

Táhirih -The Pure One 1817 – 1852 (KS3 & KS4)

August in Britain is Summer School season for many members of the Bahá'í community. With gatherings in Scotland, Ireland (both the Republic and Northern Ireland), Wales and England, there are venues accessible to many of the thousands of Bahá'ís resident here, as well as travellers from further afield. This year, we're off to the school in Wales where the theme is 'Humble Heroes'.

This is a special year for Bahá'ís, as it marks the bicentenary of the birth of the Báb, forerunner of the Bahá'í Faith and Herald of Bahá'u'lláh.

In helping to plan the children's activities for the Summer School, I was tasked with preparing a session dealing with a group of people known as 'Letters of the Living'. These 18 souls were the first people to learn of, understand and believe in the Báb and His station as a Divine Educator. Amongst these Letters was one woman, a poet named Táhirih.

Táhirih came from a family of religious scholars. She lived at a time when girls and women were not expected to be educated, but her father wanted her to learn. He ensured she would read and write, learn languages and study the verses of the Koran.

Táhirih liked to listen to talks about the traditions of Islam with her father's friends, but she always had to stay behind a curtain and stay quiet because women were not supposed to join in discussions like this, or even be seen by men who were not in their close family. So keen was her insight that when she did speak out, the scholars who visited her father were shocked, but impressed by her wisdom and happy to hear her words – as long as she remained behind the curtain.

She heard from a cousin about two scholars named Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kházim who were teaching that The Promised One was due to appear. Through prayer, investigation and correspondence she learnt of The Báb and became sure that He was a Divine Educator, a Manifestation of God, as He declared Himself to be. Though she never met Him in person, Táhirih became a devoted disciple, telling people about His teachings wherever she went. She held the attention of princesses and the wives of noblemen with her knowledge, kindness and wisdom.

Tahirih attended a conference for the Báb's supporters in Badasht. It was here that she removed her veil in public for the first time, and stood before the men, telling them that it was time to change the ways of the past.

She said that in this new age, women must be treated equally to men. Some of the men didn't like this, but others supported her and it was here that she became known as Táhirih, 'The Pure One', named by Bahá'u'lláh. In common with some 20,000 of the Báb's followers, Táhirih was persecuted for her beliefs at the order of clerics who felt their authority threatened by the growing Bábi movement. Eventually, as had happened to The Báb two years earlier, orders were given for her to be put to death. Táhirih put on a beautiful wedding dress and spent the day in prayer, saying she was going to be with her Beloved. She gave the guards her own white silk handkerchief to use, and that night she was taken away and strangled with her own veil. Her last words were:

*"You can kill me as soon as you like, but you can never stop the
emancipation of women." 1*

The children at Summer School will be exploring themes of heroism, unity, equality and dedication. There will be singing, making, laughter and learning, and a special visit by a Persian calligrapher. Táhirih's words will be the starting point for some of these activities:

*"Now is the time to show forth the true signs of God, to rend asunder
the veils of idle fancy...*

Let deeds, not words, be our adorning." 2

Source: 'Abdu'l-Bahá *Memorials of the Faithful*, 1971, Bahá'i Publishing Trust.

Quoted at <https://bahaichronicles.org/tahirih/amp/>

On the life of Táhirih:

Jacqueline Mehrabi *Immortal Heroines*, 2008, George Ronald Publisher

John S. Hatcher and Amrollah Hemmat, *The Poetry of Táhirih*, 2002, George Ronald Publisher

Further reading:

Resource: [Bahá'i Holy Day in July: The Martyrdom of the Báb](#)

RE Online's section on The Bahá'i Faith also has information about The Báb, and His connection to Bahá'u'lláh <https://www.reonline.org.uk/subject-knowledge/bahai/>

www.bahai.org.uk has information about the central figures of the Bahá'i Faith, whilst <https://www.bahai.org/library/> has a comprehensive collection of the Sacred Writings of The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

This resource was written by Debbie Tibbey, one of RE:ONLINE's Email a Believer team. If your class would like to ask a Baha'i representative any questions about their beliefs, or to see answers to previously asked questions please visit <http://pof.reonline.org.uk/people-of-faith/bahai/>

