

Baha'i, the newest religion in the world

Baha'i faith commences on 21st of April of 1863 A.D. as the flower of Babism, a movement which had already appeared in 1844 A.D. The proponents of the Baha'i faith, known as Baha'is, amount to 7 million people around the world. The beliefs of Baha'is are based on the teaching of the Persian Mírzá Husayn-`Alí Núrí (1817-1892), called Baha'ullah (Glory of the God), who is considered as the follower of the Persian Siyyid `Alí Muhammad Shírází (1819-1850), called Bab (the gate).

The origin of this movement goes deeply in the past, in a secret truth of Muslims, not included in the Qumran but in the oral tradition of hadith. According to this truth, which was widespread mainly among Shias, there is a series of twelve imams, of which the 11 have already passed, while the twelfth imam, the last one, called Mahdi, is anticipated with hope and faith. That imam with the cooperation of reborn Isa (Jesus) will remove, they say, the Evil and will judge the humanity in justice. Bab was recognized as the promised Mahdi by the Persian Mulla Husayn (1813-1849), who traveled all over the Iran, after the order of his teacher, who had prepared some tests for the recognition of the Promised and Beloved Mahdi. suggested . On 22nd of May of 1844, in Shiraz, Mullá Husayn became the first person who recognized Báb as the Beloved, since he satisfied all the descriptions given to Husayn by his teacher and also passed the first test given to him with incredible accuracy.

In the words of Mulla Husayn: "I asked him to read this book of mine and look at its pages with indulgent eyes. He graciously complied with my wish. He opened the book, glanced at certain passages, closed it, and began to address me. Within a few minutes he had, with characteristic vigour and charm, unravelled all its mysteries and resolved all its problems. Having to my entire satisfaction accomplished, within so short a time, the task I had expected him to perform, he further expounded to me certain truths which could be found neither in the reported sayings of the imáms of the Faith".

Mulla Husayn was appointed as the first of the Báb's apostles. That day, 22nd of May of 1844 A.D., is the greatest celebration of Baha'i's, commemorating the declaration of Bab, under the request of Husayn. Husayn was the first of the 18 apostles of Bab, called Letters of the Living, elected for the distribution of his teachings. Hence, the sacred meaning of the number 19 (Bab and his 18 disciples) used in all time divisions of the Baha'i Calendar. Until that day the movement of Bab, called Babism, was developing.

But how Babism was absorbed in Baha' i religion of Baha'u'llah?

In 1847 Baha'ullah meets Bab and is affected deeply by his teachings. On 21 April 1863, Bahá'u'lláh entered the Najibiyyih gardens, now the location of Baghdad Medical City and known to Bahá'ís as the Garden of Ridván. Bahá'u'lláh and those accompanying him stayed in the garden for twelve days before departing for Constantinople. It was during this time that Bahá'u'lláh declared to a small group of his companions his perceived mission and station as a Messenger of God, declaring himself as 'He whom God shall make manifest'. He based this serious announcement on a vision of the Maid of Heaven he claimed to have had while imprisoned in the Siyáh-Chál in Tehran, Persia. The declaration in the Garden of Ridván was the beginning of a new phase in the Bábí community which led to the emergence of the Bahá'í Faith as a distinctive movement separate from Bábism.

Baha'u'llah was exiled from Tehran and imprisoned by the political and religious authorities in Baghdad, Constantinople, Adrianople and finally in Acre (now in Israel). Meanwhile, for two years, Bahá'u'lláh had lived alone in the mountains of Kurdistan, having contacts with Sufi teachers.

Baha'is believe that God is manifested through history in various persons, either famous founders of religions, such as Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, either mystical teachers. The Manifestations of God, as explained by Bahá'u'lláh, are not incarnations of God, but have a two-fold station; one which is the divine in that they reveal God's attributes, but not God's essence, and one which is human in that they represent the physical qualities of common man, and have human limitations. He wrote that God will never manifest his essence into the world.

He also states that God will never descend himself into the human world. Bahá'u'lláh declared, as the most recent Manifestation of God, that he was the "Promised One" of all religions, fulfilling all the messianic prophecies around the world. His eschatological claims constitute six distinctive messianic identifications: from Judaism, the incarnation of the "Everlasting Father", from the Yuletide prophecy of Isaiah 9:6, the "Lord of Hosts"; from Christianity, the "Spirit of Truth" or Comforter predicted by Jesus in his farewell discourse of John 14–17 and the return of Christ "in the glory of the Father"; from Zoroastrianism, the return of Shah Bahram Varjavand, a Zoroastrian messiah predicted in various late Pahlavi texts; from Shi'a Islam the return of the Third Imam, Imam Husayn; from Sunni Islam, the return of Jesus (Isa); from Bábism, He whom God shall make manifest. While Bahá'u'lláh did not himself directly claim to be either the Hindu or Buddhist messiah, he did so in principle through his writings. Later, `Abdu'l-Bahá, his son and successor, stated that Bahá'u'lláh was the Kalki avatar, who in the classical Hindu Vaishnavas tradition is the tenth and final Avatar (great incarnation) of Vishnu who will come to end the Age of Darkness and Destruction. Bahá'is also believe that Bahá'u'lláh is the fulfilment of the prophecy of appearance of the Maitreya Buddha, who is a future Buddha who will eventually appear on earth, achieve complete enlightenment, and teach the pure Dharma. This inter-religion character of the Baha'u'llah's personality gives to the Baha'i faith a meta-religious nature, uniting and accepting all the people away of any divisions of sex, ethnic group, religious faith, political position, facing all of the people as equal creatures of God.

The last leader of Baha'is was Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957), Guardian of the Cause, the head of the Hands of the Cause, a Council of elected persons for the protection and the propagation of their faith. Baha'is are directed after the unexpected death of Shoghi by the Universal House of Justice, first elected in 1963. The Seat of the Universal House of Justice and its members reside in Haifa, Israel, on the slope of Mount Carmel.

The Baha'i Calendar starts in the spring equinox of 1844 AD, with each year starting on the spring equinox computed through the algorithm used in the Persian Calendar. Year 1844 A.D (year of the Declaration of Bab) is the year 1 of Baha'is, so 2018 A.D. is 175 B.E. (Bab Era). Each year consists of 19 months of 19 days each, with a complement of 4 or 5 days in regular or leap years respectively. Days, months and years are called through virtues' names, giving to the Baha'i religion a taste of universality, mentioning ideas and properties that are commonly adopted.

For instance, 1st of January of 2018 AD is presented as follows in the Baha'i Calendar. Day of week: Perfection. Date of month: Glory. Month: Honour. Year 174 in Bab Era. Year in the 19-year Vahid (Unity) cycle: 3 Ab (Father). Vahid Cycle in the 19-Vahid-cycle Kull-i-Shay (All Things) supercycle: 1. Kull-i-Shay supercycle: 1.

The Declaration of Bab for 2018 A.D. is celebrated on 23rd of May [Date: 7 Kalimát (Words) of month: 'Azamat (Grandeur), year: 175 B.E. 4.Dál (D)]. The feast starts in the evening of 23rd and lasts until the next evening of 24th.