

When the Waters Were Changed

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ONCE upon a time Khidr, the Teacher of Moses, called upon mankind with a warning. At a certain date, he said, all the water in the world which had not been specially hoarded, would disappear. It would then be renewed, with different water, which would drive men mad.

Only one man listened to the meaning of this advice. He collected water and went to a secure place where he stored it, and waited for the water to change its character.

On the appointed date the streams stopped running, the wells went dry, and the man who had listened, seeing this happening, went to his retreat and drank his preserved water.

When he saw, from his security, the waterfalls again beginning to flow, this man descended among the other sons of men. He found that they were thinking and talking in an entirely different way from before; yet they had no memory of what had happened, nor of having been warned. When he tried to talk to them, he realized that they thought that he was mad, and they showed hostility or compassion, not understanding.

At first he drank none of the new water, but went back to his concealment, to draw on his supplies, every day. Finally, however, he took the decision to drink the new water because he could not bear the loneliness of living, behaving and thinking in a different way from everyone else. He drank the new water, and became like the rest. Then he forgot all about his own store of special water, and his fellows began to look upon him as a madman who had miraculously been restored to sanity.

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TALES OF THE DERVISHES

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Legend repeatedly links Dhun-Nun, the Egyptian (died 860), reputed author of this tale, with at least one form of Freemasonry. He is, in any case, the earliest figure in the history of the Malamati Dervish Order, which has often been stated by Western students to have striking similarities with the craft of the Masons. Dhun-Nun, it is said, rediscovered the meaning of the Pharaonic hieroglyphics.

This version is attributed to Sayed Sabir Ali-Shah, a saint of the Chishti Order, who died in 1818.