

Sermon

(Note: the following is apparently a sermon delivered by Samuel Lewis sometime following the death of Hazrat Inayat Khan and the absence or demise of Murshida Rabia Martin.—Moineddin)

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, ‘Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing, and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.’ So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him, and Lot went with him; and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot, his brother’s son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that had gotten Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.” Genesis XII: 1 to 5.

Look we into the lives of the great ones, and truly as Jesus said, “A prophet is with honor save in his own country.” What would it have availed Abram to remain in Chaldea? True, he learned all of their wisdom, but the time had come when the greatest doctrine of this wisdom was to be given to the world, and a place and people must be found to preserve this wisdom. So Abram became the father of the two peoples who have spread the doctrine of the essential unity of God: the Abri and the Arbi, the Hebrews and the Arabs.

The race having been founded, the time came when the doctrine was to be intrusted to it. And again the wisdom of the Lord manifested itself, and Moshe, the water-born, had to be raised by the Egyptians. How else would it have resulted that his own people could honor him! Had he lived with them, had he shared their battles, they may have made him a leader, but for their own ends, and then, not honoring him, Moses could never have given to Israel that which God wished to be entrusted to human-kind. And what country could have been better for them to sojourn in than Egypt? Egypt—the preserver of the ancient lore, of the secret doctrine? So Moses, learned in this doctrine, presented it to his people, who for the most part never did and never have regarded him as an equal, but as a superior. And ‘twere better, for thence forth they learned to honor prophets, but particularly prophets with whom they were not too familiar.

The Buddha taught in his own country, but today it is not the Hindus that revere him the most. Jesus hardly had a follower in Galilee, and so far as he was a leader of Galileans, he was distrusted by others; yet the Galileans not honoring his stock, as it were, rose in other parts of Judea.

And more than any one else, Mahomet had to strive with his kinsmen and his countrymen. And when they accepted him as a leader, it was rather because of his political prowess, that because of his doctrines his prestige rose. Yet Mahomet's whole life was purposed to lead his countrymen to God, even though they take but a slight step forward. Political leadership was not his desire, and he longed not for personal ambition. Yet it was only after his teachings spread abroad, and that after his death, that Mahomet became revered and "found his place in the sun."

So it might be with many of the world's great leaders, both in the realms of spiritual teachings, and of culture as a whole, that a man must go abroad to be honored. We know only too well, that an artist in any field no matter how mediocre, is honored above his fellow-creatures, if he spend a season or two in some European city. Upon his return he is lauded, though he produce not a single work of merit.

How could it have been otherwise without our Murshid? Had he stayed at home, would not his countrymen have said, "Is this not our neighbor Khan! Is this not the musician of 6? Can anything be added to the Veda? Or taken from the Qur'an? What need have we of another teacher of a new doctrine?' And what could have been better for the Murshid, coming West at a time when anyone born in India can be known as a "swami" or "guru?" When whether they come out of curiosity, or earnest desire, he is sure to get an audience? When through the radio, through the press, through modern science and invention, the whole world has been linked? When else has there been a time when the whole of humanity has been so united? Truly it was a providential season that brought the Murshid to the West, and lately to our shores.

And this day has even an interest and significance to us. If it is the anniversary of the Hejirat day of our Murshid, it is the Hejirat day of our Murshida. Many anniversaries shall we celebrate, please God, but none as this. Though we be few in numbers, though our be but slightly awakened, though our souls be but raising their head from lethargy, the years will show that this, our first celebration under the Sufi Order and Movement as it shall be constituted, is also the first in significance, and we should remember this more during the coming year.

And let our real celebration not be now, but during the coming months, when without our Murshid, without our Murshida, we shall work and strive as though they were here in the flesh, remembering that time and space cannot overcome the things of the spirit, and that "Whenever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I."