

Kazim Rashti

Sayyid **Kāzīm bin Qāsim al-Ḥusaynī ar-Rashtī** (1793–1843) (Arabic: سيد كاظم بن قاسم الحسيني الرشدي), mostly known as **Siyyid Kázim Rashtí** (Persian: سيد كاظم رشتی), was the son of Sayyid Qasim of Rasht, a town in northern Iran. He was appointed as the successor of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i, and led the Shaykhí movement until his death.

He came from a family of well known merchants. He was a Mullah who, after study of the Islamic writings told his students about the coming of the Mahdi and the "Masih" (the return of Christ) and taught them how to recognize them. After his death in 1843, many of his students spread out around Asia, Europe and Africa for the search.

Upon his death he was buried near the tomb of Imam Husayn in Karbala.



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Successorship

On the death of Sayyid Kazim on 31 December 1843, some Shaykhis went on to become Babis, some of whom later became Bahais, and the rest split into three factions. It is reported that before dying, instead of appointing a successor, he sent his disciples out to find the Promised One!^[1] One of his most noted followers,Mullá Husayn said:

"Our departed teacher insistently exhorted us to forsake our homes, to scatter far and wide, in quest of the promised Beloved... Regarding the features of the Promised One, he told us that He is of a pure lineage, is of illustrious descent, and of the seed of Fatimah. As to His age, He is more than twenty and less than thirty. He is endowed with innate knowledge. He is of medium height, abstains from smoking, and is free from bodily deficiency."

(quoted in Nabil-i-A'zam's *The Dawn-Breakers*", or "*Nabil's Narrative*", translated by *Shoghi Effendi*, p. 57)

In 1844 Mullá Husayn, after meeting the Siyyid `Alí-Muhammad (theBáb) in Shiraz accepted him as the Mahdi.

The Báb's relationship to SayyidKázim

The Shaykhis had previously met Siyyid `Alí-Muhammad in Karbila' when he attended the meetings of Sayyid Kázim. There is disagreement over the amount of time Sayyid Mírzá `Alí-Muhammad stayed in Karbila' and the frequency of his attending Sayyid Kázim's lectures; Bahá'í sources state that the Báb only occasionally attended the meetings, while sources more critical to the Bahá'í Faith state that he stayed in Karbila for a year or two and learned the Shaykhi teachings. In the Bab's own writings, however, he refers to the Shaykhi leader as his teacher Some statements include:

- E.G. Browne wrote that the Báb was in Karbila for two months meeting Sayyid Kazim occasionally:

"He [the Báb] proceeded at some time antecedent to the year A.H. 1259 (in which year Seyyid Kázim died) to Kerbelá, where he resided for some time (two months, according to the ḥárikh-i-Jadíd), occasionally attending the lectures of Hájí Seyyid Kázim of Resht"

(E.G. Browne, Notes in the Traveller's Narrative) [1]

"One day the circle of those who sat at the feet of Seyyid Kázim was augmented by a fresh arrival. The new comer, who took his seat modestly by the door in the lowest place, was none other than Mírzá 'Alí Muhammad, who, impelled by a pious desire to visit the Holy Shrines, had left his business at Bushire to come to Kerbelá. During the next few months the face of the young Shírází became familiar to all the disciples of Seyyid Kázim, and the teacher himself did not fail to notice and appreciate the earnest but modest demeanour of the youthful stranger."

(Babism by E G Browne in Religious Systems of the World, pp. 335).

- Bahá'í sources state that the Báb went on pilgrimage to Iraq for 7 months, to the cities Majaf and Karbila. But they deny that a close bond developed with Sayyid Kázim.

"According to Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl of Gulpaygan, He journeyed to the holy cities of 'Iraq in the spring of 1841, stayed in 'Iraq for nearly seven months and returned to His 'native province of Fars' in the autumn of that year

...
"While in Karbala the Bab visited Sayyid Kazim-i-Rashti and attended his discourses. But these occasional visits did not and could not make Him a pupil or disciple of Sayyid Kazim. His adversaries have alleged that He sat at the feet of Sayyid Kazim for months on end to learn from him."

(H.M. Balyuzi, *The Bab - The Herald of the Day of Days* p. 41)

- Amanat presents arguments for and against the Bab being a student of Sayyid Kazim (p140-1). On the one hand Mulla Sadiq Muqaddas states that "...Mir Ali Muhammad Shirazi [the Bab]...is a student of Sayyid Kazim..." and that he (Muqaddas) was introduced to Sayyid Kazim by the Bab. On the other hand, another contemporary Qatil Karbala'i, who later became a Babi, states that the Bab attended Sayyid Kazim's lectures only two or three times. Amanat argues that the Bab was not in Karbala long enough to fully grasp Sayyid Kazim's teachings; in fact, Muqaddas himself states that once in Karbala, he was asked to teach the Bab, and that he was also determined to convert the Bab to Shaykhism. Amanat asserts that the Bab's reference to Sayyid Kazim as "the revered scholar and my intimate teacher" is a symbolic acknowledgement of their spiritual affinity and not a literal fact.
- Abdu'l-Bahá's wife, Munirih Khanum quotes in her biography her uncle stating:

"We had often heard in the course of his lectures Haji Sayyid Kazem stating the fact, that the day of the Manifestation was drawing nigh. He admonished us at all times that we must be searching, and be in a state of quest, because the Promised One was living amongst the people, was associating with them; but unfortunately the people were veiled and lived in a state of negligence. When we saw the Bab standing with such humility before the Shrine of Imam Hossein, we often wondered if perhaps, he was not the invisible Promised One, who had come to visit the Shrine of his ancestors.

...
During his seclusion in Karbala, he attended now and then the classes of Haji Sayyid Kasem, with a shining and luminous countenance. Whenever he entered the class, Haji Sayyid Kasem would show him the greatest respect and honor"

(Munirih Khanum quoting her uncle, found in Episodes in the Life of Moneereh Khanum, pp. 11–12)

- In one of the Báb's earliest writings, the Risala fi'l-Suluk, or "Treatise on Spiritual Wayfaring," he mentions the Shaykhi leader by name and refers to him as "my masterly support, my teacher, the pilgrim Sayyid Kazim al-Rashti."

Notes

1. Smith, Peter (2000). "Kázim Rashti, Sayyid" (<https://books.google.com/books?id=pYfrAQAAQBAJ>) A concise encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith Oxford: Oneworld Publications. pp. 217–217 ISBN 1-85168-184-1

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