

Zavárih: Áqá Siyyid Ismá'íl-i-Zavári'í

Áqá Siyyid Ismá'íl was from Zavárih, a small township near Isfahán. He was a learned man and a master of calligraphy and is usually known by the title of Dhabíh (meaning sacrifice). The reason why he is known by this title will become clear below. He should not be confused with Hájí Muhammad-Ismá'il-i-Káshání who was given the title of Dhabíh by Bahá'u'lláh. Hájí Muhammad-Ismá'il-i-Káshání was one the brothers of Hájí Mirzá Jání of Káshán.

Áqá Siyyid Ismá'íl-i-Zavári'í was one the early Bábís and instrumental in teaching the Faith to Nabíl-i-Zarandí. Nabíl tells the story of how he was taught by Áqá Siyyid Ismá'íl in Dawn-Breakers Chapter 21, p437-439. Several years later, Áqá Siyyid Ismá'íl went to Baghdád to meet Bahá'u'lláh and he immediately recognized the station of Bahá'u'lláh. His living quarters were close to the residence of Bahá'u'lláh. Áqá Siyyid Ismá'íl-i-Zavári'í is famous for sweeping the doorway in front of Bahá'u'lláh's House in Baghdád and collecting the dust in his 'abá (cloak) and taking them to the river Tigris where he disposed the dust. He did this because he said the earth and dust that had been touched by Bahá'u'lláh's blessed feet should not be touched by anything unclean. One day, early in the morning, he was observed leaving Baghdád and going towards Kázimayn. There by the roadside, facing the direction of the House of Bahá'u'lláh, he slit his own throat and died. Bahá'u'lláh extolled him as the "Beloved and the Pride of the Martyrs".

Áqá Siyyid Ismá'íl-i-Zavári'í's story is told in Balyuzi *Bahá'u'lláh: King of Glory* Chapter 22, p132-134. The following account is extracted from those pages:

Nabíl was once again back in Baghdád. Bahá'u'lláh told him then to go over a manuscript of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* which Áqá Siyyid Ismá'íl-i-Zavári'í had been copying, to ensure that all was correct. Siyyid Ismá'íl had come from Írán with high hopes and had attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. He found all that he expected, all that he craved. He was of noble descent, a learned man and a master of calligraphy. ... Nabíl says that it took them eighteen days. When the task was completed, he asked Siyyid Ismá'íl to tell him of his experience. Nabíl knew that Siyyid Ismá'íl went out, every night around midnight, and with his turban swept the street where the house of Bahá'u'lláh was situated, gathering up all the sweepings in his 'abá (cloak) to fling them into the Tigris. This earth and this dust, he would say, was hallowed by His blessed feet, and should not be touched by anything unclean. To Nabíl's query, Siyyid Ismá'íl answered, precisely and considerately, while his eyes welled with tears: "What I have seen cannot be described. After I asked Him for spiritual sustenance, and He said that it had been granted to me, door after door opened upon my heart, and my soul became acquainted with thoughts not of this world. One night, in His *bírúní*, (outer section of the residence where guests were met), His Blessed Person asked for a candle to peruse a paper, and I, as usual lost in wonderment at my

own condition, suddenly thought: "Is it possible that that visage, the sight of which the Chosen Ones and the Messengers of God had longed to behold, could be unveiled in a human temple?" and as soon as this thought passed through my mind, His blessed voice called out to me: " Áqá Siyyid Ismá'íl, look!" and when I gazed at His blessed face, I saw that which no word can ever describe. All that I can say is this: it seemed as if a hundred thousand seas, vast and sunlit, billowed upon that Blessed Face. What happened then, I do not know. My last word to you is this: never ask for anything like this and be contented with what is given unto you, and always say, "O God! allow it all to end well with us" - and pray for me that my own end shall be well.

The incident which Siyyid Ismá'íl had described to Nabil happened thus. One day Bahá'u'lláh was a guest in the house of Áqá Muhammad-Ridáy-i-'Aríd. In front of Him were laid dishes of fruits and sweets. Siyyid Ismá'íl too was there. When Bahá'u'lláh gave the Siyyid some sweets, the latter expressed his desire for spiritual sustenance, to which Bahá'u'lláh replied, 'That has been given to you'.

Now Siyyid Ismá'íl became afire with the love of Bahá'u'lláh. Poems left by him testify to that all-consuming love:

Hear this from me,
 Once again I say, and saying it, burn do I:
 'Has anyone ever seen flowers pullulant in fire?'
 This I say, and saying it, burn do I.
 'Tear apart the veils, Bring forth the means,
 Breathe the breath of love.'
 This I say, and saying it, burn do I.
 'Behold the garden of the Lord, The land divine,
 All in Him to nothingness reach.'
 This I say, and saying it, burn do I.
 Suffice thus to end my word:
 'My soul alight has He set, My life in His path shall be shed.'
 This I say, and saying it, burn do I.

After that, Siyyid Ismá'íl could be seen sweeping before sunrise the doorway of Bahá'u'lláh 's house. One day, early in the morning, he was observed leaving Baghdad and going towards Kazimayn. There by the roadside he sat down and, facing the direction of the house of Bahá'u'lláh and the holy shrines of the seventh and the ninth Imáms, he cut his throat, and thus he died. By his act he became known as 'Dhabíh' - the Sacrifice. And the pen of Bahá'u'lláh extolled him as the 'Beloved and the Pride of the Martyrs'.

In [another description of this same set of incidents](#), extracted from *La'Alí-yi-Derakhshan*, by M.A. Faizi, pp. 195-99, it is noted:

Bahá'u'lláh in Kitáb-i-Badí' has related the rest of Siyyid Ismail's story. Briefly He gives the following account. One day he requested Bahá'u'lláh to grace his residence by His presence. He offered fruits and sweets to his Beloved Master. He expressed extreme lowliness and servitude to the Blessed Beauty and begged Bahá'u'lláh to grant him with spiritual food in order to put his soul in fire. Bahá'u'lláh commanded him to come and seat in front of Him. Then the Blessed Beauty began to speak to him with such words that completely transformed him and filled him with such extreme love and devotion that he completely ignored his own being and everything in this contingent world. Then Bahá'u'lláh adds that the whole world will not be able to describe what went on in that encounter. Being so in love with his Beloved he could not stand the unpleasant behavior of the enemies and those who outwardly claiming to be believers but were practically causing Him to be harmed. So one early morning after sweeping the area around Bahá'u'lláh's residence took the dust to the nearby river and went to meet with a few of his fellow believers. Then he went to the riverside near the House and in the ecstasy of his love for Bahá'u'lláh and sorrow of what was being done to him committed suicide by cutting his own throat. This action impressed some of the enemies of Bahá'u'lláh to the extent that they changed their attitudes and became friendly towards Him. Bahá'u'lláh in Kitáb-i-Badí' has recorded this story and at the end He adds that when Siyyid Ismail was going towards that spot to sacrifice himself all the Angels on High were circumambulating him. In the famous Tablet addressed to the Prime Minister of Ottoman Empire (Lawh-i-Ra'ís) Bahá'u'lláh referring to Siyyid Ismail calls him The Beloved and the King of Martyrs.

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