

The Science of Commentaries

by
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The Sufi teachings in their higher phases, were once limited to the classes for disciples but some were later published for general consumption. Consequently Murshid Samuel Lewis felt there was “some doubt whether they can mean anything to those who have not imbibed the spirit of the true Teacher who alone has had such experiences. And therefore it has also become necessary to write commentaries on this subject for disciples so they can understand what is in the literature, what has been published which was originally not intended for everybody but for mureeds. Still no harm can come, only confusions and theory instead of realization.” (*Pasi Anfas: Breath. Gatha with Commentary Series II*)

Such writings are not primarily understood at the intellectual level. Any insights and benefits we may experience result from increasing the capacity within our own heart sphere. The more we can create an inner state of spaciousness and receptivity the more we will be able to receive, assimilate and utilise. It is not simply a matter of studying these teachings; rather it is a process of reflection and meditation to allow them to become a living experience for us. Approaching the esoteric papers from such a perspective allows us to touch the inner being of the writers. It is an interactive and experiential process, not at all passive, requiring active effort on our part. Through our own insights we discover how the teachings are relevant in our lives.

As Murshid Samuel Lewis pointed out. “To read such papers without some ability in inner Concentration does not help much. Often one does not really know what the subject matter is and does not gain much by reading. The reason is that the real book which one is studying is oneself and the Githas, while they are the words of Holy Murshid, are in reality the reflections of his inner being and it is the inner being and not the words of Holy Murshid which must be understood by the traveler on the path to God.” (*Book of the Jamiat by Samuel Lewis*)

In 1923, as a young Sufi student, Samuel relates that Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan first spoke to him about the subject of making commentaries upon his esoteric writings. In 1926, Inayat went into much more detail giving exact instructions as to how Samuel was to carry out this work. Samuel reports that he began this work immediately. Just before his death in 1927 Inayat Khan sent a letter of praise and approval to Samuel for his initial efforts.

In February 1930 Samuel went on a spiritual retreat to commemorate the third anniversary of the death of Inayat Khan. On 5th February, the date of Inayat's passing, he appeared to Samuel in vision and “from the other side” began to help him to write the commentaries on his esoteric works in what could be called a telepathic fashion. Samuel considered them to be a direct mental transmission from the teacher. In 1963, Samuel wrote in a letter to one his students, Saadia Khawar Khan, that “neither the language nor the wisdom belong to your murshid but are products of Fana-fi-Sheikh and tassawuri Murshid.” Fana-fi-Sheikh is a Sufi practice of effacement in the teacher. It implies that the more one removes the self the more the wisdom of the teacher can be assimilated. Tasawwuri Murshid is the outer effort of the student to attune to the teacher.

For the next 15 years while he was responsible for the Sufi instruction and classes at the Sufi Khankah at Kaaba Allah, Fairfax, California, Samuel wrote many commentaries on the works of Inayat Khan as well as his own esoteric instruction papers. In a later commentary of Inayat Khan's “Cosmic Language” Samuel explains that, “At first it looked like analysis and personal views. But as one became more attuned to the subject he found the ether, so to speak, which recorded the state of mind of Hazrat Inayat Khan and he attuned to it. He had already learned to attune to Hazrat Inayat Khan when in the flesh; now he was able to attune to the mental imprints.” (*Cosmic Language Commentary* 1969). Samuel writes in the same year, “It has taken some time but now one receives from Hazrat Inayat Khan telepathically perhaps easier than one hears from people in the same room. This has taken discipline and concentration no doubt.” (*Diaries* 1969)

According to Samuel, Inayat's intention was to have the science of commentaries included in the Sufi Order Esoteric Constitution. For higher initiations in the Sufi Order each person to become a Khalif was supposed to write a commentary on the “Gathas”, the instruction papers for first three years. To become a Murshid

they needed to write a commentary upon the “Githas”, the instruction papers for the next three years. After Inayat’s death this did not happen and the requirement was not included in the Esoteric Constitution. It was however something which Samuel took to heart and throughout his life he carried on with the task assigned by Inayat. It seems to be the case that Murshid Samuel Lewis was the only person to approach Inayat’s work in this way and it is a great blessing that he did carry out this work with such dedication and skill.

Samuel revised or rewrote many of the commentaries several times over the years, no doubt because his own capacity and realisation increased. Due to a fire at Kaaba Allah in 1949, between then and 1968, Samuel did not have access to Inayat’s esoteric papers and was therefore unable to fully complete the task assigned by his teacher. It was certainly a deep frustration for him and in 1967 he wrote “It is hoped that some day this person will be given the papers requisite to his place in the spiritual life so he can continue the commentaries as requested by Hazrat Inayat Khan.” (*Diaries 1967*).

In 1968, he was given access once more to many of Inayat’s papers through his recently established connection to Pir Vilayat Khan, Inayat’s eldest son. While it is not always possible to date the commentaries exactly, it can be said that many were made between 1930 and 1945. Revisions to some papers were made between 1967 and his death in early 1971. New commentaries and original papers were also written during this period.

The Commentary presented here, *The Path of Attainment: Sadhana* does seem to have been written in the early years between 1930 and 1945.

An introduction written for forthcoming publication of **Githa Sadhana: The Path of Attainment** by Hazrat Inayat Khan with Commentary by Murshid SAM

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