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6. Mahmud Rashid Kishunga Dar-es-Salaam

Mahmud Rashid Kishunga was a motor mechanic from West Lake Region of Tanzania. In 1965, he was converted to Shi'ism by Sayyid Intizar Husayn who at that time was Imam of Jamaat in Singida. In 1966 he came to Dar es Salaam; where we got him employment in a garage.

In 1967, the discussions mentioned in the accompanied article took place.

I had left Tanzania in 1978. By that time Kishunga had been employed in the JKT (paramilitary wing of the Tanzanian army), When I returned to Tanzania in 1985, I did not see Kishunga anywhere. His friends fold me that during the Tanzania–Uganda war, he was sent to the front. Since then nobody had seen him. Presumably he became a casualty of the war.

Two Interesting Talks

By Mahmud R. Kishunga as related to Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

Mr. Mahmud Rashid Kishunga is a motor mechanic from West Lake region of Tanzania. He became Shia in 1965.

In 1967, he was admitted into Muhimbili Hospital, Dar-es-Salaam. During one of my visits, I gave him a copy of *Kitabu Cha Sala* (Book of Salat), the first publication of the Mission, which had come out of the press that very day.

When I visited him next time, he told me about an interesting discussion he had with a Christian priest. The said priest had come to visit a patient whose bed was next to Kishungas. He saw *Kitabu Cha Sala* and with permission of Kishunga looked at it here and there. He saw the pictures of the prayer, noted the hands which were not folded; and asked Kishunga, which sect of Islam he belonged to, and was told: 'Shia Ithna-'asheriya'.

Then the following discussion took place:

Priest: Do you believe that Prophet Muhammad was most beloved of all prophets in presence of Allah,

and His dearest one?

Mahmud: Yes.

Priest: How many children your Prophet had?

Mahmud: One daughter, Bibi Fatima (a.s.).

Priest: Was she married?

Mahmud: Yes, to Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.).

Priest: How many children did they have?

Mahmud: I know of two sons, Hasan (a.s.) and Husain (a.s.).

Priest: Do you know that Prophet Muhammad loved his grandsons?

Mahmud: Yes; he loved them very dearly.

Priest: How did Hasan and Husain die?

Mahmud: I do not know much in detail; but I have been told that Imam Hasan (a.s.) was poisoned and Imam Husain (a.s.), together with his children, relatives and companions, was martyred in Karbala very brutally.

Priest: Well, my friend. doesn't it seem strange to you that the dearest grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (who was, according to your belief, the dearest to Allah) was killed with such unparalleled brutality, and still God did not save him? You will have to accept that either there is no God at all, or if there is one, He is very weak.

Mahmud: Yes, Sir, I agree with you that God is really very weak.

Priest: Why do you say so?

Mahmud: Let us say that you and I are fast friends. Suppose, I have got a son and you have got a grandson. Of course, being your friend, I will love your grandson. But you will agree with me that I can never love your grandson as deeply as my own son.

Priest: Yes, it is but natural.

Mahmud: Now, Sir, will you, please, tell me what you believe about Prophet 'Isa (a.s.)?

Priest: We believe that he is the son of God.

Mahmud: How did he die?

Priest: He was crucified and died on cross.

Mahmud: Well Sir, you see, that it why I told you that although there is a God, He is very weak. He is so weak that He could not save His own son. How can we expect such a weak and powerless God to save the grandson of his friend?

This reply abruptly ended the arguments. The priest said that he must rush to another place, and hurriedly took his leave.

Another incident occurred some two years ago. Mr. Mahmud Kishunga rented a room in a house in Ilala (Dar-es-Salaam) area. There is a mosque nearby, where he went at sunset for Maghrib prayer. He prayed with unfolded hands, as is taught by the Shia shari'ah. When he finished his prayer, a gentleman asked him as which 'madh-hab' he belonged to. He said that he was an Ithna-'asheriya. The gentleman asked derisively: "Why, you are an African and you are following the 'religion' of the Indians!"

Mahmud said: "Now that you have pointed it out, I realize that I have committed a great mistake. Really, being an African I should not have accepted the 'madh-hab' of the Indians. Now, dear Sir! please tell me about yourself. Whose religion do you follow?"

The gentleman said that he was a follower of the Shafi'i *madh-hab*.

Mahmud: "Well, this Imam Shafi'i (May god have mercy on him), which country did he belong to?"

Gentleman: He was an Arab.

Mahmud: Then please tell me why do you, a true son of Africa, follow the 'religion' of an Arab?

The gentleman left him with the parting shot: "You are a troublesome man".

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