

Autobiographical Notes

by

Murshid Samuel L. Lewis

(Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti)

Samuel L. Lewis was born in San Francisco in 1896. He first became interested in Oriental Philosophy and World Religions in 1915 when he visited the booth of the Theosophical Society at the World's Fair (P.P.I.E.). He began the study of Max Muller's voluminous writings and collections in 1916.

At that time he was studying non-Euclidean Geometry and Mathematical Philosophy under Prof. Cassius Keyser of Columbia University. It was Keyser who later introduced him to Dr. Alfred Korzybski and thus to semantics and general-semantics (not accepted by the disciples of the latter). But the views of Keyser easily harmonized with those of Indian Philosophy leading to a later friendship with Dr. Oliver Reiser, proponent of Integral Outlooks. Dr. Reiser is professor emeritus of philosophy at Pittsburgh University.

Sam began studying with Murshida Rabia Martin in San Francisco in November 1919. Mrs. Martin was a recognized Sufi teacher with a background in Indian philosophy and European occultism. Through her he met the Sufi Pir-o-Murshid, Hazrat Inayat Khan in 1923 and was initiated by him, then and later (1926) though the later initiations were not recognized in the western world.

Meanwhile Sam met Dr. M. T. Kirby in January 1920 at the Honganji Temple on Pine St., in San Francisco. Dr. Kirby (Sogaku Shaku) is best known for having been a disciple of the great Zen Master, Shaku Soyen and teacher of the noted Theravadin Buddhist, Dr. G. Malalasekera.

Sam himself introduced the Zen monk, Nyogen Senzaki, to Inayat Khan in 1923, the two men establishing a noteworthy friendship. This lead afterwards to the introduction of Paul Reys, a fellow disciple of Hazrat Inayat Khan, to the Zen Nyogen Senzaki from which source have been many roots.

Sam himself attended the meeting of the **Mentorgarten**, established by Shaku Soyen to bring East and West together. This terminated outwardly in 1926 when Nyogen Senzaki opened the first official Zendo. This was somewhat before the establishment of the **First Zen Institute** in New York City by Sokei-An Sasaki. But Sam went to New York in 1930 and received Dharma Transmission from Sokei-An, later confirmed by Mrs. Ruth Sasaki, Sokei-An's widow.

About 1937 Sam was initiated by Mr. Paul Brunton into the Yoga of Ramana Maharshi and quickly attained Samadhi, confirmed by Brunton but not by the "official disciples" of the Maharshi.

Sam was initiated as a full "Sufi" by Hazrat Inayat Khan in 1926, but this was not accepted by the warring factions of disciples. It was finally confirmed by Sufis in Pakistan and India and Sam received a full public ordination both as Sufi and Murshid by Pir Sufi Barkat Ali of the combined Chisti, Kadari and Sabri Orders in 1962.

At the request of Mr. Paul Reys, Sam went to Japan in 1956, was immediately received by the Zen Roshis, and experienced Satori in the presence of both Rinzaï and Soto Masters (rejected locally), and was also initiated into Esoteric Buddhism (Shingi-Shingon).

Sam received the spiritual Kiksha (initiation) from Swami Ram Das in 1953, confirmed by “Papa” on his visit in 1954, rejected by nearly all Americans and accepted by all Asians! He visited Anandashram in 1956 and again in 1962.

Sam was received by the highest officials of many branches of Buddhism, by the heads of the Ramakrishna movement and by Swamis, Yogis and Pundits on his two visits to India. How was also received by Sufis in Pakistan in 1956 and especially on his return in 1962.

His reports rejected almost universally in this land, he returned to Asia via U.A.R. in 1960 and was initiated into the Shadhili and Rifai Orders of Dervishes. He was initiated into the Naqshibandi Order in Pakistan in 1956 and into the Khalandar and Khidri-Chisti-Kadri Order in 1962.

He was welcomed by the Nizami-Chistis in 1956 and was officially initiated and ordained at Ajmir at the tomb of the celebrated Moin-ed-din Chisti in 1956, and has remained in touch with this center ever since.

It is only now, especially through Dr. Huston Smith that his Asian backgrounds are being accepted in the United States. Sam does not accept that European and English graduates of famous universities are necessarily the expositors of Asian wisdom and culture.