

Bahá'u'lláh's

ministry Jamal was foremost among the teachers of the Faith and famous throughout the community.

Bahá'u'lláh revealed many Tablets for him (I think close to 100 but since I do not have them all I am not sure; many are unpublished). In many of these Tablets Bahá'u'lláh had exhorted him to faithfulness and purity of intention and at times he admonished him for his actions which were harmful to the Faith, and overlooked his shortcomings. But Jamal's hypocrisy was known to those who were close to him.

Before becoming a Bahá'í, Jamal was a learned Mujtahed from a town called Burujerd. There was a time that he had a lot of respect from the Bahá'ís of Iran. It was after the passing of Bahá'u'lláh that Jamal showed his true colours. He rejected the covenant and rebelled against Abdu'l-Bahá. There were other covenant breakers in Iran at that time but he was the leader of all of them.

When Jamal-i-Burujirdi was in Iran, Mirza Muhammad-Ali had contacted him and established secret links with Jamal and a few others like him to promote the covenant breaking activities in Iran. Jamal, together with Mirza Muhammad-Ali, had designed a strategy to make their rebellion public and divide the community of Bahá'ís of Iran. Even though Abdu'l-Bahá knew about their intentions and covenant-breaking activities, for four years he did not reveal them to the Bahá'ís outside of Holy Land. After four years the covenant breakers themselves unmasked themselves by printing letters loaded with falsehoods and misleading statements, which is another subject.

This rebellion that I have mentioned in the above paragraph had taken place soon after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh. Mirza Muhammad-Ali formed private circles within the family and contacted secretly some eminent Bahá'ís at that time such as Jamal-Burujirdi to start their terrible activities. Jamal was really the chief representative of Mirza Muhammad-Ali in Iran.

It is interesting to note that how proud Jamal was of himself that even after becoming a Bahá'í he continued to wear cleric's robes (Aba wa amameh) and never gave up the traits of superiority and pride. Also, he continued his customary Islamic practice of making his hands available for those who would like to kiss them! He used to explain to the Bahá'ís that, although Bahá'u'lláh had forbidden the kissing of hands, Jamal had decided that in the circumstances prevailing at the time such a practice would be conducive to the exaltation of the Faith! Since he was a very learned man and there were many Iranians at that time who knew nothing they continued to respect him more and more, and when ever they knew where he was giving a talk they would go and listen to him. Abdu'l-Bahá says in "Rahig-i-Maghtom V.1" that Jamal was so proud of himself that he did not allow the believers to sit in his presence. In order to show respect everybody had to stand to hear him speak. Once, an old man who was not a believer had come to one of his meetings to investigate about the Faith. When he saw every one standing, he had to get special

permission from Jamal to sit down, for he was an old man and could not stand at his feet for a long time!

Bahá'u'lláh makes a reference to Jamal-i-Burujirdi's actions in "Ishraqat."

In

summary, He says "We have concealed Jamal's actions and Jamal thought We are ignorant..." Bahá'u'lláh continues in the same Tablet by saying that "Jamal did not realize that We were aware at all times about his deeds and wrong doings but because of the sin-covering eye of God did not disclose his faults until the time that the wrong-doings of Jamal started harming the Faith."

Abdu'l-Bahá said that it was a good thing that Jamal was finally expelled. He also added that Jamal was like a poison to the Bahá'í community. In this respect Abdu'l-Bahá said that the Cause of God is like an ocean which cleanses itself by casting upon its shores the dead bodies and loathsome objects which are of no use to it.

At the time of Jamal, there was a well-known story among the believers who knew him closely, that when he went to visit his friends, after knocking on the door, when the owner of the house asked "who is it?" he used to respond: "This is Jamal-i-Mubarak" (The Blessed Beauty!), a title which was exclusive to Bahá'u'lláh.

Jamal-i-Burujirdi used to refer to himself in a highly exaggerated manner. For example, in one of his letters he says "Verily, Jamalu'l-Ilm (Beauty of Knowledge) has manifested himself with the power of truth" and he closes the same letter by saying "Verily, God has opened to my face the door of all knowledge. It is fitting that you seek my advice in all things... for in truth I am the most learned of the divines on this earth." In all this time, also, he thought himself a prominent Bahá'í scholar! Bahá'u'lláh knew all of this but He concealed his shortcomings and always advised him to moderation and chastity.

There were Bahá'í who knew him and opposed him. Bahá'ís such as Ustad Muhammad- Ali Salmani always used to put him down for his actions. Ustad Salmani, who was a personal barber of Bahá'u'lláh, relates a few stories. One brief one is the story of when Jamal-i-Burujirdi went to visit Bahá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá and Ustad Salmani paid no attention to him and lay down in the same room as he was waiting to see Bahá'u'lláh to disrespect Jamal, etc.

Jamal-i-Burujirdi was one of those who read the Kitab-i-Aqdas soon after its completion and Bahá'u'lláh allowed him to copy some excerpts and share them with the believers. Jamal says that "After reading Kitab-i-Aqdas I went to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh and ask Him to exempt me from obeying the laws of Kitab-i-Aqdas." Bahá'u'lláh granted him his request and he was free for that. Some day that Jamal was boasting about his freedom which Bahá'u'lláh had granted him, when someone recited these words of Aqdas to him: "Al huriato sha'nal haivan" (the embodiment of liberty and its symbol is the animal).

Jamal, considering himself superior than any one else, rose up against a few

other prominent Bahá'ís such as Hands of the Cause of God, too, such as Haji Mirza Haydar-Ali and Ibn-i-Asdaq.

Jamal was the first one who went to Holy Land without any permission after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh and stayed there for a few months. But, when he was still in Iran Bahá'u'lláh passed away and Abdu'l-Bahá sent a message to the Bahá'ís of Iran and as soon as Jamal read that message he became upset and agitated and said that "The Aghsan are too young and immature," referring to Abdu'l-Bahá.

Before establishing the first LSA of Tehran, Abdu'l-Bahá asked some prominent Bahá'ís of Tehran to start a consultative council and choose a few other prominent Bahá'ís in it. They did not include Jamal and he got very upset. Abdu'l-Bahá asked them, please just for the sake of unity, include Jamal. Jamal said OK but I have to be the chairperson and my vote should count two and all the others only one.

Abdu'l-Bahá also wrote for Jamal many Tablets and encouraged him to be steadfast in the Covenant and some of those tablets are in Ma'edeh Asemanis, but finally publicly he broke the Covenant. He was very proud of himself and his knowledge. He had several representatives throughout Iran, such as another like him "Jalil-i-Khuii," who was the representative of Jamal in Azarbaijan.

3. by Juan Cole

In Fadil Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, Vol. 6, pp. 300-314, there is a brief biography of Aqa Jamal Burujirdi.

Aqa Jamal Burujirdi was known as Ismu'llah al-Jamal. He descended on his mother's side from Mirza Abu'l-Qasim Mujtahid-i Qummi. He studied in Iraq and gained ijazat/diplomas from the major mujtahids/jurisprudents there. He "heard of Bahá'u'lláh's call" and hurried to Baghdad in 1280 (began June 18, 1863), apparently unaware that Bahá'u'lláh had already left for Istanbul. He stayed 9 months in Kazimayn with Mulla Ja`far Niraqi, and became a Babi (Babi-Bahá'í?) after much discussion. He went to Edirne and met Bahá'u'lláh (this episode is described in Salmani). His son and the rest of his family cut him off. All his property and wealth were confiscated. He worked as a Mulla in places like Isfahan and Tehran, secretly teaching the faith.

Aqa Jamal was a bit of a braggart. He let it out that he had paid for the costs of relocating Bahá'u'lláh from Baghdad to Turkey and thence to Akka; in fact, Sayyid Hasan Nahri had borne those costs. In 1287/1870 in Akka, he collected funds on the grounds there was a need in Akka, but Bahá'u'lláh disapproved and sent them back to the donors. Bahá'u'lláh then sent a tablet with counsels in it (mava`iz) to Aqa Jamal, who did penance by walking barefoot to Akka. He spent some time with Bahá'u'lláh, then was ordered to take a copy of the Aqdas back to Iran with him.

In 1291/1874 he was arrested at the instigation of a council of mujtahids in Tehran. He asked the shah to be allowed to debate them, and was. From all accounts he won the debate (though the very top mujtahids like Kani only sent

representatives). He insisted he had always obeyed the State and the shari`ah/Islamic religion, and indeed had rendered many services to the latter. He presented both traditional and rational proofs for the Bahá'í faith before an audience of prominent persons. He argued that the government should build up the country, remove corruption, promote progress (taraqqi) and population growth. He points out that all the lives lost in the suppression of Babism would have contributed to Iran's manpower, especially if one counted their potential children (he understood demography!).

Aqa Jamal went to Isfahan. For a while he floated a scheme for a mass immigration of Bahá'ís to Russia because of Nasiru'd-Din Shah's oppression. Sayyid Hasan Nahri complained to Bahá'u'lláh about the Bahá'ís being stirred up this way, but Bahá'u'lláh declined to intervene. Eventually Aqa Jamal gave up the scheme.

In 1295/1878 when Aqa Jamal was teaching the faith in Yazd, Mirza `Ali Muhammad Ibn-i Asdaq and Mirza Asadu'llah Isfahani had gone for the same purpose to Khurasan. Aqa Jamal wrote a detailed letter to the Bahá'ís criticizing those two. He also got into an argument with Mulla `Ali Akbar Shahmirzadi concerning the station of Bahá'u'lláh, bringing into question his faith.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote Aqa Jamal a Tablet urging him not to act as in former religions, wherein upon merely hearing each other speak they start uttering curses. He says not everyone is at the same epistemological level. For instance, some immediately recognize the manifestation of God, others do not. (p. 309)

[This is the tablet Khazeh Fananapazir translated and which is up by permission on my Web site at ["Jamal"].

Aqa Jamal lived in Tehran despite his notoriety there, but did keep changing residences. He took a second wife and gave her and her children her own house. He visited Akka for 6 months later on. He would go back and forth visiting the Bahá'ís on donkey back, after the wont of mullas.

From p. 311 there is an account of his later rebellion against `Abdu'l-Bahá.

Balyuzi's account of the 1882 imprisonment of prominent Bahá'ís in Tehran in *Eminent Bahá'ís* also mentions the dispute that existed among them over whether Bahá'u'lláh was God or not . . .

4. by Iraj Ayman

a brief bio of Burujirdi and his son, Lutfullah Mohebat

You may like to know that Jamal had only one child, a son. He was Lutfullah Mohebat. He was steadfast in the Covenant and completely severed his connection and relationship with his father when Jamal became a Covenant breaker. Mohebat was a well-known expert in illuminating original copies of the Tablets. He was called by the Guardian to Haifa to illuminate the original copies of the Tablets which are preserved in the International

Bahá'í Archives. He stayed in Haifa as the guest of the Guardian for many months. The Beloved Guardian instructed him to introduce some modifications in the classical style of illuminating the Tablets to make it more dignified for such purposes. Mohebat had a shop in Tehran for printing, bookbinding and book illumination. For many years he was responsible for reproducing old style photographic copies of the tablets for distribution among the friends. His shop in those days was something like the photocopying centers of today. Towards the end of his life he pioneered to Zanjan, northwest of Tehran and later passed away in that city.

Lutfullah Muhibat, Jamal Burujerdi's only son, was a close friend of my father. He used to frequently visit us or I used to meet him when I was passing at his studio-workshop which was near our house. That was a small shop near Chahar-Rah-i-Hasanabd on the east side of Shahpour Ave.

Mr. Muhibat repeatedly related the following event:

He said after his father was openly expelled from the Bahá'í community he completely cut off from his father. He had not seen his father for quite a long time. He said one day I was passing on Sepah Avenue near Meydan-i-Tupkhanih. Suddenly I noticed that an old beggar was sitting at the roadside asking for money from the passers by. I recognized that the beggar was my father. Muhibat said that his father also recognized him but they did not say anything to each other. Muhibat said that I could not believe my eyes that such an arrogant and highly distinguished figure had fallen from the climax of honor retrograded to such a pitiful perigee, the lowest point of dishonor.

This was the end of the life of Jamal-i-Burujerdi!

Another story that I have heard many times from the older members among our relatives:

A distant relative of our family was 'Amu Ali Asgar who is famous for being a highly effective and enthusiastic teacher of the Faith, repeatedly praised by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, although he was illiterate. His residence was close to the residence of Jamal-i-Burujerdi. Some Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to individual Bahá'ís were received. One of them was in honor of Jamal-i-Burujerdi. Amu Ali Asgar was asked to deliver that Tablet. He as other friends was considering Jamal to be an exemplary believer. He went to Jamal. Jamal was sitting on a mattress, when he received the Tablet from Amu Ali Asgar. Without even opening it he pushed it under the mattress on which he was sitting. Amu Ali Asgar immediately left that house went home and told his wife this man, Jamal, is a covenant breaker. His wife was astonished and asked why. Amu Ali Asgar said when we are honored by receiving a Tablet from Sarkar-i-Aqa (the Master) we receive it with full respect. We kiss it and we put it on our head, then we immediately open it to receive the bounty of its content but Jamal disregarded what I had

brought to him and pushed it under his feet. Amu Ali Asgar was a simple-hearted but very brave and frank person. From then on he used to tell the friends that Jamal-i-Burujerdi is a covenant breaker do not approach him. This incident happened sometimes before 'Abdu'l-Bahá publicly announced that Jamal-i-Burujerdi was a covenant breaker.

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