

twenty-two at the time. In 1944 my father became seriously ill with tuberculosis and could not be saved. At this time although I had accepted the Bahá'í Faith I was not aware of its complete truth or the depth of its teachings. I only knew that the path of all religions is the same, but this truth was not apparent to me from observing the followers of different religions. They said the words and they called Ishvar's name(9) but they often deceived others in various ways. Having seen all of these things I became very sad and wondered why Bhagavan(10) had created people who for their own gain and benefit cheated and deceived others.

After seeing this type of deception I slowly began to think how I might become more wealthy and make myself more comfortable in life. And as a result I began to think of some evil things. I was tested. It happened in this way. I had gone to the home of Kishan Lal Malviya(11) in Shajapur (the Malwa villager who had first come to Harsodan with Mr.Boman and Shirin Mummy) where we were discussing different ways and means of making money. In the process I thought of some not-so-proper ways. Then I thought of making separate pieces of paper with the name of a different occupation on each and in the name of Bhagavan, without looking, I would draw one piece of paper, and whichever one I picked, that would be my life's career. Among these were: thief, bandit (dacoit), pimp and other thugi-like(12) occupations. On other pieces I wrote more respectable occupations such as hotel owner, shop keeper, farmer etc. And on one piece of paper I wrote: "Service to the Bahá'í Faith." In this fashion, having recited Bhagavan's name, I picked out one of the papers and opened it. And this is what I saw: "Service to the Bahá'í Faith." When I saw this I became anxiety free.

A year later Shirin Mummy and Dr. Muhajir made me a traveling teacher. Then I had the opportunity of reading the holy books and came to understand the depth of truth within them.

But now the chance of my serving God's religion has been stopped. Therefore I pray that Bahá'u'lláh might again give me the power of serving Him.(13)

Notes

The village of Harsodan is located approximately 15 miles from Ujjain in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. The region in which it is located is commonly referred to as Malwa.

Satya-Narayana is a form of the Hindu deity Narayana. During the medieval period under Muslim influence the god Narayana became known as Satyapir (satya = true + pir = saint). This deity was a syncretic fusion of Rahim and Rama.

At a later date he was called Satya-Narayan.

The family were Balais who in Malwa are classified as "unclean" They are one ranking above "untouchable" but are considered a "scheduled" caste because they are on the government list for special compensations = something like affirmative action (at least this was the case in the mid 70s) Their low status derives from their traditional occupation (weaving) which brought them into close contact with leather.

Rajputs and Kulmis

When I was in Malwa 4 Rajputs and 5 Kulmis were said to be Bahá'ís in Harsodan. There were 65 Balai declarants.

Mr. Boman was Shirin Boman Meherabani's husband. He died in the mid 60s in a jeep accident while teaching the Faith in the Gwalior area.

Shirin Boman was known throughout Malwa as "Mummy"

Dr. Munje and his wife came to Ujjain from Bombay at the same time as the Bomans. He later moved to Varanasi where he practiced homeopathic medicine.

Ishvar(Who is able) is a *generic* Hindu title for the personal aspect of God

A name for the Supreme Being, often related to both Vishnu and Krishna.

Kishan Lal Malviya was a scheduled caste leader from Shajapur district. He became very significant during the mass teaching era, as it was at his village of Sangimanda that the now famous Bahá'í Conference was held in 1961 (at which Dr. Muhajir was present) which really initiated the flood of declarations in Malwa over the next decade.

Originally the word "thug" in Hindi referred to a member of a secret fraternity of assassins who were associated with the goddess kali. In common usage it has come to refer to a "tough guy" as it has in English.

I was never quite sure about what happened, but apparently Daya Ram Malviya lost his position (and perhaps his voting rights?) This was not uncommon apparently, as a number of village teachers were felt to have either abused their positions financially or otherwise.

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