

The Garden of Inayat

The Garden of Inayat was instituted in the city of Novato, California, in the autumn of 1968. Plans were made for it to become the spiritual headquarters of a Sufi Murshid. This Murshid was Samuel L. Lewis, also known as Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti, and again as SAM, these letters being not only his usual nickname but also forming the initials of his spiritual sobriquet.

The Chisti School of Sufism has its headquarters in Ajmir, Rajputana, India. It is known for its use of music as an aid to spiritual development and in this country the Murshid has also added to it, dancing. The program has been very successful, drawing an ever growing number of young Americans, mostly ex-Hippies.

Novato is located in the northeastern section of Marin County which is just north of San Francisco (and the Golden Gate Bridge). The land is partly hilly, partly flat, characterized by "rift" valley formations. The underlying soil is red adobe, of a terra-cotta type, and the hilly parts are mostly covered by oaks. But there have been more pines near the Garden of Inayat, and this being at the bottom of a hill, has benefited from soil and silt deposits and a slightly higher pH. The good soil runs roughly about three feet deep.

While the temperature is roughly moderate all the year around, it is somewhat warmer in the summer (theoretically) and cooler or rainier in the winter than the land to the immediate south, and on the whole resembles that of Sonoma County which is to the north. This had once been chicken and grape country, but for various reasons, including the rise in land values, the whole functional structure has changed and Novato has become a prospering community of commuters.

When the Khankah was established there was a considerable flurry about "communes." These have now largely disappeared, being basically emotional and often more concerned with what might be uncomfortably called "love-lust" rather than agape or "love-love," the characteristic of the early Christians.

Sufis resemble these Christians in their emphasis and practice of heart-love and this has resulted in at least a successful flourishing commune (if one wishes to call it that) of spiritual devotees.

Sufis have preserved and practiced what has been called "ancient wisdom." This is very, very different from the hitherto prevailing hodge-podge of "Oriental philosophies" offered to the public by a conglomerate mass of European or English educated savants. Their philosophies are no doubt most interesting and even practical, but they are not based on human experience, and Sufism is based on human experience above all else.

The real mystical philosophies regard the earth itself as living (cp. Chardin). We read in Psalm 24: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." Too often this has been applied to the rights of ownership rather than to its deeper meanings. For instance, the word *adamah* is mentioned in the 25th verse of the first Chapter of Genesis, just before the word Adam appears. These are really the feminine and masculine of the same root. We translate *adamah* as ground and Adam as man or mankind and so lose sight of their esoteric relationship.

The various scriptures of the world agree that there are three bodies; the various religions have de-emphasized this. We have added to the bodies of men, animals, plants and the earth itself, the lowest form of existence, the ersatz chemicals, thinking thereby we are adding life and actually we are depriving all of them—men, animals, plants, and the earth itself of living vitality.

In the actual evolution of plant-life on earth and then of the manifestation of animals, nitro-fixating organisms played a great part. We have still to study Algae for food or for soil additives.

The approach to organic gardening came from at least two entirely different directions: college laboratory research and "stoop-labor" on small vegetable farms in eastern states. But this was followed in later years by visits to many Asian lands and also to Egypt to study the agriculture and plant-life in general. This began with the hope that there could be plant exchange as a means of promoting international good-will and then more discrete examinations into food supplies; also the possibilities of desert reclamation.

The general acceptance or rejection of these investigations followed very closely Lord Snow's dictum that there are two cultures. In any event one has yet to meet any kind of agriculturalist or horticulturist that rejected anything, and only a single scientist who did not assent; and an almost unanimous rejection by publishers, writers, and (so-called) "social scientists."

As a culture we are not aware of the importance of organic gardening in South-east Asia; and the marked difference in social conditions in East Pakistan and Bengal generally contrasted with Burma and Thailand may be due largely to the proper understanding and use of "manures" (in the larger sense). In any event, objective experience made one feel that one's garden should be organic. And believing that plants have subtle bodies only emphasizes such an approach.

Besides, the young people of the **New Age** have been leaning heavily to organics. So we started our place by adding organic soil conditioners and later liberal applications of Atlas Fish Emulsion. And our first undertaking was the digging of a compost heap. We have already dug several, and the whole has been topped by manure; the composite will be spread on the land during the winter months.

None of the people at the Khankah have had farm experience and only one a little gardening. But all are anxious to get close to the land. Besides this we were only two miles from the now dismantled Olompali Ranch which also started out with manures plus fish emulsion and has turned out successful crops—their only successful venture.

Our own land is about 150 x 100 feet, but we also have use of the lot next door. Fruit trees, ornamentals, annuals, vegetable crops, herbs and some other plants were purchased. Generally the very instincts lead to proper planting in rows, hills, etc. Some mistakes have been made, especially in not transplanting lettuce rapidly with the coming of warm weather.

Instinct tells one to plant the relatives of the wild growth, and it is not surprising that the crucifers have done marvelously. There has been so much Broccoli we have not even been able to give it away. The Squashes produce on the average of one good fruit a day. We have compared them with those on the market as to size, color and texture, and have been amazed at the difference. And our very first Zucchini, overlooked, was more than a foot long. Three crook-neck Squashes, selected at random for Atlas weighed, one four pounds, and two two-and-a-half pounds!

The Tomatoes have been so heavy on the vine that we intend to get a scale next year and measure everything plant by plant and crop by crop. And reading articles by Mr. Rodale in the course of this writing, one can assure you that the color, taste, fragrance, etc., are all excellent. (On the whole very little seems to be known of the production of the proper esters for taste and odor.)

This is only the first year and already both our Olive trees have a little fruit on them. They will be properly pruned in due course. And the one Fig tree has so much fruit we believe only one more is needed to give us sufficient fruit for the family.

The Beans have been a perpetual source of joy and wonder, and we have instituted a late planting. Parsley and the Alliums do quite well, but root vegetables only fair. All our border plants are in excellent shape.

We have taken a picture of one of the Hollyhocks. These were self-sown. This one was over 13 feet high, and still growing in August! We shall collect seeds because this may be a "sport." We did not touch the soil here but did water with Atlas.

At this writing there are still some crops as Peppers and Eggplants which are just appearing.

Before starting this venture the writer was ill and the Chinese physicians warned against any kind of mineral intake—salt, preservatives, medicines, etc.; and from the study of real Oriental philosophies one knows one must feed the subtle as well as the physical body. And the writer, who is in his seventies, can at least attest with his own life and good health.

But this is only a beginning and we hope to have more scientific and less emotional reports later on.

Samuel L. Lewis

[separate handwritten note-Ed:]

The soil of the Khankah is fairly heavy clay-loam topsoil washed down from a steep slope behind the property with a terra-cotta hard pan at a depth of about 2½ feet. Taking these factors into consideration, particularly the fact that the topsoil of the Garden of Inayat has been deposited by the leaching of the hill, in what way has this contributed to the psychic vitality of the grounds?