**Stories about the Humility of Mirzá Abu'l Fadl**

*"Pure souls, such as Mirz"a Abu'l-Fadl, upon him be the Glory of God, spend their nights and days in demonstrating the truth of the Revelation, by adducing conclusive and brilliant proofs and expanding the verities of the Faith, by lifting the veils, promoting the religion of God and spreading His fragrances."*

('Abdu'l-Bahá, from a Tablet to an individual believer: The Compilation of Compilations, Vol II, p409)

Mirzá Abu'l Fadl was the greatest Muslim scholar long before he became the greatest Bahá'í scholar. But there was a time when he was not modest. In fact, he was arrogant. And his arrogance almost blinded him from the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's mission. His path would often bring him in contact with an illiterate tradesman -- a Bahá'í who was not at all shy to let him know about Bahá'u'lláh. One day the tradesman gave Mirzá Abu'l Fadl the Kitab-i-Iqan. He quickly read the book and the next time they were together he dismissed this holy book, which is second only to the Kitab-i-Aqdas in importance. He said that he could easily write a book equl to the Kitab-i-Iqan if he wished. Soon after making that statement he was summoned by a royal princess to write a formal letter. At this time in Persia this was a common way for a scholar to earn a living. He put pen to paper but found his pen hand unable to write a single word. After some embarrassing minutes, the princess dismissed him by saying something like 'and you call yourself a learned man!' This was a blow to his pride that caused a crack that would spread unil the arrogant shell covering his soul shattered and revealed the humility of his true self.

Mirzá Abu'l Fadl became curious about the Bahá'í Faith, and asked to meet other Bahá'ís. There is a famous story of Mirzá Abu'l Fadl's meeting with a Bahá'í blacksmith"

"It so happened that on the way out one of the donkey's lost a shoe, so the party called at the nearest blacksmith for help. Noticing the long beard and large turban of Mirzá Abd'l-Fadl -- indications of his vast knowledge -- the blacksmith Usad Husayn-i-Na'l-Band (shoeing smith), who was illiterate, was tempted to enter into conversations with the learned man. He said to Mirzá Abu'l-Fadl that since he had honored him with his presence, it would be a great privilege for him if he could be allowed to ask a question which had perplexed his mind for some time. When permission was granted he said, 'Is it true that in the Traditions of Shí'ah Islam it is stated that each drop of rain is accompanied by an angel from heaven? And that this angel brings down the rain to the ground?' 'This is true,' Mirzá Abu'l-Fadl responded. After a pause, the blacksmith begged to be allowed to ask another question to which Mirzá Abu'l-Fadl gave his assent. 'Is it true,' the blacksmith asked, 'that if there is a dog in a house no angel will ever visit that house?' Before thinking of the connection between the two questions, Mirzá Abu'l-Fadl responded in the affirmative. 'In that case,' commented the blacksmith, 'no rain should ever fall in a house where a dog is kept.' Mirzá Abu'l-Fadl, the noted learned man of Islam, was now confounded by an illiterate blacksmith. His rage knew no bounds, and his companions noticed that he was filled with shame. They whispered to him, 'This blacksmith is a Bahá'í!'

(Source: Taherzadeh, *The Revelations of Bahá'u'lláh, Vol 3, 'Akka, The Early Years 1868-77*)

Years later, at a gathering of western pilgrims in the Holy Land where 'Abdu'l-Bahá was present, the American Bahá'ís were thanking the Master for sending Mirzá Abu'l-Fadl to become their teacher. Their words of praise felt like the lashes of a whip on his face until finally Mirzá Abu'l-Fadl broke down in tears. He was embarrassed to be praised in the presence of the Master. How could an insignificant dying ember be praised in the presence of the burning sun? 'Please stop,' he begged the well-meaning friends.

(Source: See Mr. Mehrabkhani's book on Mirzá Abu'l-Fada'il, pp 42-43. Mr Mehrabkhani's source is Fadil-i-Mazandarani who heard the account from Mirzá Abu'l-Fadl directly. One small note: the original says "zaní motashakhkheseh" which has been translated as "princess")

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To the many who were accorded the rare privilege of meeting this man of letters, both during his stay in America and on their pilgrimages to the East, I need not speak of his peculiar personal charm. With all his book learning he was not at all "bookish." Gifted with one of those rare minds that explore all the channels of life with equal grace and facility -- the same dignity and impressiveness with which he discussed a verse of the Koran with the learned sheiks, he put into the meeting some sojourning American; often finishing with a personal pleasantry, for he was a ready humorist and made his guests instantly at ease. He had the placidness of a child and the air of one who was never in a hurry and had plenty of time to make radiantly happy the place where God had placed him.  
  
 That was his attitude toward the world; but in the presence of the Center of The Covenant, ‘Abdu’l-Baha, with head bowed and downcast eyes, he became the essence of humility. Even his voice, in answer to ‘Abdu’l-Baha's questions, became low and subdued. Never have I seen such a perfect and instantaneous agreement of mind and body to express humility.  
  
 One day when I was at his house, there were about twenty sheiks who had come over from Alexandria to visit him. One who seemed to be the leader was a very learned and gorgeously attired young sheik, who said with some pride that he had been educated in the oldest university in the world. He was the editor of a magazine in Alexandria and had come to interview Mirza Abu’l-Fadl, who for more than an hour had been listened to with absorbed attention. His talk was interspersed with an occasional jest and his sharp eye would glance from one face to another to see if his point was understood. One might imagine the learned devotees in the early Christian era listening like this to the elequence of St. Paul.  
  
 Suddenly ‘Abdu’l-Baha appeared. Mirza Abu’l- Fadl faced the door, the rest of us had our backs to it and did not see Him; there was a moment of silence and Mirza Abu’l-Fadl stood with his head bowed, his whole attitude changed. He immediately became the most humble and respectful of servitors. Then quickly arranging a chair for Abdu’l-Baha, He told him in a low voice, in answer to His questions, the subject under discussion.  
  
 ‘Abdu’l-Baha continued the subject, which was on the independent search for reality, further emphasizing the great necessity of investigating truth with a mind unbiased by theology or the limitations of other minds.

Source: http://bahaiheoresheroines.blogspot.com/2010/03/mirza-abul-fadl-gulpaygani-one-of-19.html