

Afterwards, Haji Shah Muhammad Manshadi and another believer were instructed to bury the casket beneath the floor of the inner sanctuary of the shrine of Imam-Zadih Zayd, where it lay undetected until Mirza Asadu'llah Isfahani was informed of its exact location through a chart forwarded to him by Bahá'u'lláh.

Mirza Asadu'llah first "removed the remains to his own house in Tihran, after which they were deposited in several other localities such as the house of Husayn-i-'Aliy-i-Isfahani and that of Muhammad-Karim-i-'Attar, where they remained hidden until the year 1316 A.H. (1899), when, in pursuance of directions issued by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, this same Mirza Asadu'llah, together with a number of other believers, transported them by way of Isfahan, Kirmanshah, Baghdad and Damascus, to Beirut and thence by sea to 'Akka, arriving at their destination on the 19th of the month of Ramadan 1316 A.H. (January 31, 1899), fifty lunar years after the Bab's execution in Tabriz." [2]

In listing the Bahá'í properties acquired in Iran, Shoghi Effendi has recorded, "Other acquisitions that have greatly extended the range of Bahá'í endowments in that country include ... the house owned by Mirza Husayn-'Aliy-i-Nur, where the Bab's remains had been concealed." [3]

Aqa Husayn-'Ali Nur:

Aqa Husayn-'Ali's father was Aqa 'Ali, a deeply religious Muslim who would observe the Islamic laws to the point of fanaticism. When Aqa 'Ali first heard of the Bahá'í Faith, he decided on investigating its veracity, promising himself that should he find it to be of truth, he would walk to the presence of its Author. Some time passed and one night he dreamt of Bahá'u'lláh and the Bab. Through this vision, he was confirmed in his belief and with great ecstasy, began his journey to 'Akka. With utmost difficulty, he reached his destination, only to be told, after a prolonged search, that Bahá'u'lláh was incarcerated in the city's prison and all were barred from attaining His august presence. Desperate to behold the Object of his longing, Aqa 'Ali ascended a nearby hill and from its top was able to briefly gaze at the countenance of Bahá'u'lláh Who waved at him from the window of His prison cell. Thrilled with this blessing, Aqa 'Ali immediately submitted a supplication and was honored with a response from Bahá'u'lláh in which He bestowed the surname "Nur" [light] upon him. Aqa 'Ali Nur returned to his native town of Isfahan and commenced teaching the Cause. [4]

Aqa Husayn-'Ali was born in 1861 in Isfahan. When he was eighteen, two prominent and wealthy Bahá'í merchants of the city, Mirza Hasan and Mirza Husayn, surnamed the King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs, were wrongfully accused, seized and after considerable tortures, put to death. This event took place at the instigation of the leading 'ulama and with the knowledge and collusion of the governor, Zillu's-Sultan.

During the evening following these martyrdom, Husayn-'Ali and his older brother, Hasan-'Ali, together with three other believers who served the King of Martyrs, clandestinely left the city and through unfrequented routes and after enduring great hardships eventually reached Tihran.

Gradually, they were able to reestablish themselves in the capital where Husayn-'Ali became a successful merchant, his seed-money having been granted by Bahá'u'lláh. He bought a parcel of land on the south side of Bagh Firdaws (presently a women's hospital), next to the Bazar Madar-Aqa, where he built a nine-room house. It was in this house that for four years the remains of the Bab were kept.

Some time later, Aqa Husayn-'Ali committed to paper his fascinating memories of the King and the Beloved of Martyrs and the events leading to their slaying, and he included a chapter on the concealment of the remains of the Bab in his house in Tihran. Considerably supplementing A.H. Ishraq-Khavari's *Núrayn-i Nayyiran*, this book contains many Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and was published in 128 BE through the efforts of Aqa Husayn-'Ali's son, Colonel 'Izzatu'llah Nur, under the title "Khatirat Muhajiri Az Isfahan" (memoirs of a refugee from Isfahan).

An Extract from "Khatirat Muhajiri Az Isfahan", pages 68-75[5]:

About the year 1269 Sh[6], Mirza

Asadu'llah Isfahani and his wife arrived from Isfahan in Tihran and came to the residence of this servant, which was located south of the present Bagh Firdaws. After a few days, he mentioned, "We intend to continue our journey to the Holy Land, but certain objects have been left in our trust which we have placed in a box and now wish to leave them in your care. After our return, we will come and retrieve our trust, but you must exert your utmost to ensure the protection and safekeeping of these items."

I accepted this charge and the following day, he and his wife returned to our house carrying a wooden box. With utmost reverence, they placed the box in the room near the courtyard and asked that the room be locked and no one be permitted inside until their return the subsequent day. They took the key with them.

The next day Aqa Mirza Asadu'llah and his wife returned and this time they brought with them an iron container (known as, *Hishtar-khun Sanduq*), which is lined with iron sheets from both outside and inside. They opened the room and the two of them entered and closed the curtains so carefully that nothing could be seen from outside and we had no idea what they were doing within the room.

They stayed inside for four hours. Finally, they emerged from the room and summoning me forward, stated, "This is the trust that we like to leave in your charge." I looked inside and noticed that the new iron container was locked and sealed, and placed in the center of the room. A fantastic aroma or attar and musk was emanating from the container and perfuming the air.

We left the container in the large, built-in pantry of the room and later, one

of the Bahá'í youth, who was a builder, came and brick-walled the front of the pantry.

Of course, caring for an entrusted object is a very difficult task, particularly when one believes it to be a box of the Writings by the Bab and Bahá'u'lláh. As such, after Aqa Mirza Asadu'llah's departure, I was protecting that trust with my own life. Even at nights, I would stand guard in the room till morning and be watchful. In fact, early on, for many nights I would sleep in that room, but after a while refrained from doing so.

It went thusly for two years, until once more the people of rancor and enmity in Tihran raised the standard of sedition and some of the believers, including Ibn-i Abhar, Haji Amin and Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar were arrested. News was spreading throughout the city that the homes of Bahá'ís were being targeted for pillage and plunder. This rumor greatly disturbed me and I worried that the enemies may rush our home and steal the trust. Therefore, we convened a family consultation and it was decided to more securely hide the entrusted container.

Quickly we moved the container from the pantry on the western side of the house to a location on the eastern side, where we removed a portion of one of the thick walls and vertically inserted the container in the cavity. That night, we raised a wall in front of the cavity and covered it with plaster, which was heated all night by a fire so by the morning it was completely dry and looked identical to the other portions of the room.

That very day, I wrote to Mirza Asadu'llah Isfahani, stating, "Great uproar reigns throughout Tihran and rouges and ruffians are determined to harm and persecut this innocent community [i.e. Bahá'ís], and may even succeed in pillaging the homes of believers. Since safekeeping a trust is one of the important ordinances enjoined upon the people of Bahá, until now I have protected your trust with my life. However, now there is the possibility that hoodlums may rush our house and, God forbidden, harm your trust. Therefore, at your earliest, kindly arrange for your return to Tihran to retrieve this trust."

I sent the above letter and some time later received a reply from Mirza Asadu'llah which stated that, at an opportune time, he would acquaint the Master with the situation and after receiving His permission, would come to Tihran to regain the entrusted container.

A year later, Aqa Mirza Asadu'llah came to Tihran, arrived at our house and asked for the container. We removed it from its hiding place inside the walls and returned it to him. After carefully inspecting it, he moved it to another location, which apparently was the home of Aqa Muhammad-Karim 'Attar.

Six months had passed when one day the postman brought a letter from Kirmanshah. Upon examining it, I noticed that it was from Aqa Mirza Asadu'llah.

I quickly opened it and read that he had expressed much appreciation and gratitude for the safekeeping of the trust that had been in my charge for nearly four years. He had further written, "However, your efforts in protecting this trust are not without their due reward. Indeed, they have won a prize that even your progenies, generation after generation, would pride themselves in your service. Your house will forever be honored that at one time it was the repository of such sacred trust." At last, he had revealed, "Know that this trust was none other than the sanctified remains of the Wronged of the World, the Primal Point, may my soul be a ransom for His martyrdom. Know the worth of this charge as your house will one day be the site of pilgrimage of millions of people and indeed it will be regarded as one of the Faith's Holy Places."

... On reading this letter, immediately the friends were invited to our house and the above letter was read for them. It was a majestic feast that rarely one similar to it had been seen before. All the friends and lovers of that Manifestation of Divinity, perfumed their nostrils with the musk of the spot where the sacred remains had been deposited and prostrating themselves on that threshold, used its dust as the kohl of their eyes. It was a feast conducted in the utmost magnificence and splendor. The lovers of that Beloved of the World composed enchanting odes and sang enthralling songs. From that day, that spot was designated as one of the Faith's Holy Places. In accordance with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wish, a picture of the house and that room was taken and sent to the Holy Land.

Some time later, when I was privileged to be in the presence of the Master on pilgrimage, one afternoon, along with a group of believers I was invited to the home of Mirza Asadu'llah. Once more, Mirza Asadu'llah reiterated, "Protect that house since it's one of the Bahá'í Holy Places!"

Notes:

[1] This article is dedicated to the loving memory of 'Izzatu'llah Nur.

[2] God Passes By 274.

[3] God Passes By 338.

[4] Khatirat Muhajiri Az Isfahan 79-80.

[5] The following extract is translated for the first time in this article.

[6] 1890.

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