

Memories of My Teacher, Murshid Samuel Lewis
by Sara Morgan, Lama Foundation, New Mexico, 1999

I'd like to try and describe what it was like, for this person, to do a snake Dance with Murshid S.A.M. He did snake Dances often, usually with 'Allah' or 'Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram', and occasionally with 'Hallelujah'. Dancing with Murshid, especially in these Dances, wasn't so much an event as a journey.

There is a Sufi teaching that says something like, "The Way of the Sufi is a journey from the unreal to the Real." That is how these snake Dances were. He wasn't 'dancing', *per se*, he was taking us somewhere.

One of my most precious memories is holding Murshid's hand when he led a Dance. There was nothing personal about him then. He was on a mission, like some ancient patriarchal prophet, leading these dazed, unfocused and unconscious 'hippies' from the unreal to the Real. The blend of strength, determination and infinite gentleness in his hand was unforgettable. Sometimes I felt like we snaked our way through time and space, through layers of consciousness, like bushwhacking in a jungle, till we came out in a clearing beyond description. That clearing I now know is the space of Spirit, of Unity, and above all, of Love. Deceptively simple, those snake dances.

For years after Murshid died I used to lead Dances always imagining that I was holding that hand, or hanging on to a piece of his robe, hanging on for dear life. Knowing nothing, I always walked behind him.

Years later I was given the paper "Prayers before Lectures" by Hazrat Inayat Khan (which I highly recommend for dance leaders) and realized that this attunement was the first stage in such work.

I have one letter which Murshid wrote to me while I was away from San Francisco. It is, of course, a treasure to me. In it I asked him one of the typically dumb questions of a young disciple: should I stay here and do this, or come back there and do that, a kind of mind-mesh drama.

His response was as follows:

"I have to tell you what I have told----- (name) and others. To me action is righteousness. What you do, God is doing through you and with you. To me, non-action is sin and action is virtue, but this is a private conclusion."

And, finally, the closing lines of this letter have always been a kind of koan for me in my work with the dances. I would like to share it with all of you:

**"Actually, although we seem to be in a world of song and dance,
we are most concerned with peace on earth."
—Murshid Samuel Lewis**