Ṭáhirih and the Conference of Badasht

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Translated from Persian

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Question: Can you provide an account of Ṭáhirih’s deliverance from Qazvín, her arrival in Ṭihrán, her departure for Badasht, and the events that transpired there?

Answer: In brief, what happened is the following. Those were the early days of the Cause and no one was informed of the divine teachings. All followed the law of the Qur’án and regarded warfare, retribution, and retaliation as permissible. In Qazvín, Ḥájí Mullá Taqí8 launched an attack from the pulpit and condemned those two resplendent stars, Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá’í and Siyyid Káẓim-i-Rashtí. He cursed and reviled them vehemently, saying: “This affair of the Báb, which is unmitigated error, is a hellish fire that has blazed forth from the grave of Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Káẓim.” In sum, he uttered the most brazen words and repeatedly hurled insults and invective at them.

A believer from Shíráz was present at his sermon and heard it with his own ears. As he was unaware of the divine teachings that were yet to be promulgated and the principles upon which the religion of God was to be established, he concluded that it behoved him to act according to the law of the Qur’án, and thus he set out to settle the score. He went before dawn to the mosque of the said Ḥájí Mullá Taqí and concealed himself in an alcove. When at dawn Ḥájí Mullá Taqí came to the mosque, that individual stabbed him in the back and in the mouth with a spear-tipped cane. Ḥájí Mullá Taqí fell to the ground and his assailant fled. When the people arrived, they saw the cleric lying dead.

A great tumult erupted and throughout the city a hue and cry was raised. The dignitaries of the town decided in concert that the assassins were Shaykh Rasúl-i-‘Arab and two other individuals, whom they viewed as being among the associates of Ṭáhirih. They immediately arrested these three individuals, and Ṭáhirih herself was subjected to severe restrictions. When that man from Shíráz saw that others had been apprehended in his place, he felt it unfit to remain silent and came of his own accord to the seat of the government to declare that Shaykh Rasúl and his friends were entirely innocent of the wrongful accusations levelled against them, and that he himself was the murderer. He described in full detail what had transpired, and confessed, saying: “These people are innocent: Set them free, for I am the guilty one and it is I who must be punished.” They arrested him but kept the others captive.

Briefly, they brought these four people from Qazvín to Ṭihrán. No matter how much that man from Shíráz protested that it was he who was guilty and that the others were entirely innocent—explaining that he had committed the crime because the victim had openly cursed and reviled his master from the pulpit and that, outraged and unable to contain himself, he had therefore

stabbed him in the mouth with a spearhead—no one listened. To the contrary, Ḥájí Mullá Taqí's son clamoured before the ministers of the government for the death of all four. Ṣadru'l-'Ulamá, who was the head of the clergy, sought an audience with the Sháh and said: "Ḥájí Mullá Taqí was an illustrious man, highly renowned in the eyes of all and deeply revered by the people of Qazvín. In avenging the murder of such a man, a single individual is of no consequence. All four men must be turned over to the heirs of Mullá Taqí and delivered to Qazvín, that they may be executed in that city and that its inhabitants may thus be placated." Out of regard for Ṣadru'l-'Ulamá and the people of Qazvín, the Sháh gave word that all four could be executed.

The man from Shíráz, seeing that the others had not been released in spite of his own arrest, escaped on a snowy night and went to the house of Riḍá Khán. Together they made a pact and departed for Shaykh Ṭabarsí, where they both met with martyrdom. As to Shaykh Rasúl and his friends, they were taken to Qazvín, where the populace fell upon them and killed them in the most horrendous manner.

As a result, Ṭáhirih met with the greatest hardship. No one would associate with her, and all her relatives—even her husband and two sons—showed the greatest enmity and would oppress and revile her. Bahá'u'lláh dispatched Áqá Hádíy-i-Qazvíní from Ṭihrán and, by an elaborate stratagem, arranged for Ṭáhirih to be rescued from Qazvín and brought directly to the private quarters of His house. At first no one knew of this, but when some within the inner circle of the believers were informed, they came to see her. I was a child, sitting on her lap and being held in her arms. The curtain was drawn, and those believers were seated in an adjoining room while she was speaking. The purport of her discourse, which was supported by a range of arguments, as well as by the Qur'án and the traditions of the Prophet, was that in every age an illustrious and distinguished Individual must be the focal Centre of the circle of guidance, the Pole Star of the firmament of the most excellent Law of God, and a perspicuous Leader; that all may defer to Him; and that in this day that illustrious and distinguished Individual is the Báb, Who has manifested Himself. Although her speech was eloquent, yet when she perceived that Bahá'u'lláh was to raise another call and shine forth with another radiance, she became even more enkindled and reached a state that can hardly be described. She forsook all patience and composure and well-nigh rent asunder the veil of concealment. Night and day she would at turns speak forth and cry out, laugh aloud, and weep bitterly.

Later Bahá'u'lláh sent her with a number of believers towards Badasht. Their first stop was a beautiful and verdant garden. Ṭáhirih and the friends arrived there and were later joined by Bahá'u'lláh, Who rested the night there. In the morning He sent Ṭáhirih and the friends with ample provisions to Badasht. After a few days, Bahá'u'lláh Himself went there. When He reached Badasht, Quddús had returned from Khurásán and he, too, came to Badasht, but he remained concealed.

In Badasht there was a field with a stream running through it and gardens to either side. Quddús remained concealed in one of the gardens, and Ṭáhirih resided in the other. A tent had been pitched for Bahá'u'lláh on that field, and the other believers were also housed in tents erected on the same field. In the evenings Bahá'u'lláh, Quddús, and Ṭáhirih would meet. Bahá'u'lláh made a solemn agreement with them that the truth of the Cause would be proclaimed at Badasht, but no specific day was designated.

Then, by chance, Bahá'u'lláh fell ill. As soon as he was informed, Quddús emerged from his concealment and entered Bahá'u'lláh's tent. Ṭáhirih sent a message saying: "Either bring Bahá'u'lláh to the garden where I reside or I will come myself." Quddús said: "Bahá'u'lláh is unwell and cannot come", which was a signal. Ṭáhirih, seizing upon the opportunity, arose and, unveiled, came forth from the garden. She proceeded towards the tent of Bahá'u'lláh crying out and proclaiming: "I am the Trumpet-blast; I am the Bugle-call!"—which are two of the signs of the Day of Resurrection mentioned in the Qur'án. Calling out in this fashion, she entered the tent of Bahá'u'lláh. No sooner had she entered than Bahá'u'lláh instructed the believers to recite the Súrih of the Event from the Qur'án, a Súrih that describes the upheaval of the Day of Resurrection.

In such wise was the Day of Resurrection proclaimed. The believers were seized with such fear and terror that some fled, others remained bewildered and dumbfounded, and still others wept and lamented. Some were so dismayed that they fell ill, and Ḥájí Mullá Ismá'íl was so overcome with fear and terror that he cut his own throat. But after a few days, peace and composure were regained and the confusion and anxiety were dispelled. Most of those who had fled became steadfast again, and the episode of Badasht drew to a close.