

Qazvín: Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím-i-Qazviní

Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím-i-Qazviní was one of the three main amanuenses of the Báb (the other two being Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdí and Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunúzí). An amanuensis is a secretary who writes and copies what is dictated. Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím was given the title of Mírzá Ahmad by Bahá’u’lláh (*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p439), and being a scribe, he was therefore also known as Mírzá Ahmad-i-Katib [meaning Mr. Ahmad, the scribe].

What is a bit confusing in the *Dawn-Breakers* is that Nabíl sometimes refers to Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím as Mírzá Ahmad – the two names are used interchangeably, and the reader is left to conclude that it is the same person based on the context.

Briefly, Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím was from Qazvín and the story of his search for spirituality, his dream and how he came to recognize the Báb is told by Nabíl in detail in *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 8, p162-168. This happened in Shíráz in the summer of 1846, after the Báb had returned from his pilgrimage (*hajj*). After relating this story, Nabíl then relates how he met Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím in Tihrán (shortly after the struggle at Fort Shaykh Tabarsí had ended) and how they became friends, a close friendship that would last a long time [*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 8, p168-169]. Nabíl returns to the theme of his trust and friendship with Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím again in *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 21, p439-445. This is important because Nabíl greatly valued and trusted Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím and used his stories as a source of reliable information when writing the *Dawn-Breakers*.

Soon after his first meeting with the Báb in Shíráz in the summer of 1846, Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím begins to help transcribe the Writings of the Báb. He becomes one of the three main amanuenses of the Báb and accompanies the Báb in this role at many points during the Báb’s life as is mentioned at various points in the *Dawn-Breakers* including: Chapter 9, p176 (he helps Vahíd copy the Báb’s commentary on the Súrih of Kawthar which had just been revealed for Vahíd) and p192 (he is asked by the Báb to go to Isfáhán and wait for Him over there); Chapter 10, p212 (he is transcribing the Báb’s Writings in Isfáhán with the other two amanuenses; and they are the only ones who know the whereabouts of the Báb when He is being secretly housed by the Mu’tamid); and Chapter 12, 227-228 (he joins the Báb at Kulayn, just outside Tihrán; and recounts incident of the Báb missing for a period of time). Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím was close to Bahá’u’lláh as well, and it was to Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím that the Báb, shortly before His martyrdom, sent His rings, seals and documents in a sealed coffer to deliver to Bahá’u’lláh (*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 23, p504-505). Later in 1850, Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím together with Áqáy-i-Kalím [faithful younger brother of Bahá’u’lláh], were entrusted by Bahá’u’lláh to securely hide the holy remains of the Báb (*Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 23, p521-522).

Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím was in Tihrán in 1852 when the attempt on the life of the Sháh was made. He was arrested. His brother Áqá 'Abdu'l-Hamíd, who had come to urge him to return to Qazvín, was arrested with him. The two brothers were imprisoned in the Siyah-Chal with Bahá'u'lláh but did not survive. Both were taken by the artillerymen of the royal bodyguard, who hacked them to pieces with their daggers.¹ This was probably in the present Maydan-i-Arg, adjacent to the artillerymen's camp and the passage to the Siyah-Chal.²

[Note: In 1852, besides Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím, Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdí, one of the other of the three main amanuenses of the Báb, was also imprisoned in the Siyah-Chal with Bahá'u'lláh. And like Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím, Siyyid Husayn-i-Yazdí, was also taken and hacked to pieces by the royal bodyguard.]

Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím was loved and highly trusted. As noted, Nabíl got several of the accounts of the early events of the Faith from Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím, the most famous being the account of the Báb's declaration to Mullá Husayn. That whole account, which is noted as Mullá Husayn narrating, is what Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím told Nabíl he had heard many times from Mullá Husayn. The *Dawn-Breakers* Chapter 3, p52 begins this account thus:

Mírzá Ahmad-i-Qazvíní, the martyr, who on several occasions had heard Mullá Husayn recount to the early believers the story of his moving and historic interview with the Báb, related to me the following: "I have heard Mullá Husayn repeatedly and graphically describe the circumstances of that remarkable interview: 'The Youth who met me outside the gate of Shíráz overwhelmed me with expressions of affection and loving-kindness."

One commentary states:

Mírzá Ahmad was important as an authority on the writings of the Bab. Several manuscripts in his hand of the Arabic and Persian Bayans survive. He handled the private correspondence of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and Mírzá Yahyá with discretion. He was also one of Nabíl's principal informants for the inner history of the early Bábí period. Modern Bahá'ís know him best as the source through which Mulla Husayn's famous account of the Bab's declaration reached Nabil.

The sincerity of his spiritual search is apparent from his own account preserved in Nabíl, from the trust placed in him by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, and from his own actions: his contentment with the modest stations of merchant and scribe when his learning and piety would have given him an honored place among the 'ulamá, his abrupt departures in search of Siyyid Kázim and the Báb, and his

¹ Balyuzi *Bahá'u'lláh King of Glory* Chapter 17, p87.

² [Bahá'í Library: Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím-i-Qazviní \(Mírza Ahmad Katib\)](#)

refusal to rejoin his family in Qazvín. He enjoyed the respect and affection of Bahá'u'lláh and his family and the obvious devotion of Nabíl.³

More detailed accounts of Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím-i-Qazviní's life can be found here:

- [Bahá'í Chronicles: Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím-i-Qazviní](#)
- [Bahá'í Library: Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím-i-Qazviní \(Mirza Ahmad Katib\)](#)

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³ [Bahá'í Library: Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím-i-Qazviní \(Mirza Ahmad Katib\)](#)