

Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kázim

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated from Persian



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Question: What is the story of Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá’í and Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashtí, the journey of their disciples to Shíráz, and their declaration of allegiance to the Báb, and how did these events unfold?

Answer: Know that in the latter days the Shí’ihs of Persia had forgotten the truth of the religion of God and had become entirely devoid and deprived of the morals of the spiritually minded. They were cleaving to empty husks and remained entirely heedless of the pith and substance. They had nothing to show but outward observances, such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, almsgiving, and the commemoration of the blessed Imáms. The people of true knowledge would therefore call them “Qishrí” (superficial), for amongst them the inner truths and meanings were absent, spiritual perceptions were non-existent, and heavenly morals had become but an idle matter.

When the night of separation approached the dawn—that is, when the concealment of the True One ran its course and the dawn of the morn of God drew nigh—Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá’í appeared. He guided the people to inner truths and meanings and expounded the secrets and mysteries of the Qur’án. The Shí’ihs then became divided into two camps: Some followed the august Shaykh and became known as Shaykhís, while others kept to their prior condition and were called “Qishrí”.

The illustrious Shaykh began to invite the people to anticipate the advent of God’s revelation and the blazing of the Fire of Sinai. He proclaimed, in his writings and in his lessons, that the dawn was fast approaching and that the appearance of the promised Manifestation was imminent. Thus did he seek to instil receptivity in the hearts of the people and admonish them to await day and night the advent of the divine Manifestation. He became most renowned for his knowledge and perfections, not only in Persia but throughout the Shí’ih world. He was mentioned at every gathering and was sought after by all.

During his lifetime he trained and instructed Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashtí, and before he died he appointed him as his successor. Siyyid Kázim followed in the footsteps of the illustrious Shaykh and occupied himself night and day with elucidating the inner truths and meanings and in disseminating the secrets and mysteries of the Qur’án. He so imbued the people with anticipation for the coming Revelation that his disciples, in their eagerness, forsook all patience and repose and dispersed in every direction until they found the Promised One.



TRANSLATION

Moreover, Siyyid Kázim explicitly specified, in the preamble of his book “Sharḥ-i-Qaṣídih”,¹⁰ the name of Bahá’u’lláh: “Praise be to God Who hath adorned the preamble of the book of His Essence with the mystery of distinction, the ornament of that Point wherefrom the Há is manifested, with neither assimilation nor separation, through the Alif.” To fully explain this expression to you would take a long time, since you are unfamiliar with such words and expressions, and were I to do so it would fill an entire book. But since time is short I will briefly provide a word-for-word translation¹¹ so that you will understand the general meaning. He says: Praise be to God who has adorned the book of existence with the mystery of distinction through degrees, for it is through such differences that the world of existence is adorned. If all things were of one kind and there were no distinctions, existence would be imperfect. The realm of God and the realm of creation, the realm above and the realm below, the realm of truth and the realm of illusion: All these distinctions are among the inherent requirements of existence. He then says that the book of existence is adorned with that Point wherefrom the letter Há’ appears and the letter Alif is manifested. And in the same book he explains in numerous passages that the Point is the letter Bá’. And when the letters Bá’, Há’, and Alif are brought together it makes “Bahá.”

Siyyid Kázim also spoke of trilaterals and quadrilaterals. A trilateral is a word comprising three letters, such as “Alí”, and a quadrilateral is a word comprising four, such as “Muḥammad”.¹² When these two are combined it makes “Alí-Muḥammad”, which is the blessed name of the Báb. In numerous passages of the same book he explicitly refers to the Báb and extols Him with boundless laudations and attributes, saying that the mysteries of all that has been and all that shall be are found in Him. He also says that all the inner truths and meanings of the Sacred Scriptures are enfolded and allusively expressed in the verse “Bismi’lláhi’r-Raḥmání’r-Raḥím” (In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate), that all the meanings of “Bismi’lláh” (in the name of God) are encapsulated and comprehended in the letter Bá’, which is the sum total of all truths and mysteries, and that the Bá’ refers to Bahá’u’lláh.

The late Siyyid had asked the illustrious Shaykh to expound in some way that Hidden Mystery. The Shaykh wrote in reply: “There must needs be a Seat for this Cause and a Place for every Announcement.” That is, this Cause upon which we have embarked has a designated Seat and Centre, and every Announcement must be established from a given place, meaning a centre wherein it is realized. Then he said: “I can say no more; I can appoint no time. ‘His Cause will be made known after a while (Ḥín)’.”¹³ That is, I cannot specify that determined Centre and cannot explicitly say Who He is. Then he cites this verse of the Qur’án: “His Cause will be made known after a while (Ḥín).”¹⁴ The preceding verse is “He, verily, is naught but a Remembrance unto all the worlds.” In the Commentary on the Súrih of Joseph, the Báb refers to Himself as “the Remembrance of God”. The august Shaykh intimates here that that “Seat and Centre” is “the Remembrance of God”, and that the verse “His Cause will be made known after a while (Ḥín)” means that you will grasp whatsoever that intended Centre will announce and proclaim after “Ḥín”. Now, according to the abjad reckoning, “Ḥín” is equivalent to sixty-eight and “after Ḥín” is sixty-nine, the year of Bahá’u’lláh’s revelation.¹⁵ The substance of these words is that whatsoever that Remembrance of God will announce and intimate will become clear and manifest in the year after Ḥín, that is, in the year sixty-nine.

As a result of the passionate encouragement of the illustrious Shaykh to anticipate the advent of God and of his assertion of its imminence, and likewise as a result of the utterances of the illustrious Siyyid who night and day proclaimed the approach of that advent—going so far as to instruct his disciples one day to go forth and seek after their Master—Mullá Ḥusayn and some of the Siyyid's other disciples set themselves to the search. And since a tradition had been reported that the Promised One would go to the mosque of Kúfih, they also went to that mosque and stayed there for a time, awaiting His advent. Even the illustrious Siyyid himself, at the close of his life, left Karbilá for a visit to Kázimayn and Samarra and returned. In the course of his journey to Samarra, and in the village of Musayyib he spoke to his disciples of his own death. When his disciples began to weep and lament, crying out and beseeching him, he asked them: "Would ye not wish that I pass from this world, that your Master may appear?"

In brief, our meaning is that these two illustrious souls endowed their followers with the greatest receptivity. That is why after the passing of the late Siyyid his disciples sought with all their might after the Promised Beauty. Mullá Ḥusayn and some of his disciples departed from Iraq, made for Persia, and were taken up with the search till they entered the city of Shíráz. As Mullá Ḥusayn had met the Báb before in Karbilá and knew Him, he became His guest. On the night of the fifth of Jamádíyu'l-Awwal,¹⁶ Mullá Ḥusayn was seated in the presence of the Báb, who was preparing the tea. As the Báb was serving the tea, He recited certain verses. Mullá Ḥusayn was amazed and astonished to hear a young man, with no religious education or training in the Arabic tongue, recite verses of the utmost eloquence and power, a feat which he could have never thought possible. This led to his awakening and allegiance. The following day he told his disciples and others that he had found the Object of their search and proceeded to describe and portray Him, but he concealed His identity and did not divulge His name. However, he so extolled His attributes that his disciples and the others were enthralled with this news and with unrelenting thirst continued to search for the life-giving waters. Finally, after a few days, he specified His blessed Name. A great commotion ensued. Seventeen people bore allegiance to Him, and the letter of Ṭáhirih, which was with a certain Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí, was presented to the Báb. For Ṭáhirih had given him this letter and asked him to present it to the Promised One when once they had found Him. In that letter she had included the following ode, the opening of which reads:

The effulgence of Thy face flashed forth,
And the rays of Thy visage arose on high.
Then speak the word, 'Am I not your Lord?'
And 'Thou art, Thou art!' we will all reply.¹⁷

Thus Ṭáhirih became the eighteenth believer. The Shí'ihis believed in fourteen immaculate Souls and four Gates. The fourteen immaculate Souls are Muḥammad, Fáṭimih, and the twelve Imáms. The four Gates are the four individuals who succeeded one another as the leaders of the Shí'ihis after the twelfth Imám. Thus these eighteen souls were appointed to match those eighteen—the main intent was the number. The Báb Himself was the nineteenth. Such is the basis of the number nineteen that has been mentioned in all the Books and Tablets of the Báb. The names of the Letters of the Living are as follows:

1. Mullá Ḥusayn
2. Muḥammad-Ḥasan, his brother

3. Muḥammad Báqir, his nephew
4. Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí
5. Mullá Khudá-Bakhsh-i-Qúchání, later named Mullá 'Alí
6. Mullá Ḥasan-i-Bajistání
7. Siyyid Ḥusayn-i-Yazdí
8. Mírzá Muḥammad Rawḍih-Khán
9. Sa'íd-i-Hindí
10. Mullá Maḥmúd-i-Khu'í
11. Mullá Jalíl-i-Urúmí
12. Mullá Muḥammad-i-Ibdál-i-Marághí'í
13. Mullá Báqir-i-Tabrízí
14. Mullá Yúsuf-i-Ardibílí
15. Mírzá Hádí, son of Mullá 'Abdu'l-Vahháb-i-Qazvíní
16. Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí-i-Qazvíní
17. Ṭáhirih
18. Quddús

The greatness and glory of most of these Letters of the Living resides solely in the fact that they professed their faith at the very beginning. Among them and in terms of importance, a few souls occupy a primary position—Mullá Ḥusayn, Quddús, and Ṭáhirih; a few other blessed souls occupy a secondary position; and the rest are honoured solely for having believed in the very beginning—two of them even, like Judas Iscariot, recanted their faith later.

After the blessed person of the Báb came to light and His fame spread, Mullá Ḥusayn unloosed his tongue and openly taught the Faith, and was charged to go to other provinces and teach. These in short are the events surrounding the declaration of allegiance of Mullá Ḥusayn and the other Letters of the Living.