

spearhead and to bring the remaining male prisoners to Tihrán. Shafi and his mother were released in Shiraz, where they continued to live as guests for four years in the home of the Imam Jumih. Shafi's grandfather, too old and frail to make the journey to Tihrán, was killed not far from Abadeh.

Under the guidance of the Imam Jumih of Shiraz, Shafi studied religion, Arabic, logic and poetry. He traveled extensively in Iran visiting Sarvestan, Jahrum, Kerman and Rafsanjan.

Imam Jumih requested Shafi to return to Nayriz where he was put in charge of the Mosque of Jumih, a very large historic mosque. This was the same mosque where Vahid gave lectures. In addition to administering the affairs of the mosque, Mullá Muhammad Shafi, administered many real estate and water rights for properties belonging to the mosque while spreading the teachings of the Báb.

After his first wife, Zeinab, passed away, Mullá Muhammad Shafi married Khavar Sultan, who was the niece of his mentor, the Imam Jumih of Shiraz, and the daughter of Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Vafa. Through this marriage, Shafi substantially increased his prestige and station amongst the clergy. He was respected by the government officials and used his position to act as a defender of the Bábís.

Bahá'u'lláh showered Shafi with unprecedented affection and revealed many tablets in his honor. Many of these tablets were in Bahá'u'lláh's own handwriting. In 1883, a tablet was sent to Mullá Shafi, which contained within the Tablet of Visitation for Vahid.

At one point, Shafi was appointed trustee of the Huquq'u'llah. He was credited with teaching the faith to the Governor of Nayriz. Bahá'u'lláh asked Shafi to be a judge amongst the Bahá'ís, to settle disputes amongst others and to officiate over marriages.

Mullá Muhammad Shafi also received many tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. When he died, 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed a Tablet of Visitation for him.

During his illustrious ministry, Mullá Muhammad Shafi invited many prominent Bahá'í teachers and scholars to visit Nayriz including Hájí Mírzá Haidarali, Mírzá Mahmud Zargani, the author of Mahmud's Diary, Nabil Akbar and Mírzá Naim.

Bahá'u'lláh granted permission to Shafi to visit Him in Baghdad. Accompanied by another Bahá'í, they walked all the way from Nayriz to Baghdad.

Shafi defended the Faith against the Covenant Breakers. Among his accomplishments was the protection of the community from Mírzá Yaya, the half-brother of Bahá'u'lláh, Mírzá Muhammad Ali, the brother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Hájí Muhammad Karim Khan.

So intolerant to anything that would harm the Faith, when a member of the Nayriz Bahá'í community stated at a meeting that Bahá'ís were to follow Mírzá Yahya after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, Shafi severely slapped the

man in the face. The man left immediately, feeling so ashamed that he did not attend any Bahá'í meetings for a year. Eventually Shafi went to the man's house and brought him back to a community gathering.

To Mullá Shafi's eternal credit is his success in appointing many Bahá'ís to key positions by virtue of being trusted by the Governor of Nayriz – Phat Ali Khan. Because of his friendship with Shafi, the governor, Phat Ali Khan eventually became a Bahá'í, although he tried to keep his faith as a secret, he received a tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The enemies of the faith were alarmed at the rapid growth of the Bahá'í community and the unprecedented influence of Mullá Muhammad Shafi. In the early years, before Phat Ali Khan became sympathetic to the Bahá'ís, they encouraged the governor to attack the Bábís and Bahá'ís again.

When Shafi realized that the governor might just do that, he prompted a few brave survivors of the mountain upheaval, to warn the governor that harm might come to him if he continued the harassment of the Bahá'í community. The governor was so frightened that he changed his attitude towards the Bahá'ís. He called on Mullá Muhammad Shafi to express his regret about the actions of his father and his own conduct. The governor signed a written agreement that he would not harm Bahá'ís. Shafi found him to be sincere, so Shafi also signed the document. As a consequence, the relations between Muslims and Bahá'ís in Nayriz improved tremendously thereafter. The governor even began to consult with Shafi about the community affairs.

The Bahá'í community flourished under the leadership of Shafi. Their number reached a few thousand. Shafi counselled Bahá'ís against being afraid of their sacred destiny and to this day, the descendants of many of those early believers are still serving the cause throughout the world.

The Nayriz Bahá'í community was blessed by receiving many tablets and letters from both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Baha which addressed Bahá'í laws, giving instructions on how to conduct their lives and ways in which to serve the Faith and humanity.

As an example of his kindness, Shafi would go to the houses of the poor early in the morning and would leave food and clothing at their doorsteps anonymously. While he was generous and kind to all, especially the poor and disadvantaged, Mullá Shafi would not hesitate to rebuke vehemently those who chose to be rude and unruly or disrespectful of the precepts of the Faith. When his mother advised him not to fight the Mullás, he responded firmly that he would not hide under a chador.

The sudden death of his son 'Abdu'l Husayn was the most traumatic event in Shafi's life. He was known to go often to the mosque where he prayed for such a long time that he would pass out and had to be carried home. On hearing about this, Bahá'u'lláh sent him a tablet consoling and comforting Mullá Shafi who was distraught over his departed son.

At the request of Bahá'u'lláh, Mullá Shafi put the final touches on his

diary. According to Kasravi, the famous historian, Shafi finished his book soon after his return from Baghdad and sent a copy to Bahá'u'lláh. It was a diary so precise and complete that it later became the prime source of information for many future historians including Nabil, Nicolas, Mazandarani, Avareh, Rouhani, Faizi and Shaykh Bahá'í.

Mullá Shafi died in 1900 at the age of 59 due to complications from bronchitis, extreme fatigue and weakness after fasting for seven days. After Shafi's death, Aga Siyyid Doavod, the leading Mullá of Nayriz, ceremoniously placed Shafi's turban on the head of Shafi's 15-year-old son, while declaring confidently that Shaykh Muhammad Husayn would continue the legacy of his father, Mullá Muhammad Shafi.

2. Tablets to Shafí

(all online at nayrzi.org)

Tablet 001: From Bahá'u'lláh

Tablet 101: From Bahá'u'lláh

Tablet 107: From Bahá'u'lláh

Tablet 128: From Bahá'u'lláh

Tablet 129: From Bahá'u'lláh

Tablet 132: From Bahá'u'lláh

Tablet 134: From Bahá'u'lláh

Tablet 135: From Bahá'u'lláh

Tablet 137: From Bahá'u'lláh

Tablet 158: From Bahá'u'lláh

Tablet 002: From 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet 102: From 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet 103: From 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet 104: From 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet 105: From 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet 106: From 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet 108: From 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet 138: From 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet 139: From 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet 142: From 'Abdu'l-Bahá

3. The Diary of Mullá Muhammad Shafí

This is online here: bahai-library.com/shafi_ahdieh_diary.

METADATA

Views1114 views since posted 2025-10-15; last edit 2025-10-15 18:32 UTC;

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