



50th Anniversary of the establishment of the Faith in Goa

THIS YEAR MARKS the 50th Anniversary of the launching of the 10 Year Crusade by the beloved Guardian at Ridván 1953. So, this month 50 years ago, in answer to that call, Roushan Knox (then Aftabi) and Feroza Yaganegi pioneered to Goa, which was at that time a Portuguese colony. When they subsequently attended the International Conference in New Delhi the following October it was announced that the Guardian had declared that those pioneering to the virgin territories listed in his Ten Year Crusade would become Knights of Bahá'u'lláh.

The year before, Roushan had written to the beloved Guardian saying that she had wanted to pioneer abroad but as a young single girl could not obtain her parents' permission. The reply written on behalf of the Guardian said, "Perhaps you will not only be able to secure your parents' consent, but be able to find some older person who also desires to go there as a pioneer and then you will no longer be alone and they would not have cause to worry over you. He urges you to serve the Cause actively and devotedly in Bombay pending the time when you can arise and go forth in foreign fields, and assures you of his loving prayers for your success". A year later when the beloved Guardian launched the 10 Year Crusade, Roushan found a copioneer and thus was able to go to Goa with her parent's permission and blessing. Some years later Marion Hofman, the well-known Bahá'í historian and researcher told Roushan that she was the ninth and youngest Knight of Bahá'u'lláh.

Roushan explained, "We arrived in Goa at the end of June 1953 and I was able to get a secretarial job which involved a four mile walk each way every day. Goans are devotedly Roman Catholic due to the Portuguese influence but are very friendly and hospitable. The beloved Guardian's instructions at that time were to make friends, and only when one had gained their confidence, to teach them the Faith. Some of them were very suspicious of us from a moral point of view because they could not understand how Feroza, a widow, and myself as a young girl chose to live there. A second problem was that the Portuguese authorities were suspicious of us as Indian nationals and watched all our activities. For instance, when we used to get up for dawn prayers every morning, the authorities thought we were sending secret radio messages to India! However, eventually after a year they were impressed enough to grant us permanent residence status. After two years the daily long walk to and from work together with the poor food, living conditions and hygiene made me ill. I had to return home for an operation and within two days of my arrival my dear father was rushed to hospital where he passed away that day. Within a month I applied to the Indian authorities for a re-entry visa to Goa, but at that time they would not grant me a visa as they were expecting political trouble with Goa. For a very long time I kept asking for re-entry permission but was always refused. During that time a Bahá'í friend of mine in England knowing of my disappointment and frustration at not being able to return to Goa encouraged me to pioneer to Cardiff to help re-form the Local Spiritual Assembly and this I did. Subsequently India invaded Goa and it became part of India."

On the occasion of the Centenary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh in May 1992, the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh were invited to the Holy Land by the Universal House of Justice and Roushan joined them when the Roll of Honour containing their names was laid at the entrance to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh by Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm. In 2001 Roushan revisited Goa after 48 years and was able to meet joyously with the Bahá'í community now over 600 strong



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