



MY EXPERIENCES AND MY WILL

Syedi Ismailbhai Sahib Luqmani



An Introduction

The author, Syedi Ismailbhai Sahib Luqmani, my father was the brother-in-law of late Mullaji Taher Saifuddin Sahib and the maternal uncle of the present Mullaji Mohammad Burhanuddin Sahib. He was a learned man, a good writer and a regular contributor to Gulzare Hakimi, a periodical issued from Burhanpur, Central Provinces, India. His translations from Arabic into Gujarati of Ikhwanus Safa, the Prophet's 40 sermons and the famous judgements of Hazrat Ali (A.S.) were published weekly in the Gulzar, some of which came out in the form of booklets at a later date. His articles under the caption 'The Bragging of the Doctor of Theology' had become quite popular since therein he tried to uncover the truth underlying the bogus claims made from time to time by the priest class. Occasionally he also contributed articles to the 'Aage Kadam' published from Karachi. After the death of Gulzar's editor the responsibility of issuing the paper was shared by him with Mr Hasanali Chakera, the then Headmaster of Hakimia Coronation High School in Burhanpur.

For more than twenty five years he was in charge of the Arabic and Religious Studies section attached to the Hakimia Coronation High School. In addition to this he also worked for a number of years as the Superintendent of the Hakimia Boarding House in place of Mr Hasanali Chakera, who resigned from that post for personal and health reasons. By spreading knowledge of Arabic and sound religious education coupled with his various articles in Gulzar he created the

much needed awareness and courage amongst the community members to raise their voices and to oppose all forms of tyranny and oppression rather than be enslaved and suffer at the hands of the priest class - all in the name of religion.

He was bold and outspoken and never afraid of declaring openly his firm belief that the 46th Dai*, Syedna Mohammad Badruddin, died suddenly of poison in 1256 Hijri (1840 AD) in Surat without appointing his successor and that the "Nas"*** had been broken.

Mullaji Taher Saifuddin Sahib would not tolerate this unequivocal declaration by my father. Hence, he left no stone unturned to humiliate and persecute him and the family with the help of his well fed team of sinister looking 'goondas'. Relations became strained to such an extent that when my elder sister, Amtullabai, was to be married in Surat to Hatimbhai Sheikh Faizullahbai Hamdani Sahib, the Mullaji Sahib did not turn up to solemnise the marriage although he

* "Dai" is an Arabic word signifying a person who calls or invites. Hence, the Dai is a missionary and a religious leader. He is to the community what a shepherd is to his flock. His two fold functions are (1) to invite persons into the fold of believers and give them religious education and guidance and (2) to persuade and bring back into the fold those who have strayed.

The Dai appoints two assistants known as Maazoon and Mukaasir from amongst the learned men of the community to help him in the performance of these two functions.

** "Nas" is the public declaration by a Dai appointing his successor. It was usual to pronounce the Nas verbally in the presence of all the learned men of the community and sometimes it was repeated for the purpose of confirmation. All authority exercised by a Dai as a religious head is derived from a valid Nas. Hence, if one assumes the office of a Dai without Nas his title is defective, he is deemed to be acting unlawfully and he cannot use the instrument of Nas to appoint a successor. Since the 46th Dai expired before making any appointment the system of Nas is considered to have broken down.

had promised to do so. As a result the two families managed to have the Nikah ceremony performed independently.

This triggered the anger of Mullaji Sahib who conspired to send his team of 'goondas' to the Hamdani residence where the ceremony was held. They shouted abuses, pelted the house with stones and threatened to kill everyone in the house. But apart from some structural damage no harm came to anyone as the police arrived on the scene and the mob quickly disappeared. A few days later a similar attack was launched on the Luqmani residence but this attempt also failed and due to police intervention in time no life was lost.

Now started the excommunication of Luqmani and Hamdani families accompanied by all forms of persecution. We were totally cut off from our relations and the social, economic and educational boycott was so severe that life in Surat became virtually impossible for us. Hence my father decided to migrate to Burhanpur where he found the much desired peace and security and the facilities for my education and that of my younger sisters.

My father was one of the prominent witnesses in the "Chandabhai Galla Case"* in Bombay as well as 'Burhanpur Dargah Case' both of which were filed by the Reformist section against the Mullaji Sahib in order to establish his accountability and to secure our legitimate rights in the community. He played an important role in supplying to the courts various documents, letters, books, translations and information which he alone could procure because he was closely related to the Mullaji Sahib.

Every year in the month of Muharram he used to deliver sermons (Waaz) to the Reformist group at Gowalia Tank

* Some details of the Chandabhai Galla Case appear on pages 32,33 and 41 to 44 and a brief description of the Burhanpur Dargah Case will be found on pages 45 to 47.

Road, Bombay and this was not at all agreeable to the Mullaji Sahib.

During the sixties he spent a great deal of his time in Malegaon amongst a wonderful group of Reformists - hospitable, sincere, devoted and courageous - and he felt quite happy to be with them. He donated all the important documents, letters and all the precious Arabic books, some of which were in his own hand writing, to their communal library.

Both father and mother found the atmosphere in Malegaon very cordial. However, in 1965 my mother expired in Malegaon and was buried there. This was a great blow to father. In order to overcome his feelings of grief and loneliness he used to make frequent trips to Bombay and stay there for a while but he never felt safe. As the priest class disapproved of his activities and considered him to be a threat to their ill gotten empire in the Bohra world, several attempts were made on his life while he was in Bombay. But by the grace of Allah no harm came to him. One particular instance occurred in early 1968 when my father was invited by Mr Adamji (a member of Sir Adamji Peerbhoy's family) one evening for dinner in Sattar, a predominantly Bohra locality, the priest class had conspired to throw acid on father with the intention of burning him alive. He received repeated anonymous phone calls from some well wisher within the Badri Mahal, the headquarter of Mullaji Sahib, advising him not to go out that evening. Since the caller seemed persistent father felt certain that he probably knew about this treacherous plot but was unable to give details on the phone. Hence, father considered it prudent to postpone the visit and Mr Adamji agreed under the circumstances. Mr Adamji investigated into the matter and was able to confirm later that a few suspicious looking characters were seen waiting in the building on that evening.

Father was completely shaken by this incident and it became apparent that his life was now at risk any time anywhere. When he wrote to me about it I advised him to leave India and settle down in UK where he would not only be safe but also enjoy the company of his children and grand children. At last he arrived in UK in mid 1968 and was delighted to see the whole family after a long time. He felt quite comfortable and enjoyed the peace of mind which he had not experienced lately in India. Occasionally he would talk about his friends and colleagues in Bombay and Malegaon whom he missed a great deal. However, he adjusted himself admirably to the changed environment.

Since it was a completely retired life for him he used to spend much of his time in reading and writing. He passed away peacefully on the last day of January 1970 and was laid at rest in the Tottenham Park cemetery in London.

After his death we discovered in his room a number of sheets written by him in Gujarati. On a scrutiny of these papers we found that he had portrayed in them his life experiences. However, these papers seemed to be incomplete. Evidently, death did not permit him to give finishing touches to his work.

Our brothers in Malegaon took the initiative and considered publishing this work for the benefit of the community. I sent them the Gujarati manuscript and they suggested its title *"My Will"* considering the fact that he wrote this during the last days of his life. Ultimately it was published from Malegaon in 1976 in the form of a booklet in Gujarati. A great deal of work was involved in the process and I am obliged for the painstaking efforts of the Malegaon group, specially Mr Salehbhai Taherali Badshah, in publishing it. May Allah reward them.

A number of my friends suggested that if we published this booklet in English it would be of immense benefit to all those who are not conversant with the Gujarati language and who are totally unaware of the historical background of the priest class and the struggle for freedom and justice by the persecuted members of the community.

In reply to these suggestions I decided to undertake this task in the name of Allah the Almighty.

While translating the Gujarati text into English I have tried my best to adhere to the sense intended by the author.

I am grateful to my dear friend Saifuddin Marzban for spending long hours helping me to edit my transcript on his own computer and also his valuable suggestions relating to the lay out and presentation of the text.

I hope the readers will find this booklet useful and if so I shall consider that my efforts in this respect have been fully rewarded.

Wa maa tawfiqee illa billah.

Ahmed bin Syedi Ismailbhai Luqmani

London

Rabiul Awwal 1414 Hijri (August 1993)



My Experiences and My Will

Praise be to Allah, the Sustainer of all the Worlds, His blessings on the Holy Prophet Maulana Mohammad Mustafa, upon his Vasi Maulana Ali Murtaza, upon his daughter Maulatena Fatematuz Zahra, the choicest amongst the women of the world, upon his two beloved grandsons Imam Maulana Hasanali Muji and Imam Maulana Husain, the martyr of Kerbala and upon all the Imams who were descended from Imam Maulana Husain to the 21st Imam, Maulana Imam Tayyab Abil Qasim and upon the Imams who will come till the Day of Judgement.

The Holy Prophet laid stress upon the need for the young and the old to make a 'will' as one never knows when death may strike. Bearing this in mind I, Ismail Luqmani, son of Syedi Luqmanji Sahib, a humble servant of Allah and the follower of the Panjatan, the Imams and the rightly appointed Dais, do realise that since I have grown old it is my duty to leave a 'will' without further delay for my children, relations and friends. I possess neither wealth nor property which I may bequeath to my successors. But knowledge is an everlasting wealth and true faith will be the means of deliverance on the Day of Judgement. Hence, I wish to leave behind as a gift for my family and friends true faith as I see it, together with the true record of some of the events in our community from 1256 Hijri (1840 AD) to the present day. I do believe that the vast majority of our community members is ignorant of what actually transpired in 1256 Hijri and thereafter and those few who do know the facts maintain silence lest they are deprived of their bread and butter as if it is the mulla who provides sustenance and not Allah.

The scholars who knew the true history are no longer alive and the unfortunate heart-rending incident of 1256 Hijri was almost forgotten. But when Taher Saifuddin Sahib started his 'Reign of Terror' in the community and opened the door of conflict in 1335 Hijri (1917 AD) he indirectly became instrumental in reviving and

bringing into lime light the event of 1256 Hijri, so much so that it found its place even in the Privy Council records at a later date. During the Burhanpur Dargah Case our religious history came under close scrutiny. I was one of the witnesses in this case on behalf of the victims of oppression while I myself was one of the victims. In order to uphold his false claims, Taher Saifuddin Sahib arranged to produce in the Burhanpur court by way of evidence a number of our community books - all in Arabic. With the help of these very books we were able to refute all his claims. Although both the parties produced certain letters and documents as well, we did not have to produce any books from our side as this job was already done for us. As a result of all this, the event of 1256 Hijri was clearly highlighted. Based on the facts revealed in this case and keeping in view my own personal experience I am now writing the true history of that period. But before commencing the 1256 Hijri events I would like to give a brief account of the rightful Dais prior to 1256 Hijri so that one may easily distinguish between right and wrong.

Before the seclusion (satar) of the 21st Imam, the 20th Imam took steps to establish the Mission (Daawat) in Yemen through Maulatena Arwa binte Ahmed, better known as Hurratul Maleka. There were 23 Dais in Yemen from Syedna Zoeb bin Musa to Syedna Mohammad Izzuddin.

The office of Dai was not the monopoly of one family alone. Rather it was given to the most deserving, sincere and learned person in the community. If a Dai found a person of a family other than his own more suited for the office he would appoint such a person as his successor and ignore his own son. Consequently Syedna Yusuf bin Sulaiman of Sidhpur, India, was appointed as the 24th Dai on account of merit. He then migrated to Yemen but the office continued after him in Ahmedabad, India, until the time of the 29th Dai Syedna Abdul Tayyab bin Syedna Dawood bin Qutub. After him Syedna Ali Shamsuddin became the 30th Dai in Yemen but once again this post was transferred after him to Ahmedabad, which remained the centre of Daawat till the 33rd Dai. From there the centre shifted to Jamnagar where there were five Dais up to Syedna Ismail Badruddin (Junior). Then there were two Dais in Ujjain, Syedna Ibrahim Wajihuddin and Syedna Hebatullahil Moayyad, followed by Syedna Abdul Tayyab Zakiyuddin who preferred to settle down in Burhanpur. He appointed as his successor his son, Syedna Yusuf Najmuddin who chose to live in Surat. There he

nominated as the next Dai Syedna Abdeali Saifuddin who in turn named his brother Syedi Abdul Qadir Hakimuddin for the post of Dai after him. But Syedi Hakimuddin did not live long leaving Syedna Abdeali Saifuddin in search of a suitable person to succeed him. Although his own brother, Syedi Sheikh Adam Safiyuddin, was his first assistant (Maazoon)*, he did not appoint him as his successor and his keen eyes fell upon two pupils from Aurangabad, Sheikh Mohammadali and Sheikh Tayyabali, who had joined the religious school (Saifee Daras) for higher education. Syedna Abdeali Saifuddin took personal interest in the training of these two brothers so much so that both of them proved to be capable of becoming Dais. As if by instinct he chose the younger brother Mohammadali as the next Dai, gave him the title of Izzuddin and instructed him to appoint after him his elder brother Tayyabali who was awarded the title of Zainuddin. Syedna Abdeali Saifuddin left his young son Mohammad in charge of the two brothers. When the younger brother died Syedna Tayyab Zainuddin became Dai. He trained the master's son and made him worthy of the office of Dai. He gave him the title of Badruddin and after appointing him as his successor he died in 1252 Hijri (1836 AD). Syedna Mohammad Badruddin took charge as the 46th Dai at an early age of twenty eight.

Now we come to the era of Najmuddin Sahib. whose first name was Yusuf. But before we look at the events of that era I would like to throw some light on how the previous 46 Dais lived, what sacrifices they gave for the community and how they spent their time and energy in spreading knowledge and true guidance. I am sure this will help you to see the truth.

As it is not necessary that the post of Dai should remain in one family, Syedna Abdeali Saifuddin ignored his brother and selected two strangers from Aurangabad because he found them more capable of holding this post. Likewise, in Yemen the Dai's post was held by persons belonging to different families and so were the posts of Maazoon and Mukaasir*. The fifth Dai in Yemen, Syedna Ali bin Mohammad bin Waleed was a special case. He was a descendant of Waleed, son of Utbah, the brother of Shaibah, both of whom were unbelievers of Makkah and were enemies of the Holy Prophet and they took an active part in persecuting the Prophet.

* Refer to footnote on page 2.

Once when the Prophet was boycotted, harassed and injured by the Makkans, he took refuge near the house of his enemy Utbah, who felt pity upon the Prophet and sent with his servant a bunch of grapes out of his abundant crop which he had obtained from his orchard. Upon receiving the bunch the Prophet found that it contained 18 grapes. He thereupon prayed to Allah for a reward to Utbah for his kindness and the answer to his prayer was that 18 of Utbah's descendants later became Dais in Yemen. By the time the office of Dai was transferred to India there had been only 17 Dais from Utbah family in Yemen. Hence, after the 29th Dai in India, by the wish of Allah, the post was given to Syedna Ali Shamsuddin in Yemen thus completing the figure of 18 in the family of Utbah.

Apart from this, the Dais, Maazoons and Mukaasirs in Yemen came from different families and this practice continued in India.

The life style of the 46 Dais was very simple. The plain and undecorated houses of these Dais in Yemen and in India can be seen even today. Syedna Dawood bin Qutubshah, the source of our title as Dawoodi Bohras, led a very austere life living in a basement in Ahmedabad for over three years. Syedna Sheikh Adam was for a very long time a victim of atrocities committed by the then rulers. Syedna Qutbuddin gave his life and became a martyr. All these sufferings were in the course of performing their duty to guide people in the cause of Islam.

In order to justify their own misdeeds the present claimants of the Dai's office have misguided people into believing that the 26th Dai, Syedna Dawood bin Ajabshah was fond of sumptuous feasts and monetary presents (ziafats and salaams) and ostentatious processions, and that they are simply following his example. This is far from truth and they are trying to fool the community. Through their Amils they bring pressure upon the community members to donate exorbitant sums of money to meet the expenses of travelling and subsistence for the troop of as many as 150 whose stay may prolong for several days and months unnecessarily. No such burden was placed on the community by the 26th Dai as alleged. It so happened that during his time there was peace and security and there was no oppression from the rulers. Taking advantage of the peaceful situation the members of the community on their own initiative used to invite the Dai into their homes. However, the Dai observed simplicity and there was no sign of pomp or show

anywhere. The author of the book 'Muntazaul Akhbaar' writes that once Syedna Dawood bin Ajabshah went to see his sick daughter Fatimabai (not referred to as princess) and on the way stepped over a nail receiving serious injury to his heel. He went to the Hakim for the treatment of his injury walking bare footed all the way. This wound proved fatal and ultimately caused his death. Is it not strange that a Dai who was highly honoured and loved by the people is unable to afford a servant in the house, owns no horse nor carriage and walks bare footed to the Hakim to fetch his medicine? In fact it proves how simple he was.

The rightful Dais never reserved religious grades, posts and honours for members of their families but gave preference over their own relations to outsiders in case these were more learned. This has been well elaborated in the book 'Mausame Bahaar' Volume III giving the detailed history of the Dais. The rightful Dais never misused Waqf properties nor did they ever get them transferred into their personal names. Whatever belonged to the community was spent for its benefit. Syedna Abdeali Saifuddin had issued special instructions to one of his Amils to see that the income of the community fund (Baitul Maal) was spent with the consultation and advice of its members and he was asked to exercise his best judgement as regards the money belonging to the 'Daawat'. Thus we notice a clear difference in the life style of the rightful Dais and the present claimants.

From the day Syedna Zainuddin started giving preference to Syedna Mohammad Badruddin over others, Najmuddin Sahib, Syedna Zainuddin's son, lost no time in launching an adverse propaganda against Syedna Mohammad Badruddin and with the help of his associates he laid false accusations against him. After Syedna Mohammad Badruddin assumed the office of Dai, the opposition of Najmuddin Sahib became stronger and more open. On a number of occasions he insulted the Dai and went so far as to say that the Nas on Syedna Mohammad Badruddin was not valid as it was made by his father during his illness. It has been reported that Miya Sahib Isabhai Dohadwalla, the father in law of Najmuddin Sahib made him appear before the Dai and seek his forgiveness for all his accusations.

The first name of Yusuf Najmuddin Sahib was changed by Syedna Abdeali Saifuddin Sahib to Abdul Qadir Najmuddin. He was

known in his circle as very sexual and in order to boost his sexuality he made use of medicines derived from the testicles of a horse. Sheikh Tayyabali Satta of Ratlam has written a poem describing Najmuddin Sahib's lust as "Baawaaji na waqto ma Yaaquti ghanee khaadi.....etc."

From the beginning of 1252 Hijri (1836 AD) when Syedna Mohammad Badruddin became Dai at the age of twenty eight, Najmuddin Sahib had open confrontations with the Dai and always wished his early death so that he could usurp the coveted post of Dai. Any intelligent person would ask, "How could one expect Syedna Mohammad Badruddin Sahib even to think of declaring Nas upon Najmuddin Sahib and appoint him as his successor in spite of such stiff opposition and ill treatment?"

Najmuddin Sahib had lost his patience and was all the time planning somehow to get rid of Syedna Mohammad Badruddin who was suffering from piles for quite some time. This afforded him an opportunity to administer poison to the Dai in his medicine with the help of his associates, thus causing the Dai's death.

Syedna Mohammad Badruddin promised on the evening of 29th Jamadil Aakhar 1256 Hijri (1840 AD) to some of the learned men that on the next day (1st of Rajab) when they would all assemble for the majlis, he would discuss the question of Nas. But the day never dawned upon him as he died suddenly due to poisoning.

I made an affidavit in Bombay (mentioned later) as to the persons involved in the sudden death of Syedna Mohammad Badruddin. As regards the poisoning of the Dai the relevant paragraph from Mausame Bahaar was quoted by us in the Burhanpur Dargah Case and treated as Exhibit P29. Therein the author says "It is surmised that apart from the complaint of piles there was clear evidence of poison (Almas powder). No one expected such a thing to happen but all of a sudden he passed away leaving every one in total darkness and confusion. Like Syedna Shujauddin he also departed from this world as a martyr".

In 1340 Hijri (1922 AD) I went to Khamgaon for a change of climate, together with my family and stayed in the farm belonging to late Mr Hasanali Gulzar. One day my daughter, aged 12, was possessed by some evil spirit and it was soon discovered that it was the spirit of Chamanai, the mother in law of Najmuddin Sahib. In

the presence of Hasanali Gulzar and his family members the spirit made a confession about the administering of poison to the 46th Dai. I signed a sworn affidavit about this in Bombay in 1383 Hijri (12th March 1963) in the court of the Presidency Magistrate. An extract of the affidavit is as follows:

"Then I asked her (the spirit) about the poisoning of Syedna Mohammad Badruddin and she replied that it was true. I then asked her as to who were the persons involved in this crime. In answer to this she gave the following names :

1. Chamanai herself
2. Sukanai, daughter of Chamanai
3. Sheikh Mohammadali Chuha Burhanpuri
4. Mulla Ahmedali Karodi Burhanpuri
5. Mukhlis
6. Mohammadali Hawalchi
7. Isaji Hazuri
8. Miyabhai Lambo
9. Ghulamali Alibhai Khachi
10. Alibhai Kothari
11. Dawoodbhai Hazuri
12. Moosa Kiristan
13. Muzaffar Sidhi.

Ten days later my brother in law, Sheikh Qayyumbhai Sheikh Isabhai, also signed an affidavit in the court of Presidency Magistrate, Bombay. An extract from there is, "The facts I learnt from my forefathers and my own investigation and experience have revealed that the persons involved in poisoning Syedna Mohammad Badruddin were:

1. Chamanai, mother of Miya Sahib Dawoodbhai Goldadar (my father's paternal uncle), maternal grandmother of Burhanuddin Sahib, sister of Syedi Abdulali Valiyullah and Syedi Abdullahai Fakhruddin, two out of the four scholars who had nominated Najmuddin Sahib to officiate as Dai.

2. Sukanai, daughter of Chamanai, wife of Najmuddin Sahib and maternal grandmother of Taher Saifuddin Sahib
3. Sheikh Mohammadali Chuha Burhanpuri
4. Mulla Ahmedali Karodi Burhanpuri
5. Mukhlis
6. Hawalchi
7. Muzaffar Sidhi etc."

The sudden death of Syedna Mohammad Badruddin without making Nas to declare his successor left the learned men of the time in great consternation. At first they did not know what to do, but then four of the most prominent scholars among them met together and discussed the grave situation. These scholars were Imaduddin Sahib, Syedi Valiyullah Sahib (whose shrine is in Javra), Syedi Valibhai Sahib (my great grandfather whose shrine is in Parda, Malwa) and Syedi Abdullahai Fakhruddin (brother of Syedi Abdulali Valiyullah Sahib). Imaduddin Sahib said, "If the members of the community came to know that a Nas has not been proclaimed on anyone it is bound to create chaos among them. Besides, we cannot delay performing the funeral rites of the deceased Syedna. I therefore suggest that as a temporary measure we nominate someone to act as Nazim who will look after the affairs of the community and no one would even know the truth". He then suggested the name of Najmuddin Sahib. The remaining three scholars were reluctant but finally agreed on condition that Najmuddin Sahib gave a covenant to the effect that he would not claim to be a Dai, that at the time of Fajr prayers his name would not be announced in public, that soon after making suitable arrangements at home he would proceed to Baitullah in Makkah, pray there and return only when he sees a sign or receives guidance from the Imam.

It is now felt that the correct procedure should have been to submit to Syedi Hebatullah Jamaluddin and act according to his instructions as he was the Maazoon. Instead, Najmuddin Sahib was given the authority to act as Dai and Syedi Jamaluddin Sahib was not even informed of this horrific event for a number of years and in fact, he was under the impression that everything in Surat was normal.

For a while Najmuddin Sahib complied with the terms of his covenant, but soon he succeeded in winning the full support for all

his actions from his teacher, Imaduddin Sahib who was a man of the world, less spiritually inclined. With his help Najmuddin Sahib succeeded in having his name being publicly announced before the Fajr prayers. He tightened his hold on the community and started introducing innovations in religion (Bidaat). The scholars realised the danger but they were powerless to be able to do anything. He awarded ranks to the children of the Najmi and Husami families high above others and disregarded the age old criteria of merit based on knowledge, experience and piety. All his sons were uneducated except Husainbhai Sahib Izzuddin and Abdullabhai Sahib Hakimuddin.

Because of the unfair and unjust grading there was lot of discontent among the learned men of the time. Najmuddin Sahib tried to create friction and division among them with a view to thwart any attempt to oppose him. However, most of the learned men stopped attending majlises or going to the mosque. They would only participate in funerals and even then spend most of their time sitting in the shrine.

One of the conditions agreed to by Najmuddin Sahib was to go to Makkah and pray there for guidance. Syedi Valibhai was at last able to persuade Najmuddin Sahib in 1260 Hijri (1844 AD) to travel to Makkah for Haj and wait there. But this was not upto Najmuddin Sahib's taste, so he returned to Surat without accomplishing anything.

Syedi Valibhai died in 1262 Hijri (1846 AD). The two brothers Syedi Abdulali and Syedi Abdullabhai had no chance of improving the situation as Imaduddin Sahib using his diplomacy and cunning ways was backing up every move of Najmuddin Sahib. The greatest innovation of all was that he divided the Daawat, as if it were a kingdom, between his seven sons and his two brothers allowing them to exercise full powers over their respective regions.

Najmuddin Sahib led a lustful and luxurious life. He made invocations (sadhna) to Hanuman in the house of Chibawalla in Navapura street in Surat for the prolongation of his lustful life. He was attracted by the charms of Zainab, wife of Sheikh Salhuji Sironji. She was beautiful and very shrewd. After the death of Sheikh Salhuji, Najmuddin Sahib married her. Whenever he was away from home he would write such indecent letters to her that no husband would dare write to his wife. Most of these letters were

extremely vulgar and immoral and it is not wise for me to reproduce any of them.

There was an affair between Zainab and Najmuddin Sahib's brother, Abdulhusain Husamuddin Sahib. Najmuddin Sahib knew about this and referred to it in one of his letters saying, "Whatever is in your mind do write to me clearly without hesitation, fear or shame. When I am in your presence you refer to me as your dear beloved and your comfort and that you belong to me only but in your heart you profess love to Husain. Dil main kya aur honton pe kya".

The three brothers, Najmuddin Sahib, Husamuddin Sahib and Ismailjibhai Sahib were fooled by the two sisters, Dayam and Mana of Navapura Street Surat. They were mad after the two sisters who pretended they knew how to make gold. Later one of them claimed to be the daughter of Imam and a secret marriage was arranged with Husamuddin. This marriage lasted only for a day and she disappeared. Husamuddin who probably thought she was dead wrote letters addressing the Imam begging him to make her alive. Ismailbhai Sahib married Dayam in secrecy and gave an undertaking to Dayam in writing that he would have no relation whatsoever with his wife, Umme Zainab, the daughter of Imaduddin Sahib. All these letters and writings have been preserved.

In 1264 Hijri (1848 AD) Najmuddin Sahib received five letters of warning, one after the other, assumed to have come from the Imam addressed to him as Yusuf, which was his first name at birth. These Imami letters were produced in the Burhanpur Dargah Case as Exhibits P190 a, b, c, d and e. Najmuddin Sahib was very worried and nervous on receipt of these letters and tried to get in touch with Syedi Abdulali Valiyullah who was at the time in Makkah. He also sent a copy of one of the letters for the opinion of Imaduddin Sahib who advised him to ignore the letters which contained instructions for him to submit to the Maazoon Jamaluddin Sahib. The letters of concern written by Najmuddin Sahib were also produced in the Burhanpur Dargah Case as Exhibits P186, 187 and 188. Similarly an extract relating to these Imami letters from Mausame Bahaar Vol. III page 749 to 752 was produced as Exhibit P30. Some of the words are quoted below :

"During the officiating period of Maulana Najmuddin, may Allah maintain his power, letters arrived from the Imam. Upon reading

these letters the heart of every man of clear understanding was full of praises for the Lord but nothing useful was achieved on account of sins. For long there was a search for the Goal but it was nowhere to be found."

After the death of Imaduddin Sahib in 1271 Hijri (1855 AD) Syedi Abdulali Valiyullah seized the opportunity to exercise some control over Najmuddin Sahib. Since Syedi Abdulali intended to perform Haj in 1272 Hijri (1856 AD), he first visited Syedi Hebatullah Jamaluddin in Jamnagar and related to him in detail the sad event of 1256 Hijri (1840 AD) and the developments since then. He further said, "You are the master and I shall persuade Najmuddin Sahib to submit to you. Many years have gone by and Najmuddin Sahib has exercised authority without any right. Please forgive him and let him continue, but with your written permission, otherwise there will be great confusion in the community. You will, of course remain in the background and watch him." Syedi Jamaluddin accepted the suggestion and Syedi Abdulali returned to Surat. He said to Najmuddin Sahib, "How long will you persist ignoring the truth? You saw Syedna Tayyab Zainuddin in your dream rebuking you and the Imami letters warned you, yet you did not submit to the Maazoon. Think, there is still time to make amends." Najmuddin Sahib replied that it was no use since Syedi Jamaluddin Sahib was unaware of all this. Thereupon Syedi Abdulali informed him about his visit to Jamnagar and the terms agreed with Syedi Jamaluddin Sahib. He then asked him to invite the Maazoon to Surat, seek his forgiveness and act according to his written instructions, a draft of which Syedi Abdulali would send from Bombay on his way to Makkah for Haj. Soon Syedi Jamaluddin arrived in Surat and Najmuddin bowed before him with a salaam of Rs. 51 and sought his forgiveness. On receipt of the draft as promised, the instruction letter was prepared and signed by Syedi Jamaluddin Sahib. Najmuddin Sahib wrote to Syedi Abdulali that he had done the needful. This was Exhibit P189 in the Burhanpur Dargah Case. This incident was described by Ibrahimbhai Sahib Safiyuddin, son of Imaduddin Sahib, in his poem (Nasihah) which became Exhibit P198 in the Dargah Case. In this poem he says "If he had been rightly appointed by Nas why did he have to bow down to Maula Jamaluddin and present him a salaam of Rs.51 ?"

The new arrangement had hardly worked for a few months when Najmuddin Sahib began flouting the authority of Jamaluddin Sahib

who, having been fed up with the awkward situation, left for Jamnagar where he died shortly after. Syedi Abdulali died soon after his return from Haj and his brother, Syedi Abdullahbai also died a few days later.

Now that the top ranking scholars were gone, the sons of Najmuddin Sahib came into prominence. He made up a story that the Imam appeared in his dream and directed him to appoint his son Husainbhai Izzuddin as his successor. He even prepared a document of Nas and called it 'Risalatul Vaziyah fee Eezaahin Nasse wal Wasiyyah'. This document was produced in the Dargah Case as Exhibit P112. Najmuddin Sahib's brother Husamuddin Sahib was very annoyed at this and in 1297 Hijri (1880 AD) he joined an association (Anjuman) called 'Hilful Fazaail', the first president of which was Imaduddin Sahib's son, Ibrahimbhai Safiyuddin (the grandfather of the notorious Profumo of Dohad). Husamuddin Sahib took an active part in the Anjuman and he questioned Najmuddin Sahib about the validity of the Nas. Najmuddin Sahib's answers were evasive and full of doubt and confusion, but one fact clearly emerged that he was nominated by the four learned men and not appointed by Nas. Exhibit P30 of the Dargah Case gives a detailed account of this event by way of quotations from Mausame Bahaar. The relevant paragraph is reproduced below:

✓ "It was his intention that on the first of Rajab he would deal with the matter of Nas, award ranks to the deserving on merit in accordance with the practice of his predecessors, make people aware about the person to be named successor and to read in the presence of everyone the document of Nas. However, death intervened and he departed to heaven before the first of Rajab. It was a terrible calamity and many a soul were frustrated. A ruling of Nas was pronounced by the leading scholars Sheikhul Fazil Abdulali, Sheikhul Fazil Valibhai, Sheikhul Fazil Abdullahbai and the most eminent and learned of all, Abdeali Imaduddin Sahib. The servant of Aale Mohammad took charge of this august office with the help of Allah."

✓

Although Najmuddin Sahib gave ambiguous answers to the questions about Nas put to him by Husamuddin Sahib on behalf of Anjumane Hilful Fazaail he had admitted the fact of his nomination by the four scholars. Three documents prepared by Hilful Fazaail were recorded in the Dargah Case as Exhibit P121, 122 and 123.

The first document was signed by 12 scholars, the second by five and the third did not bear any signature. In order to destroy the Anjuman, Najmuddin Sahib used the tactics of giving his daughters in marriage to some and wealth to others. Selecting two brothers from amongst the scholars he gave his daughter as well as money to the younger one and shrewdly created a rift between the two brothers. He kept on playing one brother against the other and ultimately succeeded in achieving his aim - the dissolution of the Anjuman which automatically ended all opposition at least for the time being. He made some excuses and cancelled the Nas on Husainbhai Izzuddin and announced a fresh Nas on Husamuddin Sahib. This act of his confirmed the fact that the previous Nas was bogus.

In 1302 Hijri (1885 AD) during the month of Rajab, Najmuddin Sahib became ill in Ujjain. He was afraid of death and craved for a long life. During his illness he learnt that a procession of Ganpati (a Hindu God) was passing by. So he sent one of his servants with oil to offer it on Ganpati in the hope that this dedication would prolong his life but all his efforts were in vain and he died on 26th Rajab.

Husamuddin Sahib now took charge of Daawat. Even though he was hot tempered he would cool down quickly. It is reported that he was careless in observing the canons of cleanliness (Tahaarat) and often led prayers in an unclean state (Janaabat).

He had four sons, Abdealibhai Sahib Mohiyuddin, Abdullabhai Sahib Badruddin, Sheikh Adambhai Sahib Ziauddin and Hebatullabhai Sahib Jamaluddin. Abdealibhai Sahib whose mother was from Sidhpur, knew the truth about the Nas, so he never prayed under the imamat of Husamuddin Sahib or any of his office holders nor did he accept any post of Maazoon or Mukaasir. Abdullah Badruddin Sahib kept himself occupied in reading and learning, and correcting handwritten books. The remaining two brothers were notorious in fornication. Husamuddin Sahib was not on good terms with Burhanuddin Sahib (son of Najmuddin Sahib) who always used abusive language for Husamuddin Sahib. My father once told me, "One day in 1308 Hijri (1891 AD) I was sitting in the company of Burhanuddin Sahib in Surat while Husamuddin Sahib was suffering from illness in Ahmedabad. Burhanuddin Sahib was cursing (laanat) Husamuddin Sahib when a telegram arrived to the effect that

Husamuddin Sahib had expired. Perhaps this news gave him a shock and from that day onward he never cursed nor used abusive language against Husamuddin Sahib."

Burhanuddin Sahib* had two sons, Tayyab and Taher in his old age. His servant (Hazuri) was Ghulamali Dadu with whom he had homosexual relations. Some years later he had two more sons, Saleh and Ibrahim. As Burhanuddin Sahib was illiterate, complications and problems arising in religious matters such as Nikah and Talaaq were not at all dealt with satisfactorily. As a result the lives of many couples were ruined by his incorrect rulings. One such example is given below :

"Abdulhusain Aita Rangwalla of Ahmedabad married a divorced lady from Surat and a dispute arose regarding the validity of the lady's divorce. Burhanuddin Sahib was not able to solve the problem and the couple were separated and compelled to live apart for the rest of their lives."

There was no end to the introduction of innovations (Bidaat) during Burhanuddin Sahib's time. My father who was in Africa was apprised of this unhappy situation by my grand uncle, Syedi Ahmedali Hamiduddin Sahib, one of the eminent scholars of the time. Burhanuddin Sahib used to spend Baitul Maal money quite lavishly with the result that he became heavily indebted. Recovery suits were filed against him by a number of creditors including Sheikh Abdul Tayyab Goribadam. The latter had applied to the court for a decree of Rs 52,000 with a jail sentence. This critical situation compelled Burhanuddin Sahib to start leading a simple life and he could no longer afford a carriage of his own and had to rely on public conveyance in case of need.

In 1309 Hijri (1892 AD) Abdullabhai Sahib Hakimuddin, the younger brother of Burhanuddin Sahib, who knew the truth about the Nas, obtained control and was able to exercise his influence over him. He obtained from him a covenant in writing in the following words :

"I did not claim any rank or post nor did I have a desire to succeed my uncle whom I knew to be of doubtful character and that I only

* It is not clear under what authority Burhanuddin Sahib took charge of the Mission (Daawat) after the death of Husamuddin Sahib.

accepted the post of Dai in order to uphold the honour and prestige of our family. I promise that in future I shall act according to my brother Abdullahhai's instructions in every matter. My brother shall be my successor. I swear in the name of Allah, the Angels, the Prophets, the Imams and with love for Amirul mumeneen I do hereby sign this covenant."

Abdullahhai Sahib forwarded this covenant to his father in law, Syedi Mohammadali Hamdani for scrutiny. His son, Miyasahib Alibhai Hamdani, secretly picked up the document, obtained its photos and then replaced it. Legal opinion was also sought on this document from Badruddin Tayyabji, a barrister practising in the High Court of Bombay.

Soon differences arose between the two brothers and Burhanuddin Sahib demanded return of the covenant. When it was returned to him he destroyed it. However, copies of the covenant had already been circulated and were in the possession of many persons. Burhanuddin Sahib then proceeded for Haj after appointing his uncle, Ismailbhai Sahib Badruddin as his successor.

My grand uncle, Syedi Ahmedali Hamiduddin, happened to be Amil* in Burhanpur so my father also decided to stay there with him. I was then 12 and my sister, Husainabai was 9 years old. Our mother died when I was four and my father married the daughter of Sheikh Abdul Tayyab in Burhanpur. One morning while we were ready to have breakfast, to our surprise, Burhanuddin Sahib arrived in Surat by the early morning train- all alone. He had breakfast with us after which he entered into conversation with father and requested him to go to Zanzibar (Africa) as Amil. As father refused he put his hand in father's beard and begged him to accept the office. My father was embarrassed and had no alternative but to accept it.

* The Head office of the Mission appoints salaried deputies known as "Amils" in different towns and cities which have a substantial population of Dawoodi Bohras. Certain limited powers are delegated to these deputies in respect of leading prayers, solemnising marriages, arranging funerals, taking of Misaq, provision of religious education and collection of religious dues to be spent on the welfare of the community. Today the Amils are instructed to concentrate only on the collection of money from the community on one pretext or the other with the result that community care and education receive the least attention.

He left me and my sister under the care of my grand uncle while mother went back to her parents because father had decided to go alone.

After a short while my grand uncle had to leave Burhanpur on transfer. So he took my sister with him and I was to live with my maternal grand father, Syedi Badruddin Sahib who was Amil in Ranala at the time. I was admitted in a school there but due to the transfer of Badruddin Sahib we came back to live in Surat. Very soon orders for a further transfer were received and he left for his new post giving me in the care of Sheikh Abdul Karim, the husband of an adopted daughter of my grand uncle. I do not like to write in detail what hardships I had to undergo in this household. Suffice it to say that I lived in that family like a servant and many a times I was battered by the lady of the house. My elder sister, Rababbai was then in Surat but she could not help me because of her own worries. One day I was beaten so severely that my hands were swollen. Sheikh Abdul Karim took me to my sister's house, where her mother in law, Khadija Aisahiba who was also my father's aunt, was present. Besides my sister she was also a witness to this pitiful sight. Khadija Aisahiba also noticed that my clothes were all torn and that I was anaemic. Immediately she took me in her care and it was then that I finally experienced some peace and comfort.

When my grand uncle returned to Surat I went back to him. I attended school regularly working hard and always stood first in my class. The teachers were kind to me and my grand uncle was highly pleased with my performance. But my great aunt had a strange temper. One day on my return from school, while I was still on the stairs ready to enter the house, I heard my great aunt shouting and passing adverse remarks against me. This annoyed me very much and I thought that it was better to live with one's parents rather than to suffer such insults. Hence, I insisted upon going to Zanzibar to live with my father. My grand uncle wanted me to stay but I was determined and stopped going to school. Hence, he had no alternative but to send me to Zanzibar. At this stage it is necessary to mention what had happened during the period prior to my arrival in Zanzibar.

Six months after father's transfer to Zanzibar, my stepmother in Burhanpur expired. Meanwhile, father received a letter from Burhanuddin Sahib saying that he was in need of money and

therefore wanted father to go to Madagascar, collect some funds and send them on to him. Father replied that as business was slack at the moment and likely to pick up after three months or so, it would be advisable to make the trip then. Allah knows what the reaction was on Burhanuddin's mind. He wrote again saying, "Your goal is nothing but money and you have no regard for the service of Daawat." Father felt very annoyed at this accusation and wrote back three successive letters full of rebuke. Burhanuddin Sahib was enraged at these letters so he sent as Amil of Zanzibar Sheikh Adam, who was brought up in our own household. He was instructed to give father as much trouble as he could.

Meanwhile, father had married Khadijabai binte Bhajibhai and since he had resigned from the post of Amil he was living in her house. When Sheikh Adam arrived he stayed in the same house. In the beginning he used to consult father in every matter. Because of this he incurred the displeasure of Burhanuddin Sahib, who wrote a threatening letter to Sheikh Adam. As a result of this his attitude towards us changed completely. He was greedy and loved to wield power. Upon his instigation all the Bohras boycotted us except some ten or twelve persons, among whom worth mentioning were Sulemanji Alibhai Jamnagarwalla, Mulla Alibhai Dosaji and Mulla Tayyabali Hakim Mahuwawalla.

Once father visited Mohammadali Isaji Boira, a sincere and devoted friend, who was seriously ill. During the visit he appointed father as trustee of his wealth, property and business and requested him to distribute the estate equitably among the survivors. Mohammadali had two wives. The second wife who was from Dhoraji had a son one year old. Hence, the distribution would work out in the ratio of $\frac{1}{16}$ to each wife and $\frac{14}{16}$ to the son. Father asked Mohammadali to have a list prepared of all his estate without which it would not be possible to take charge and comply with his request.

Mohammadali's Bohra book keeper, upon learning this approached the Amil and offered him a substantially large sum of money if he were to assist him in getting all the property and assets transferred to his personal name. The Amil prepared a transfer deed and visited Mohammadali on the pretence of taking his misaq before death. Mohammadali was unconscious yet the Amil went ahead with the misaq ritual and holding Mohammadali's hand in his own obtained a forced signature on the deed.

By this time I had arrived in Zanzibar while my sister remained in the care of my grand uncle. The brother of Mohammadali's second wife came to Zanzibar and complained to father that his nephew was fraudulently deprived of his inheritance and asked for his help in the matter. Father told him that there was no alternative but to file a suit in the court of law and that he was quite sure of success in the case. Ibrahim, the brother, said that he was a poor man and could not afford to pay either the stamp fee or the expenses of the solicitor. So father asked Sulemanji Alibhai to provide funds as it was a good case and that he would be able to recoup all expenses. Father appeared in the court as a witness on behalf of the plaintiff. The judge asked, "If your head priest in Surat sends a ruling will you accept it or not?" Father said, "If it is in accordance with this book 'Daaemul Islam' in my hand I will accept it otherwise not." Ultimately the case was decided in favour of the plaintiff and all the property was restored to the rightful owner. After winding up the affairs in Zanzibar, Ibrahim, his sister and the child left for Dhoraji, India.

On one occasion father became ill and Seth Alibhai Mulla Jivanji, who was a close friend, came to see him. As father needed a change, Seth Alibhai took him to Mombasa to stay in his bungalow for some time. Our boycott by the Bohras, which had lasted for quite a long time, had now relaxed and Burhanuddin Sahib also seemed to have cooled down. He went to my grand uncle's house for the misaq of my sister in Surat. It was then that he felt remorse for what he had done to father. I might say that he was not as obstinate as Taher Saifuddin. When Burhanuddin Sahib saw my sister he asked her hand in marriage for his son. Probably he thought that this way he would be able to make amends for his past indiscretion and reconcile the differences. Taher Saifuddin was already married but he was not living with his wife because he did not like her. Even after knowing this situation he repeated his proposal to my grand uncle, who replied, "How can I agree when your relations with her father are so strained?" However, through the mediation of my elder brother in law, Abdullah Badruddin Sahib, my grand uncle was persuaded to agree. Immediately Burhanuddin Sahib drafted a letter about this addressed to my father and my grand uncle also wrote a few lines requesting father's acceptance in the same letter. Father received this letter while we were in Mombasa and he informed me of its contents. He wrote

direct to my grand uncle and not to Burhanuddin Sahib agreeing to the proposal. Burhanuddin Sahib sent a number of letters and telegrams requesting father to come down to Surat in order to solemnise the Nikah of my sister. Instead of replying to Burhanuddin Sahib, father wrote to my grand uncle asking him to perform the Nikah ceremony since it was he who had initially agreed the proposal. At last the marriage was solemnised in Surat.

After some time Burhanuddin Sahib became ill. His quarrel with Abdullahhai Sahib and his declaration of Nas on Ismailbhai Sahib, with which he was not at all happy, worried him a great deal. Ismailbhai Sahib was however in doubt whether he was the successor or not. Hence Burhanuddin Sahib conferred with his sons, Tayyab and Taher in this matter. Since the two brothers were pupils of Abdealibhai Sahib, they prepared a Nas document in his favour and showed it to him. But Abdealibhai Sahib, declining the offer, told them that he did not desire to hold any post whatsoever. The brothers were disappointed. Abdealibhai Sahib suggested they approached his brother and asked him if he would accept. Accordingly they approached Abdullah Badruddin Sahib, who had no hesitation in accepting the offer. Till then Abdullah Badruddin Sahib had led a pious life like his brother, Abdealibhai Sahib. He did not like to use allopathic medicine as he suspected it contained alcohol and he expressed feelings of contempt even at the mention of the word 'interest'.

However, when he took charge after the death of Burhanuddin Sahib he completely changed. The signs of piety began to disappear. It became lawful for him to take allopathic medicine prescribed by his physician, Dr Tayyabbhai. After his recovery from a serious illness he rendered financial help to many of his relations from the Daawat funds.

By this time we had returned to India and father was officiating as Amil in Kapadvanj which was in the region under the control of Abdullahhai Sahib. I was then in Surat and our house was mortgaged with Ibrahim Nazarali. Badruddin Sahib was curious to know the amount of mortgage on the house. I ascertained the figure including the accumulated interest and gave the details to him on the next day. He spoke with contempt, "I do not want to know anything about interest. I shall give you the principal sum only." However, only a short time after this he lent Rs. 50,000 to Isabhai

Motabhai at compound interest. True copies of the original registered deed are still available.

During the time of Badruddin Sahib I used to help qualified pupils in securing Amalat* in different towns or villages. In doing so I would quite often disagree with his policy.

He was not only my brother in law but also the son of my father's aunt. When he became ill again he was taken to his bungalow in Varacha. There he made Nas on Tayyabbhai Sahib, the elder son of Burhanuddin Sahib and prepared a will. Taher Saifuddin did not like this as he was not on good terms with Tayyabbhai Sahib. Shortly after Badruddin Sahib recovered and returned to Surat.

On 10th Safar 1333 Hijri (1915 AD), in order to participate in the funeral of Isabhai Sheikh Abdul Qadir, we were waiting in the shrine when Tayyabbhai Sahib arrived and joined us. I asked him why he did not go to the majlis to which he replied that he was feeling sick. A few moments later he vomited near the pond, came back and joined us. After the burial of the deceased, while recitation of 'Sadaqallah' was still in progress, Tayyabbhai Sahib and I came out of the door adjacent to the mosque, talked for about 15 minutes and then separated to go home. Very soon after reaching home we got the shocking news that Tayyabbhai Sahib had passed away. We went to the new house of Badruddin Sahib to inform him. We found him lying in bed being unwell. As soon as he was informed of this happening he jumped out of his bed and said, "There is definitely some foul play in this". A report was lodged with the police regarding the suspicion of murder by poisoning. However no action was taken by the police. Evidently they must have been bribed. At that time Taher Saifuddin was having a picnic with his friends in his bungalow in Dumas. He might have arranged this picnic in order to avoid any blame of his involvement in the poisoning. When he returned from Dumas he pretended to be deeply shocked and hurt and shouted loudly, "O my brother, O my brother". But after that he remained completely silent throughout the ceremony.

Abdullah Badruddin Sahib survived another month but did not change the Nas document. He died on 10th Rabiul Awwal 1333 Hijri. Immediately Taher Saifuddin assumed office. While his step

* "Amalat" means the job of an Amil.

mother was welcoming and congratulating him, the rosary in her hand broke and the beads were scattered all over the floor. The people who were present considered it as an evil omen and said, "Allah forbid, but this is a sign of disintegration of the community."

Taher Saifuddin's intimate friends were Akbarbhai Sahib ibne Husainbhai Sahib and Abdul Husainbhai Sahib Tayyabbhai Sahib. The latter was so dear to him that the two were often seen together for as long as 20 hours and there were ugly rumours about it. Also Tayyabbhai Sahib's wife, Vazirabai, their cousin was suspected of having an affair with Abdul Husainbhai Sahib, the intimate friend of Taher Saifuddin. These were some of the reasons which had created a rift between the two brothers.

In 1333 Hijri, Taher Saifuddin held sermons (Waaz) in Surat. Arrangement was made for Muharram majlises in Rampura for Divan Sheikh Ali Mohammad, who invited his father in law, Sheikh Haiderali for the occasion. On 7th Muharram Sheikh Haiderali accompanied by Sheikh Abdul Karim and a few others set out for Rampura where they arrived on 8th. They were given a grand reception at Lalbagh with the accompaniment of band, fire works and illumination. Sheikh Abdul Karim objected and said, "How can you do such things on 8th Muharram?" But no one listened to him. On reaching their destination a majlis was convened in their honour and betel leaves (Pan) and sherbat were served as is done on happy occasions. The Divans went to see Miya Sahib Mohammadbhai Vazir, the Amil of Rampura, who offered them 'dust of Kerbala' (Khake shifa), saying that since this was a mourning period he could not offer them sweets.

News of what happened in Rampura reached us quickly in Surat. So I drafted a letter to Taher Saifuddin and father approved it. I delayed sending the letter mainly with the purpose of allowing as many people as possible to read it. My object was accomplished and its contents were widely discussed in all circles in Surat. Sheikh Ali Mohammad and Sheikh Haiderali prolonged their stay in Rampura on account of their guilt and shame but Sheikh Abdul Karim returned to Surat. Taher Saifuddin called him and enquired as to what had transpired in Rampura on 8th Muharram. After Sheikh Abdul Karim had given him a true picture of the events, Taher Saifuddin said, "Forget what happened and if anyone asks about it just deny the whole thing."

Then he sent this Sheikh to my father with a message concerning my letter. The Sheikh waited for a long time hesitating to deliver the message in my presence. Since I did not move out of his sight, at last he repeated the exact words of Taher Saifuddin, "I can give replies to every word of the letter but I have not done so due to the respect and regard I have for you." Taher Saifuddin must have thought that father would say I was an irresponsible person to be ignored and would then use my father's words in trying to justify his stand for not replying to my letter. Hence I intervened and said, "There is no question in this either of shame or honour. I only demand an explanation of what his Divans did in Rampura, and I want detailed replies to each point raised in my letter". Then my father told the Sheikh, "Convey my son's reply to Taher Saifuddin, and tell him, 'If you score a winning point over my son he will refrain from such an attempt in future and if he wins, I shall rejoice because of the success of my son'".

Since I did not get a reply to my letter I prepared a poster in Gujarati and gave it for printing to the Deshi Mitra Printing Press. Meanwhile we had planned to go to Navsari for a change of climate and stay there for some time. Hence I instructed the editor of the press to distribute a certain number of copies in Surat and to forward the rest to me in Navsari.

The press was in a building owned by Hebatullabhai Vazir. As the rent was four months in arrears his nephew, Abdulhusainbhai Vazir, my brother in law, was sent to collect it. The editor showed him my poster and Abdulhusainbhai Vazir showed it to his uncle who informed Taher Saifuddin about it. He summoned the editor and bribed him by giving him a gift of shawl and some cash. Hebatullabhai remitted the four month's rent and obtained an undertaking from the editor not to print the poster. Then they asked him to hand over to them my original hand written poster but he refused and said that legally he was bound to return it to the owner. The Mullaji said, "Lend it to us and we promise to return it after taking a photo." The editor finally gave it to them but it was never returned to him.

Several days passed and I did not receive any copies and this worried me. Meanwhile, Bhai Faizullabhai Valiyullah arrived in Navsari and told me all that had happened. Immediately I left for Surat, went straight to the press and asked the editor for the printed

copies of my poster. He made an excuse that he could not prepare them as he was occupied in a marriage ceremony. He then put on his jacket so I asked him where he was going and he replied, "In search of the poster." As I knew that he was lying, I said "You might have lost the poster but I, the writer, is still alive and can prepare another one. Will you then print it or not?" He agreed so I prepared then and there another poster which was stronger in tone than the previous one. The editor prepared the proof which I checked and finally I obtained the prints. I left most of them with the editor for distribution in various localities and I took the rest with me. In this poster I had commented "Your Divans are worse than prostitutes who at least preserve the sanctity of Muharram by closing their business and observing mourning." It created a great uproar in public and when the editor was asked by Mullaji to explain he replied that since they had broken the promise he had no choice but to print the poster.

Taher Saifuddin engaged a few notorious goondas to kill me and they used to loiter around the press waiting for me. Already I had bitter experience with the editor hence I had no need to see him again. My brother in law who used to put on dark glasses like mine happened to go to the press for collecting rent. He was mistaken for me and the goondas fell upon him and started beating him. Among the goondas was one named Sidhi, a servant of the Vazir household, who recognised and rescued him.

I despatched a number of posters to Bombay. Ibrahim Adamji Peerbhoy got some of them. Although I had heard a lot about the late Sir Adamji Peerbhoy I had never met any of his sons. Ibrahimbhoy had these posters reprinted in thousands and arranged their wide circulation in cities and villages.

Taher Saifuddin's uncles and forefathers never made demands on the learned men for misaq. But he issued a general directive requiring every one to visit him and give misaq. The greedy ones obeyed without hesitation or delay. At that time I was in Surat and received a message to do likewise, but I did not comply. Soon father arrived from Kapadvanj and he was worried that Taher Saifuddin might demand misaq from him as well. This would be a great humiliation for him and too painful to bear. I advised father not to worry and said, "I have a feeling that he will not dare do such a thing to you and if he does, just leave him and return home without saying

a word." When father actually visited him Taher Saifuddin did not have the courage to ask for misaq.

I used to accompany my grand uncle, Syedi Ahmedali Hamiduddin whenever he used to see his nephew and pupil, Abdullah Badruddin Sahib. We would meet him in the basement of the neighbouring house which was not furnished with cushions or carpets laid specially for him and we used to sit together as equals. One day my grand uncle expressed his desire to visit Taher Saifuddin. So I accompanied him. I found that Taher Saifuddin was sitting like a pompous pharaoh and upon seeing us he offered his hand to be kissed. My grand uncle was deeply hurt at this show of arrogance. So he just shook hands with him and sat down. We were there not more than five minutes when my grand uncle decided to leave. On our way home my grand uncle remarked, "May Allah help me not to see his face again."

After this incident my grand uncle moved to Galiakot with the family and decided to remain there for the rest of his life. However, in 1334 Hijri (1916 AD) when my elder sister became ill, he came back to Surat to visit her because he had great affection for her. There he himself became ill and so was not in a position to return to Galiakot.

Taher Saifuddin was trying his best to establish that there was no break in Nas after the 46th Dai who passed away without appointing a successor by Nas. He was seeking an opportunity to take misaq of my grand uncle and obtain from him some statement regarding Nas which could consolidate his own position.

My grand uncle was under my care during his illness. One day Yahyabhai Sahib and Yushebhai came to see my grand uncle to deliver a message from Taher Saifuddin which I was not supposed to know. As I did not move out of their sight they went to the door but after reconsideration Yushebhai returned and told grand uncle that his grandfather, Yahyabhai Sahib wanted to ask him some questions. My grand uncle asked, "What about?" and he replied that it had something to do with Daawat. My grand uncle became furious and said, "Is this an appropriate moment to ask me such questions?" Thereupon Yushebhai hung his head in shame and walked away. My guess was that they would return in the afternoon but they did not as they had to participate in the funeral of Qayyumbhai Sahib's wife who had expired on that day.

I was always beside my grand uncle when Taher Saifuddin used to visit him everyday after morning prayers. Once he broke his silence and asked grand uncle his opinion on Daawat. He replied, "My opinion is the same as that of Miya Sahib Abdul Qayyum Sahib, the grandfather of Yushebbhai and that he believed that there was no Nas after the 46th Dai." Taher Saifuddin urged for a more specific and clear answer. In reply my grand uncle asked him, "Tell me when you awarded titles of 'Sheikh' recently to eleven persons did you do so because of a direction received from the Imam (Ilham) and did they deserve such honours?" Taher Saifuddin could not find a reply so he left. However, he continued his daily visits.

My father had agreed to work as Amil in the region under the control of Abdealibhai Sahib on the condition that no one would be posted there to supersede him. When Abdealibhai Sahib expired during the time of Abdullah Badruddin Sahib, the agreement was honoured by the latter. However, in 1334 Hijri, Taher Saifuddin gave letter of appointment for Kapadvanj to Yahyabhai Sahib. Meanwhile, father had come down to Surat so I advised him not to return to Kapadvanj under the changed circumstances. When father visited the shrine he met Yahyabhai Sahib whom he strongly rebuked for accepting the appointment. Yahyabhai Sahib apologised and returned the appointment letter to Taher Saifuddin. Thereupon another appointment was made, this time of my grand uncle's son in law. I obtained a letter of resignation from father and handed it over personally to Taher Saifuddin. Quite arrogantly he said, "You may get your things back from Kapadvanj." My maternal uncle, Sheikh Turabbhai was assigned the duty of fetching our luggage from Kapadvanj. I used to keep my grand uncle informed of all the developments and he would always warn me not to trust Taher Saifuddin's word.

The people of Kapadvanj did not allow my maternal uncle to collect our things. They sent several telegrams to Surat in protest of this change of Amil. We were getting copies of these telegrams. Taher Saifuddin persuaded me to send father back to Kapadvanj before Muharram. Earlier he had also issued an appointment letter to Sheikh Husainbhai Hamdani (maternal grandfather of Yusuf Najmuddin) which he had refused. I told Taher Saifuddin that father was now too old to take this responsibility but he was not convinced. So he urged me to explain what the real reason was for

father's refusal. I replied, "In the past none of your predecessors sent anyone to Kapadvanj to supersede father, so how can you expect him to go back when you have broken that promise." He remained silent for a while and said, "Send him there and my letter will follow." But I insisted upon obtaining the letter first. At the end he did comply and honoured him by presenting a shawl and wished him farewell.

Due to my grand uncle's illness Taher Saifuddin was prolonging his departure to Bombay but he was advised not to delay it. Hence he left Surat after issuing instructions to be informed regularly of the condition of my grand uncle. On 23rd Shaaban my grand uncle's condition became critical, so his maternal grandson sent a telegram to Bombay. Taher Saifuddin left for Surat on the 24th morning by express train and arrived at 1-30 P.M. but my grand uncle had already expired in the morning. Taher Saifuddin came directly to my grand uncle's house. When he saw the coffin he felt extremely dejected and went home to change clothes. On return he performed the last rites and my grand uncle was buried in Begumpura cemetery. On the day of Fateha, Haiderali read aloud a poem in which he said, "With folded hands the deceased begged forgiveness and said, 'You are the rightful Dai and the Imam will come out of seclusion because of you.' "We were wonder struck when we heard this ridiculous, false and made up story as I was with my grand uncle throughout the period of his illness upto the end.

Someone was writing articles in the name of Abu Muslim in the paper 'Praja Mitra' condemning this and other activities of Mullaji Sahib. People were prohibited from reading this paper. However, despite this prohibition people read it with greater interest and enthusiasm. The editorial board of 'Praja Mitra' consisted of Mr Swawaksh and his maternal uncle, Mr Madan. Attempts were made to bribe them but these failed so both were beaten. However they did not give in. The articles first appeared in 1334 Hijri (1916 AD) and continued during 1335 Hijri (1917 AD) and the writer still remained undiscovered.

A few wealthy persons from Surat approached the sons of Adamji Peerbhoy in Bombay, and gave them a signed declaration of support asking them to demand an account of the collection box (Galla) kept in the shrine of Chandabhai in the Badri Mahal compound. Hence Adamji sons issued a notice to Yusufali

Bandukwalla, trustee of the Galla. But he replied that he was only a servant and that the real power rested with the head priest. So a notice was served on Mullaji Sahib. He replied, "Chandabhai was not a saint (Pir). I am the owner of the Galla and I am the owner of the property and the souls of all the Bohras. I cannot be treated as a trustee." Taher Saifuddin now suspected that the articles under the name of Abu Muslim must have been written by Ibrahimbhoy Adamji and if the Adamji sons were to be excommunicated there would probably be no opposition. But a suit had already been filed in the Bombay High Court. So Taher Saifuddin summoned all the Bohras in Badri Mahal. He also summoned Adamji sons and Sharafali Mamooji so that they may be asked to seek forgiveness in public, but they did not come. So they were declared excommunicated.

My brother in law, Bhai Mohsinbhai's wife who was the daughter of Sheikh Mohammadbhai Attar (father of Salehbhai Attar) had given birth to a son in Surat and the Aqiqah ceremony was due on the day following the above event. My father in law, Syedi Faizullabhai, Headmaster, had arrived from Bombay for the occasion. He asked me to make arrangements on his behalf for a feast. Hence, I called a number of professional cooks for quotations but none of them turned up and I could not guess the reason. But when I came out of the house and noticed a number of goondas around my house it suddenly dawned upon me why the cooks were reluctant to come. Some well wishers informed me that a meeting was scheduled to be held at 4 P.M. in the Daras and that three persons were to be dragged to the meeting, namely myself, Sheikh Ishaqali Shajapurwalla and Mulla Mohammadbhai Bhatari. My previous father in law, Syedi Husainbhai, the present father in law, Syedi Faizullabhai and my father were all in the house extremely worried. However, using an exit at the rear of the house, my younger brother in law, Mustansirbhai and I quickly got out, hired a carriage, went to the office of police superintendent, Mr Pegg and explained to him our situation and the danger we were facing. The houses of Sheikh Ishaqali and Mulla Mohammadbhai were also surrounded by goondas. After giving details we returned home through the back entrance. The Superintendent gave instructions to the Clock Tower police to keep an eye on the Daras. Then he arrived with a few policemen on horse back. The goondas and the onlookers all dispersed and Mullaji's entire scheme failed. Now

deputations came to our three houses and persuaded us to appear before Taher Saifuddin. However we refused to accept.

A few days later, Taher Saifuddin told Fazalbhai Sahib, the stepson of my elder sister, in Bombay that I had forsaken my own relative. Fazalbhai Sahib said, "Do you think he will tolerate such insulting treatment?" Taher Saifuddin said, "What is the harm in seeing me? I shall of course make amends." Ultimately Fazalbhai Sahib was convinced that Taher Saifuddin meant well. So he wrote letters to my elder sister about it. She and my father and a few other relatives persuaded me to see Taher Saifuddin. I kept telling them, "I do not trust him at all and if you are afraid that the family reputation is at stake on account of me then better throw me out of the house." Yet they insisted. At last I left for Bombay with my maternal uncle. I stayed in Kurla in my father in law's bungalow. The following morning at 9 A.M. I left for the city with Bhai Mustansirbhai in his car.

There was a sale on that day in Evans Fraser, a well known departmental store near Badri Mahal. I waited outside the store and my maternal uncle went to Taher Saifuddin with my message which was, "I have come to see you. If it is convenient, let me know or give me some other time." My uncle returned and told me that they were having their meal and I would be welcome to sit in Taher Saifuddin's waiting room. Accordingly I did so. During the period of my waiting he took the opportunity to make a few telephone calls to gather the Bohras in Badri Mahal. When Fazalbhai Sahib intervened and objected, he replied that I would be treated in the same way as others. Fazalbhai sensed the evil intention of Taher Saifuddin so he felt hesitation to come before me. After one hour I got a message that Ai Sahiba, my younger sister, wanted me to go upstairs to see her. I did not suspect anything and went upstairs. To my great surprise my sister instead of welcoming me turned her face away. I guessed that she might have been instructed by Taher Saifuddin to behave like this. I was furious at this insult. Even my maternal uncle had disappeared. I was hungry and thirsty but no one showed the courtesy to offer me anything. I spread my shawl and offered Zohor prayer. My maternal uncle entered the room. I burst with anger and scolded him in a very harsh tone.

Then a deputation was sent to me consisting of Mohammadali Allabux, Salehbhai Barodawalla, Nabubhai Ibrahimji Fatabhai,

Qadirbhai Sheikh Yusufbhai, Adamali Valibhai Fatabhai and Isaji Tajbhai Vahanvati. I knew full well that out of these, Qadirbhai, Adamali and Vahanvati were blind followers. Vahanvati was a friend of mine and on behalf of all he started the conversation and said that it was regrettable that I was carrying on certain activities which were detrimental to the Daawat. I kept quiet. Then Barodawalla said, "You come from a family of great scholars who have rendered service to the Daawat. But there are charges against you: 1. That you have been writing articles under the assumed name of Abu Muslim. 2. That you supply information to the Gulzare Hakimi paper. 3. That on a certain date in Shawwal when you were in Bombay you went in Adamji son's car from Grant Road to Tardeo and signed a document." Then they tried to obtain my signature on a written apology. I refused and said, "I am serving the Daawat in the same manner as did my learned forefathers. I am not a dissident. I deny all the charges. But if you produce solid evidence for just one out of the three charges I shall accept all of them and sign the apology."

Mohammadali Allabux then argued, "There is no proof but I can swear that you are definitely involved in these activities." I replied, "Mr Mohammadali are you such a reputable personality that an accused would be hanged merely on your word without any proof? Well, since you already admitted that there is no proof, let me now tell you that during the time of Abdullah Badruddin Sahib some articles appeared in the name of 'Muslim' and you were involved in it. I have proof of this and although I have not brought it here with me I can very well produce it. Can you deny this?" He did not say a word. The Kapadvanjis said to all of them, "Our job is to obtain the reply, go downstairs and report." I said, "Look, firstly I have already given my answers about the charges. Secondly, if you are planning to mislead people about my letter in connection with the unbecoming behaviour of the Divans during the Muharram of 1333 Hijri (1915 AD), I must declare without fear that those Divans have committed a sin and instead of punishing them I am being penalised just for demanding an explanation. Thirdly, the differences are between you and me and I have no quarrel with any member of the community. Whatever you want to say tell me personally. But if any other person interferes in this as it usually happens in all your meetings, then before I go I shall do something for which you will regret all your life" The deputation went to Taher Saifuddin with my answers.

With his usual arrogance Taher Saifuddin thought that I would not be able to oppose when surrounded by the mob of fanatic Bohras. He prepared another document and called me. The hall was fully packed with Bohras. I had to steer through the crowd into the centre and took my seat right opposite Taher Saifuddin. Handing over the document he asked me to sign. I glanced at it and put it on the floor. In an angry mood he asked me again to sign so I said, "Why are you forcing me to sign? Did you not receive my answers from the deputation?" He then said if I wanted proof I would have to wait for a few days. I said, "Why are you making a false pretence? Did you not have enough time to produce your evidence specially when I have been accused for the past several days?"

Nomanbhai Sahib, Abdul Tayyabbhai Sahib, Mohsinbhai Sahib, Qayyumbhai Sahib Zainuddin, Fazalbhai Sahib, Qadirbhai Sahib and others were present in the meeting. They were all looking at me trying to express their anxiety and beckoning me to sign the document. But I ignored them.

Now Taher Saifuddin said, "You want proof of the charge that you wrote articles under the assumed name of Abu Muslim. Well, once you were in the shrine in Surat in the company of your previous father in law. Looking at the tablet on Burhanuddin Sahib's grave, you commented that a confession was implied in the writings on the tablet that our belief was ambiguous and the deceased made it clear in his letter addressed to Abdullabhai Sahib. Two days later these words were reproduced in an article in Praja Mitra." I said that it was no proof that the articles were mine.

Then he asked me if I was giving information to Gulzare Hakimi paper. Again I demanded proof. My maternal uncle, who was standing in the crowd far from me sent a note in which he scribbled, "For the sake of Allah sign the document." This note was given in the first instance to the Amil of Khamgaon standing somewhere in the middle row. He passed it on to another person who delivered it to me saying that it was from the Amil of Khamgaon. Taher Saifuddin guessed that the Amil had threatened me in the note that if I refused to sign he would come forward and prove the charge (since Gulzar was originally published from Khamgaon). So he said sternly, "Will you sign or shall I call the Amil?" Without hesitation I said, "Call him." When the Amil, Sheikh Ghulamali who knew nothing about the Gulzar, came forward he asked me if I wrote

articles under the assumed name of 'Vanvasi'. I did not like his question and asked him to leave if he had no proof. Hearing this he disappeared in the crowd.

Taher Saifuddin asked me if there was a reporter for Gulzare Hakimi in Surat whereupon I gave him the name of the reporter Bhikhaji. He then asked me if I knew him and I said he was a good friend of mine. Taher Saifuddin remarked that this must be in connection with Gulzar. I replied, "Your informer seems to be a simpleton. You should know that Bhikhaji is the librarian of Mohammadi Library of which I have been a member for the past twelve years. Bhikhaji has been delivering to me newspapers and books since many years and he became a reporter only six months ago".

At this moment Ismail Kurwa approached me and said, "I am a friend of your father. I request you in the name of this friendship to sign the document". I replied that even if my father were to press me to sign without sufficient evidence I would not have complied.

Now the third charge about my signing some document in Tardeo was raised. Taher Saifuddin said that he had two reliable witnesses to vouch for this. I asked him to produce them but he failed to do so. I then said, "The whole story is false. Suppose that your eye witness saw me arrive in Bombay from Surat, enter a car at Grant Road and drive away to Tardeo how could he see me go into a room right inside the Tardeo Mill and sign a document? It makes no sense".

At this stage both Taher Saifuddin and I became nervous and were worried. He could not imagine what the outcome of this meeting would be. On the other hand I was afraid the agitated and unruly fanatics at the meeting might fall upon me and break my bones. Hence, I said, "If it is going to save your neck I will sign the document". To close the chapter I gave my signature.

Again Taher Saifuddin asked me, "What did Syedi Ahmedali Hamiduddin say before he died?" I told him I did not know. Thereupon he said, "Am I wrong in asking you?" My reply was, "Do you want me to tell a lie?" He kept quiet and without further discussion the meeting dispersed.

I went upstairs for Maghrib prayers. My sister came to receive me and I turned away saying, "How do I become your brother now

when I was not so before? If you think that I have changed you are mistaken as I have not changed." She begged me to stay for dinner but I refused. I just offered Maghrib prayers and went to say good-bye to Taher Saifuddin. He asked me to stay for a few days but I declined the offer saying that it was necessary for me to go back to Surat. He wanted to know the reason. So I informed him that my daughter, Amtullabai's birthday had become due. He asked me how old she was and I replied that she was nine. Then he asked me if it was obligatory to observe birthdays. I replied, "I do not know that but since it is my father's wish it becomes my duty to participate". While bidding farewell he handed me a sealed envelop. When I opened it I found in it Rs 500 which I had guessed.

When I arrived in Surat I found that all the relations had gathered in the house. My elder sister came out to receive me. But I was angry and in a loud voice which everyone in the house could hear, I complained, "I had told you I did not wish to go because he was never to be trusted, but you did not believe me. The thing I was afraid of did happen. That deceitful fellow cheated me".

On that day I resolved never to become a priest nor to acquire any priestly rank. The farewell gift given by him proved to be an ill omen for me. My wife had a severe attack of typhoid and she was confined to bed for over two months. Taher Saifuddin's farewell money was spent on her treatment and a great deal more from my own resources which were very few. I was desperate and my health was also affected.

It was the month of Zil Hijjah and father was making preparations for his journey to Kapadvanj to resume his duty as Amil. So he asked me to go with him. But it was not possible for me as Ahmed's mother was ill and still bed-ridden and too weak to bear hardships in Kapadvanj. I had no mood to work hence I would be of no help to father. So I told him, "You better go alone and I shall go to Kurla and stay with my in laws."

Ultimately father left for Kapadvanj and I managed to take my sick wife to Kurla. My brother in law, Abdul Husainbhai Vazir whose views about the Mullaji had changed by then, also accompanied us with his family. Together we rented a one floor house and shared it. My wife was treated by a Hakim and she soon recovered. I had only Rs 50 left with me hence I regretted having refused father's monetary help offered to me while he was leaving for

Kapadvanj. My brother in law and I used to make frequent trips to Bombay in search of livelihood.

One day at Masjid Bunder, Bombay we met Allabux, a jeweller of Udaipur, who lived in that area in his own building. During our conversation he became aware of our difficulties. So he offered to give us jewellery items to be sold on a commission basis. We did this business for some time and made a substantial profit. Someone informed father that we were working as hawkers and probably he disapproved. The financial climate was unfavourable to us and the world war was on.

My brother in law wanted to see his maternal uncle, Sheikh Abdul Qadir Motiwalla, who was also my wife's cousin and who lived in the Sanatorium belonging to Sir Adamji Peerbhoy family. He did not have the courage to go alone and I was anxious to meet Adamji's sons. So we went together. We were looking for Adamji's sons where upon we found a man sitting on a chair in the great hall and upon enquiring we learnt that his name was A M Jivanji. I remembered that he had good relations with my father and me while we were in Africa. So we went into the hall and talked to him for a while. He said, "I am a contractor but personally I do not have any business experience". He offered to lend us a sum of Rs 5,000 to start a good business after consulting some experienced business men.

To us it seemed to be quite a large sum of money. Besides, we two were totally inexperienced. The cost of living was exceptionally high. Luckily we met Abbasbhai Gandhi who happened to visit Bombay for some work. He advised us to start a business of fencing materials and suggested we took as our partner Ishaqbhai Ranalawalla who had recently left the employment of Ghulam Husain Jaliwalla and who was very experienced in this line. It was difficult to obtain premises for a shop because most of them were owned by Bohras who were against us. Meanwhile we came to know that new shops were under construction in Khokha Bazaar opposite the local mosque. The Amil of the area, Sheikh Husainbhai of Burhanpur was a friend of mine so I requested him to reserve one shop for our use. He managed to have a shop reserved in the name of Abdul Husain Qamruddin of Burhanpur.

I wrote to father that I had decided to enter into business and wanted him to come to Bombay for the opening ceremony of the

shop. Accordingly he arrived with a few business magnates of Kapadvanj and the opening ceremony went very well. Sheikh Husainbhai also participated. (Today the shop belongs to Salehbhai Kesurwalla). The goods bought with Rs 5, 000 were just enough to cover one corner of the shop which apparently looked empty. The Bohras boycotted us. I approached A M Jivanji once again and said, "Since you are a Government contractor give us a sub contract and see how we cope with it." So he gave us an order and as he was satisfied he gave further orders. The Bohras were now inclined to give us goods, our business expanded and our earnings reached a figure of Rs 300 per day.

After a while, our experienced partner expired. This tragedy and some other difficulties compelled us to wind up the business.

In 1336 Hijri (1918 AD) father had influenza in Kapadvanj. It was an epidemic so I brought him to Surat where he died on 26th of Zil Hijjah. Taher Saifuddin was then in Udaipur so Ishaqbhai Sahib came and asked me where I would like to bury father. My elder sister desired that he should be buried in her own plot in Begumwadi to which I agreed. Taher Saifuddin arrived from Udaipur on the day following the burial. He came to my house but neither gave condolence nor uttered a word of sympathy. I recited 'Sadaqallah' on my own and ignored him. On the third day I recited the 'Sadaqallah' of Dais and Valis and placed a covering on the grave. On the day of arrival Taher Saifuddin sent a message that I should arrange Fateha meal on the day of Ziarat, but that I should not distribute portions to households according to the custom prevalent in Surat. I replied that I would do what I wished for my father and there was no need for him to interfere. I did as I had planned and the Quranic recitations continued for 11 days.

On the 9th of Muharram my six year old daughter, Ateka, died of influenza. I arranged for the Iddat of my step mother (of Bundi). My late step mother (of Zanzibar) had left some properties, half share of which was inherited by my father. He in turn bequeathed one half of his share to me during his life time. From the other half my existing mother was entitled to $\frac{2}{16}$, I was to get $\frac{7}{16}$ and my two sisters jointly $\frac{7}{16}$. In order to manage the Zanzibar properties I obtained power of attorney from my mother as well as from my sisters. My wife was expecting so I took her to Bombay where she gave birth in the Sanatorium on 19 Safar to a daughter who was

named Zehrabai. When I returned to Surat I found that all the furniture of the house had disappeared and my step mother had been living with her son in law.

Taher Saifuddin and some of his colleagues in Surat did not approve of the burial of my father in Begumwadi. My father's marble grave erected recently was demolished by Taher Saifuddin's orders. I reported the matter to the Surat police but failed to get any help or response. Clearly they were bribed and the grave remained in this state for a number of years.

In 1338 Hijri (1920 AD) the Chandabhai Galla Case opened for hearing. On behalf of the plaintiffs Miya Sahib Alibhai Hamdani appeared as witness. He possessed the photo of the original signed covenant given by Burhanuddin Sahib to Abdullahbhai Sahib. But unfortunately, during the hearing he produced a photo copy of the original photograph. He assumed that because of the glaze and fine texture of the photo copy it was better than the dull photograph which he had. Hence the defendants challenged the evidence and claimed that it was a forgery. The advocate general asked the plaintiff to produce three witnesses who could prove that the document under reference was 20 to 25 years old. When Karimbhoy Adamji came to Surat he was given assurance by Mohammadbhai Patharia (Salehbhai's father), Salehbhai Ibrahim Abdul Qayyum and a few others that they were willing to appear as witnesses if needed. But when asked to come for consultation they did not comply. Karimbhoy then asked me if I would be a witness. I was willing to do so but without any concrete proof my evidence would not be accepted by the court. Suddenly I remembered something and I suggested the name of Tayyabbhai Thanawalla of Bombay to be included among the witnesses, since he had written a letter to Abdullah Badruddin Sahib 10 years ago giving reference to the photograph and the duplicate copy of the letter was preserved by him. So Karimbhoy asked me to accompany him to Bombay as he had reserved a second class compartment on one of the trains. Hence I went home to prepare for the journey. I opened the almirah, picked up one of the books and no sooner had I turned a few pages than I was struck with wonder because of what I had discovered. My maternal grandfather, Syedi Badruddin Sahib, in his own hand writing had reproduced the covenant in the book and it was 22 years since he had expired. There was no end to my joy and with this evidence I had my name included among the witnesses.

Prior to our departure in the evening, we sent our luggage in advance to the station and hiring a carriage went to Gopipura to persuade Mohammadbhai Patharia to accompany us to Bombay. Having instructed the carriage driver to wait for us we went into Mohammadbhai's house. He agreed to come with us and quickly put on his turban. His son Salehbhai intervened and asked him to have his dinner before leaving. As we did not have sufficient time I suggested that he should better take the next train.

When we came out of the house the carriage was gone. This might be the mischief of some fanatic Bohras to leave us stranded without transport, because it was quite difficult to get any carriage in Gopipura at that time of night and the railway station was far. We went into the house and asked Mohammadbhai to arrange our transport in his car. He apologised as his chauffeur had gone on two weeks leave from that evening. Hence we were worried. Luckily the chauffeur came back to get some money from his master. So he took us to the station and Mohammadbhai accompanied us. Although we were quite late we did not miss the train as it was also late.

At last we reached Bombay. It was the first time I had appeared in the High court. Tayyabbhai Thanawalla produced his duplicate letter whereas I produced the book containing the copy of the covenant. In the court I was shown the apology document bearing my signature. I explained to the judge that a number of goondas had assembled in Badri Mahal on that day ready to kill me. Hence I had to sign under duress in order to save my life. Mohammadbhai also came into the witness box and said, "Syedi Badruddin Sahib was my teacher and I can recognise his hand writing. The reproduced letter in the book was definitely written by him."

The advocate general stated, "Whether Mullaji Sahib is Dai-ul-Mutlaq, Imam, Prophet or God, it has no relevance to the case. I only want to establish that he is a trustee and as such he is bound to render account." The issue of his being Dai-ul-Mutlaq or otherwise was no longer pursued by the advocate general. My father in law, Syedi Faizullahbhai Sahib, Headmaster, was called in the witness box. He also helped the advocate general in providing accurate translations of Arabic passages produced by the defendants which were being distorted by them in order to misguide everyone. Hence greater reliance was placed upon my father in

law's explanations. The witnesses on behalf of the defendants included Sheikh Tayyabbhai Kokab as an expert and Sheikh Abdul Qadir Tapyia as chief accountant. In case of Kokab justice Martin remarked, "This witness swears not to tell the truth before he sets out from home." As regards Tapyia it was recorded, "This witness is quite dangerous because he tries to mislead the court."

The rest of their witnesses gave stereo typed and parrot fashion statements. Taher Saifuddin also appeared as witness. The humiliation which he must have suffered during his cross examination is indescribable. In answer to the question whether Chandabhai was a saint (Vali) or not he flatly denied it and said that only a Dai-ul-Mutlaq could be a saint. He refused to accept the status of Vali in case of Syedi Fakhruddin of Galiakot, Syedi Hakimuddin of Burhanpur and many others. When asked if Hazrat Abbas, the brother of Imam Husain, the grandson of Prophet, was a Vali, he had no hesitation at all in saying 'Yes'. Then all of a sudden he changed his previous statements and admitted that all those mentioned before including Chandabhai were Valis.

After this, some papers were produced showing that there had been a dispute between Sir Adamji Peerbhoy and Taher Saifuddin's father, Burhanuddin Sahib. Taher Saifuddin confirmed this and commented, "Later on Adamji approached my father and asked for his forgiveness in my presence. I was then thirteen years old". The hearing was adjourned. Meanwhile the advocate general arranged to obtain Taher Saifuddin's birth certificate from the Municipal offices in Surat.

When the hearing resumed the advocate general wanted verification of Taher Saifuddin's previous statement. An Urdu speaking interpreter asked him, "When you were a boy were you like other boys or were you different from them?" The words of Urdu used by the interpreter seemed offensive and insulting to him, although they were not so. Therefore he did not answer even though the question was repeated thrice. The judge wanted to find out why the witness was not answering. He was informed that the witness did not understand the interpreter's language. So he was replaced by a Parsi interpreter who asked the same question in Gujarati. Taher Saifuddin replied that he was like other boys. Then showing him the birth certificate the Parsi interpreter asked, "Look at this birth certificate and tell the court how old you were at the time of the

dispute referred to in the previous hearing?" Taher Saifuddin had to admit that he was three years old and this was another humiliating situation for him. The judge told the advocate general, "How long will you keep flogging a dead horse?"

Finally the judgement was given. Taher Saifuddin was declared trustee fully accountable for the money collected in the Chandabhai shrine and the plaintiffs were awarded three fourths of the cost. Taher Saifuddin misled his followers by wrongly publicising his defeat as victory and celebrated in Bombay as well as in other places.

In 1338 Hijri (1920 AD) he decided to go to Kapadvanj. Since my sister (his wife) was expecting, I advised him not to take her with him because of the unsuitable climate in Kapadvanj. He replied that he would leave her in Bombay. However he took her to Kapadvanj, where after giving birth to a son, named Husainbhai. she became critically ill. Allah better knows what fatal drugs were being given to her. She was moved to Surat for medical attention and he left for Jamnagar. She did not survive long and as soon as I got the message of her death I went to her house. Unexpectedly Taher Saifuddin returned from Jamnagar at 4 P.M. on the same day and the funeral rites were performed. I was present throughout the funeral ceremony. After the Janaazah prayer instead of first exchanging condolence (Taaziyat) with me he ignored me and started accepting Taaziyat from the participants none of whom came to me. Noticing this, Qayyumbhai Sahib Zainuddin pushed me towards Taher Saifuddin. So I exchanged condolence with Taher Saifuddin and stood beside him. The participants now turned towards me to give Taaziyat. While I was still surrounded by the participants, Taher Saifuddin quietly managed to move the coffin away and buried it in haste to deprive me of my right to lower my sister's body into the grave.

I must mention at this stage an incident that occurred a few days before the death of my sister. Taher Saifuddin was in love with Fatimabai whose husband died in 1336 Hijri (1918 AD). During 1338 Hijri Taher Saifuddin made up his mind to marry her. Accordingly preparations were made to solemnise the marriage. In the nick of time my elder sister sent a message through her stepson, Fazalbhahi Sahib, "Fatimabai happens to be the breast-fed niece of my sister, Husainabai hence this marriage would be illegal and against the Shariah." The ceremony was therefore cancelled.

Taher Saifuddin married her two months after the death of my sister.

Meanwhile several ugly incidents took place. The coffins of Abdubhai Adamji's wife, Sheikh Sharafali Mamooji and a few others were stoned by the fanatic Bohras. The grave of Alibhai Adamji's wife in Charni Road cemetery was dug up and the freshly buried body was thrown on the public road. The servant of Fazalbai Sahib Hakimuddin named Jafar, was murdered because he had witnessed criminal incidents. Abdul Qadirbhai, the son in law of Taher Saifuddin was a persona non grata and met with his death under suspicious circumstances. Taher Saifuddin chose another son in law who was already married and loved his wife. Since he was reluctant he was persuaded to keep two wives. Subsequently, he was forced to divorce the first wife, from whom he had a young son who used to visit his father frequently. One day the young boy was missing. After a search his body was recovered from the water reservoir inside the house. A charge of murder against the step-mother of the son in law was registered in the Magistrate's court in Surat but no one was convicted. Money could buy anything.

An educational conference was held in Hakimia Coronation High School, Burhanpur between 1338 Hijri and 1340 Hijri (1922-24 AD) People from various towns and places attended. When they intended to visit the shrine (Dargah) they were obstructed and prevented by the management from entering the premises. Consequently, a meeting was held whereat it was resolved to file a suit in the court to establish and secure our rights in this public property. Hence a suit was filed in 1343 Hijri (1925 AD). During the same year the opening ceremony of a science laboratory in Hakimia, donated by the sons of Sir Adamji was performed by the Governor of Central Provinces and I participated.

During the ceremony, an announcement was made to start soon an Arabic school (Daras) in Hakimia and I was requested to take charge. I declined but later I agreed to work provisionally for three months by which time they were to find someone else. Since no replacement could be found I had to accept the post on a permanent basis.

Initially the Dargah case was heard once a week. At that rate it could have taken years to finalise the case. As a result of request made to the authorities in Nagpur an additional judge was ap-

pointed who heard the case more frequently. Hundreds of letters and documents were produced in the court by both sides.

The chief witness for the defendants was Maulvi Sheikh Dawood. Strangely enough it was his statements which actually helped the plaintiffs to win the case. As usual Taher Saifuddin made public announcements that he was victorious although he had lost the case. He then lodged an appeal in the Nagpur High court. Justice Staples, a Roman Catholic, was influenced by lady barrister, Dilruba, who worked with Bhulabhai Desai. Hence it was a biased judgement given in favour of Taher Saifuddin. Justice Staples also mentioned that the existence of Imam was nothing but a figment of imagination. Taher Saifuddin did not even bother at the remarks of the judge about the non existence of Imam who in fact was the source of his own authority.

The plaintiffs in the Dargah case were now left with only one option to lodge an appeal in the Privy Council. It was a very difficult task and required a great deal of money to cover the cost.

At this juncture Hatimbhai Alvi happened to visit Burhanpur and through his devoted and untiring efforts permission was obtained to take the case to the Privy Council and the appeal was finally lodged in 1349 Hijri (1930 AD).

The Dargah case, when filed in Burhanpur, was treated as a representative suit and the names of the representatives originally given were those of Mohammadbhai, son in law of Khan Bahadur Fakhruddin and Tayyabbhai Mohammadali Bhamgadhwalla. Shortly after Mohammadbhai expired and due to some disagreement Tayyabbhai's name was deleted. Two new names were substituted, those of Hasanali Chakera, Headmaster and Taherali Kinkhabwalla. Due to these changes the Privy Council did not accept the case as representative and gave the judgement in favour of Hasanali and Taherbhai.

The decision of Nagpur High court was reversed and the judgement of the lower court in Burhanpur was upheld. In the judgement it was stated that Najmuddin was nominated by four learned men and they accepted him as Dai-ul-Mutlaq by virtue of that nomination. The court therefore hoped that the plaintiffs would also accept the Mullaji as Dai-ul-Mutlaq as did their predecessors. Although Mullaji had the right of excommunication he could not exercise his

right arbitrarily. His action in excommunicating the plaintiffs in arbitrary manner was considered invalid and the defendants were required to pay Rs 50, 000 as cost to the plaintiffs. Yet again, Taher Saifuddin announced victory and celebrated. However after a close scrutiny of the judgement he must have been disappointed. His son advised him that fresh notices should be issued to those who were previously declared excommunicated and they should be asked to appear before a meeting of the community members to be convened in Badri Mahal whereat the decree of excommunication should be pronounced upon them and this would become perfectly legal.

Hence, notices were issued to legalise the action. A case similar to the Burhanpur Dargah case was filed in Surat jointly by Taherbhai Kinkhabwalla, Faizullahbai Hamdani Sahib and me against Mullaji Sahib. This case remained pending till the determination of the Dargah case appeal in the Privy Council since all our relevant documents were not released by them.

Upon my return from Karachi Taher Saifuddin's solicitor, Abdul Qayyum personally handed over to me a notice regarding excommunication which stated:-

"You told the court that I was not Dai-ul-Mutlaq; without my permission you are acquiring knowledge and teaching others; solemnising Nikah; leading prayers and delivering sermons and you have friendly relations with my enemies. Thus you have violated misaq. Show cause why you should not be excommunicated?"

In reply to the notice I stated:-

"I have had no connection with you for the past 25 years and suddenly today you are serving this notice, which I am not obliged to answer. However, for the information of the community I am sending a reply. I regret that I cannot commence my writing with 'salaam', an Islamic tradition which you have already violated. You have deliberately contravened the Sunnah and issued your notice in English. Your allegations in the notice are baseless because :

1. My belief about Nas is based on the views expressed by Abdealibhai Sahib, Abdullah Badruddin Sahib, my grand uncle and father. Besides, the various documents produced in the court have proved that you are not Dai-ul-Mutlaq and this is exactly what I said in the court.

2. I acquired knowledge from my above named predecessors and you were also a pupil of the first two of the scholars. Further you are a year younger than me. Do you mean to say during that early period of life I should have obtained your permission to acquire knowledge? Our Prophet always insisted upon acquisition of knowledge. He also warned the men of learning that whenever innovations were introduced in religion it was their duty to expose them and spread true knowledge and guidance. But if they failed to do so the curse (laanat) of Allah would be upon them.
 3. It is not true that I have been leading prayers. However, there is a general ruling given by our Prophet that the most learned person amongst you should lead prayers and therefore there is no need of obtaining permission from anyone.
 4. You refused to solemnise the Nikah of many couples on one excuse or the other such as not growing of beard or keeping friendship with those whom you consider as your enemies. Such couples had no alternative but to approach me. Since it was my duty as a Muslim to help in such a contingency I solemnised their Nikah.
 5. It is compulsory for every Muslim to preserve the sanctity of Muharram with mourning and to organise majlises and sermons for Imam Husain. This is not a crime but an act of piety which deserves Allah's reward.
 6. Since you consider me to be your enemy do you wish that I should cut off myself from all my friends by submitting to your unjust demands and live the life of a recluse? After all, those whom you consider your enemies are in reality true well wishers of Daawat.
 7. I am bound by misaq to the Imam and so are you. By the grace of Allah I fulfil my religious obligations in respect of prayers, fasting etc. I try to help solving the problems of those believers who are being oppressed by you. On the other hand you create obstacles in the matter of Nikah, demand large sums of money as deposits for not growing a beard and refuse to return them.
-

8. Regarding misaq I draw your attention to the booklet 'Al Mojezatul Kaafiyah' of Syedna Ahmed Nishapuri, incorporated in the book 'Tohfatul Quloob' compiled by Syedna Hatim. It says, 'Before taking misaq the Dai must discuss and explain details of the faith to the person concerned and make him aware of his responsibilities. Only then the misaq should be taken and this should be for the Imam alone'. The Dai is not supposed to add even a word for himself in this connection. But you never hold discussions nor give explanations to anyone. You obtain misaq under compulsion and that too in your own name. Tell me who has repudiated the misaq, you or I?
9. You are the complainant and you are the judge. There is neither proof nor witness and the judgement is pronounced. Subhan-Allah. It would be difficult to find such an example in the world. You will be fully responsible for whatever steps you take".

Ismail Luqmani

22nd Jamadil Awwal 1367 Hijri

1st April 1948 AD

Since replies to the notices were required to be sent to Badri Mahal I forwarded my reply on that address. However, Taher Saifuddin who was in Mhow at that time sent me a reminder before receiving my letter.



(And here the manuscript ends)

ISLAMIC YEARS WITH THEIR CORRESPONDING CHRISTIAN YEARS

Hijri	AD
1252	1836
1256	1840
1260	1844
1262	1846
1264	1848
1271	1855
1272	1856
1297	1880
1302	1885
1308	1891
1309	1892
1333	1915
1334	1916
1335	1917
1336	1918
1338	1920
1340	1922
1342	1924
1343	1925
1349	1930

