

Quddus: "The Last, But in Rank the First"

by Govindah Chinapiel

Quddús was the favorite disciple of The Báb and the Persian meaning of Quddús is 'Holy', or the 'Most Holy'.

Quddús was born in the town of Bárfurúsh, in Írán. His mother and father passed away when he was very young and his stepmother, who took great care of him, brought him up. At his very young age his teachers identified him to be very intelligent boy and a very good scholar as well.

During his early adulthood Quddús was attracted to the doctrines of Siyyid Kázim and his new teachings, so he travelled all the way to Karbilá to be his disciple. He quickly became Siyyid Kázim's favourite student. One evening, Quddús came to the city of Shíráz and met with Mullá H̄usayn. He looked very tired and dirty from his journey, but when he saw Mullá H̄usayn, he became very enthusiastic. He took Mullá H̄usayn into his arms and pleaded him to tell him if he had yet found the Qa'im. Mullá H̄usayn tried to calm him down but Quddús was restless. At that moment Quddús started looking at a Young Man walking a short distance away from them. Quddús turned to Mullá H̄usayn and said, 'Why do you try to hide Him from me? I can recognize Him by His walk'. Mullá H̄usayn was surprised by Quddús' words, so he excused himself for a minute and went to talk to the Young Man. Mullá H̄usayn told the Báb what Quddús had said, and the Báb told him not to be surprised, as He had been talking with him through the spirit, and knew him already. He had been waiting for him to come. So the Báb asked Mullá H̄usayn to go to him, and bring him into His presence immediately. It was at this meeting that Quddus became the 18th, and final Letter of the Living to recognize the Bab.

Since then and over a period of fourteen months, Quddus was with His Beloved. Nine of these months were spent in a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. During the trip although the Báb asked Quddús to ride a camel as well, he declined. Quddús preferred to walk ahead of the Báb's camel holding the camel's rein so he could safeguard the Báb in case anything might happen. Quddús walked all the way from Jeddah to Mecca, cheerfully taking care of his Master's needs and completely forgetting that he was exhausted, and his feet were sore. On this historical voyage, "every night from eventide until the break of day, sacrificing comfort and sleep, he would continue with unrelaxing vigilance to watch beside his Beloved, Who was known as the Bab, ready to provide for His wants and to ensure the means of His protection and safety." He refused all comforts preferring to walk every step of the pilgrimage. Upon their return to the port of Bushihr, in Persia, Quddus was summoned to the presence of the Bab, Who with the utmost kindness bade him depart for Shiraz. "The days of your companionship with Me", He told him, "are drawing to a close.

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The hour of separation has struck, a separation which no reunion will follow except in the Kingdom of God, in the Presence of the King of Glory . . . The hand of destiny will ere long plunge you into an ocean of tribulation for His sake . . . The hosts of the unseen will hasten forth to assist you and will proclaim to all the world your heroism and glory. . . ." With these words, the Báb bid farewell to Quddús.

It is noted in various Baha'i literatures that while Quddús was in Tíhrán, he was brought into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. The thoughts of Bahá'u'lláh about Quddús at that time are not known, but Bahá'u'lláh's brother, Áqáy-i-Kalím, was very impressed. He told a friend, 'The charm of Quddús, his easy manner, his courtesy, his grace, combined with a dignity of bearing, was liked by everyone. We watched him one day as he prepared for his prayers, and we noticed how different he was, how much more graceful he was, than anyone else who was present. He seemed to be, in our eyes, everything that was graceful and pure.'

From Tíhrán, Quddús went on to his home in Bárfurúsh, in the province of Mázindarán, where he spent many months with his family. His stepmother looked forward with great hope to the day when Quddús would be married. That was what would make her happier than anything else, she said. Quddús was then about twenty-five years of age, and she often said to him, 'I am afraid I will go to my grave without having my happiness made complete.' Quddús told her, 'The day of my wedding is not yet come. That day will be the most glorious. It will not be in this house; it will be out in the open air. It will be in the midst of the Sabzih-Maydán, while thousands of people look on. There I shall celebrate my wedding and see all my hopes come true.' His stepmother did not understand what he meant until three years later when Quddús was martyred in the Sabzih-Maydán as he sacrificed his life for the Báb.

A conference was held in Badasht on the border of the province of Mazandaran. Eighty-one disciples attended for twenty-two days. On each of these twenty-two days a new Tablet was revealed and each disciple received a new name. It was here that Muhammad-'Ali received the name of Quddus (Most Holy). The primary purpose of this conference was to implement the Bayan, the Most Holy Book revealed by the Bab, which provided the laws for the new day which He had announced. On their way from the Conference, the people of the neighborhood in the village of Niyala attacked Quddus and some of the disciples; Quddus was arrested and was imprisoned in Sari.

Throughout all Persia the followers of the Bab were, at this time, in great danger. The Islamic religious leaders were aroused and alarmed at the influence the Bab and His disciples had upon the people. Were this influence to prevail, their own positions might be endangered; their fear of this fast spreading Babi Faith caused them to tyrannize the Babis. "On three occasions a number of Babis driven to desperation withdrew in concert from their houses to a chosen retreat and, erecting defensive works about them, defied in arms further pursuit." In the East of Persia at Shaykh-Tabarsi a contest took place, which endured for eleven months. Its valiant souls were the Babis with their leader, Quddus. Day after day he

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guided them through the trials of battle and of privation of every kind. "He dispelled," one testified, "whatever doubts lingered in our minds and such were the evidences of his perspicacity that we came to believe that to him had been given the power to read our profoundest thoughts and to calm the fiercest tumults in our hearts."

At the age of twenty-seven, Quddus, "the last, but in rank the first" of the Letters of the Living, was martyred. He has been referred to by Baha'u'llah as holding a rank second to none except that of the Bab Himself.(3)

According to Nabil, "Amidst his torments, Quddus was heard whispering forgiveness for his foes. 'Forgive, O my God,' he cried, 'the trespasses of these people. Deal with them in Thy mercy, for they know not what we already have discovered and cherish. I have striven to show them the path that leads to their salvation; behold how they have risen to overwhelm and kill me! Show them, O God, the way of Truth, and turn their ignorance into faith.' "

"He exemplified by his life and glorious martyrdom," says Nabil in another instance, "the truth of this tradition: 'Whoso seeketh Me, shall find Me. Whoso findeth Me shall be drawn towards Me. Whoso draweth nigh unto Me, shall love Me. Whoso loveth Me, shall I also love. Him who is beloved of Me, him shall I slay. He who is slain by Me, I myself shall be his ransom.' "

Concerning the station of Quddus, we find the following:

"Regarding the station of Quddus, he should by no means be considered having had the station of a Prophet. His station was no doubt a very exalted one, and far above that of any of the Letters of the Living, including the first Letter, Mulla Husayn. Quddus reflected more than any of the disciples of the Bab the light of His teaching."

(11 November 1936, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer).

"It may be helpful to consider that in the Dispensation of the Bab, Quddus is referred to as the "Last Point", and the "Last Name of God", is identified, as pointed out in *God Passes By*, with one of the "Messengers charged with imposture" mentioned in the Qur'an, and is one of the "two witnesses" into whom "the spirit of life from God" must enter, as attested by 'Abdu'l-Baha in *Some Answered Questions*, yet, despite these sublime stations, he is not regarded as an independent Manifestation of God."

(24 August 1975, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer).

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Source and Quotes from:

- (1) The Dawn Breakers: Nabil-i-A'zam
- (2) 'Quddús' by Lowell Johnson
- (3) Quddus, Companion of the Báb - by Harriet Pettibone