing and midwifery.

Moody's interest in improving the situation of Iranian woman through education was not limited to matters of health. In 1910, she helped build on efforts that had been made by conducting small schools for girls in some Tehran Bahá'í homes to establish a formal school for girls under the auspices of the Tehran Bahá'í community. This school was not restricted to Bahá'ís, however, and it became a highly regarded institution educating numerous girls to the point where they could qualify as teachers themselves and help develop schools for girls throughout the country.

Within the Bahá'í community, Moody was also instrumental in the founding of Bahá'í religious study classes for girls in 1914. These classes provided a comprehensive, graduated course of study in their religion for Bahá'í girls that was intended to give them a grounding in their faith comparable to that already available to boys.

Moody was assisted in her efforts not only by local women who had laid the groundwork on which she was able to help them build but by three other American Bahá'í women who came specifically to work with her.

Elizabeth Stewart, a niece of Isabella Brittingham, was a trained nurse who came to work and live with Moody in 1910. Later in 1910, they were joined by Dr Sarah Clock who took a house in another part of town. In 1911, Lillian Kappes arrived to share Clock's house.

The first three women had come primarily because of their medical expertise and had found themselves much involved with education. Kappes came specifically to head the girls' school and put it on a solid academic basis. She also taught at the boys' school which was also run by the Tehran Bahá'í community.

Both Clock and Kappes spent the rest of their lives in Iran. Kappes died in 1920. Moody renamed the building fund for new premises for the girls' school that had been started the previous year in Kappes' honor and this fund was a major support for the work of the school in subsequent years. Clock died in 1922. Kappes and Clock were buried in the terrace surrounding

the shrine of the Bahá'í martyrs Varqa and Ruhu'llah.

Due to political unrest and anti-American feeling in Tehran in 1924, Moody and Stewart left Iran in the latter part of that year and arrived back in the United States in early 1925. Moody spent much of her time there campaigning for support for the girls' school in Tehran. She also nursed Stewart through recurring ill health until Stewart's death in October 1926.

After the death of Kappes, the girls' school had continued operating with teachers who had themselves been taught there by Kappes. In 1922, Dr Genvieve Coy, a specialist in educational psychology, arrived to take charge for a time. By late 1926, however, Shoghi Effendi was writing to the American Bahá'í community of the need for one or two American Bahá'ís to take up residence in Tehran and asking that Moody be consulted in this matter.

In late 1928, Moody herself returned to Tehran accompanied by Adelaide Sharp who was to take over the girls' school and assist with the boys' one. Sharp took a house of her own and was shortly joined by her mother, Clara, who kept house for her and assisted in her work with the schools.

After her return to Tehran, Moody moved in with a Persian family the father of whom she had known since his childhood. Her age and health did not permit her to be as active as before, but she did see a small number of private patients and hold a free clinic. She also regularly visited the girls' school.

Moody was much loved by the Tehran Bahá'í community and had many visitors during occasional bouts of illness that confined her to her room. She became increasingly infirm in the early 1930s but remained mentally vigorous. She died October 23, 1934, after a fairly brief illness. Her funeral was a large affair and she was buried near the graves of Kappes and Clock.

### Bibliography

Original sources in the National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois, that are of particular interest on Moody and her activities include the Orol Platt Papers, and copies of Moody's correspondence of 1909-1910 in the Thornton Chase Papers.

There were many mentions of her activities in *The Star of the West* and *Bahá'í News* over the years.

"A Bahá'í Pioneer of East and West - Doctor Susan I. Moody (The Hand-Maid of the Most High)" by Jessie E. Revell in *The Bahá'í World*, Vol VI (483-486) is useful but not always reliable.

Further discussion of the contribution made to the education of girls in Tehran by Moody and her associates can be found in R. Jackson Armstrong-Ingram. 1986. "American Bahá'í Women and the Education of Girls in Tehran, 1909-1934." in Peter Smith (ed.) *Studies in Babi and Bahá'í History*, Vol

III: In Iran. Los Angeles: Kalimat Press.

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