

May the Message of God Reach Far and Wide

In 1910 Inayat Khan sailed from India to the West. As pictures show, he was a relatively young man of 26 years old. A picture from 1911 – turban with western clothes and the typical Northern-Indian moustache – shows his youthfulness. A picture from 1917, only six years later – now dressed in Indian clothes and with the prominent Sufi symbol on his chest – shows the Inayat Khan as we mostly know him. The gaze is inward and meditative, and at the same time outgoing in a darshan way, offering blessing to all. His face still shows typical Indian traits, but is almost age-less. The youthfulness is gone. What has happened?



1911



1917

In his first years in the West, Inayat Khan had not yet sown the seed of what he called 'the Message', but was still tilling the ground, even though he had found in the USA a student he immediately initiated as Murshida (Rabia Martin) and had found in Sharifa Goodenough an English mureed with 'that spirit of discipleship which is so little known in the world and even rarely found in the East.'¹ Here is his assessment of these first years:

So far the Order had consisted of one mureed here or there, there was no proper organization, nor was there any society formed. But at this time the interest of some mureeds enabled us to take a house where private lectures could be given to mureeds and their friends. A Khankah was established in Ladbroke Road No. 86, in Kensington; throughout the war we were there. Perhaps many think that between 1910 and 1915 there was ample time for the Sufi Order to grow and flourish. But it is not so; during the war it was just like wanting to cultivate a desert. And even after the war it became difficult, for conditions turned from bad to worse. The little warmth that the war had produced in the feeling of humanity, even that vanished, and hearts became

¹ Autobiography, p. 141.

cold by the later effect of war. Therefore, the Sufi Order had a difficult time from the beginning of its work until now.

However, the seed was not yet sown, all that time was given to the tilling of the ground.²



Abu Hashim Madani

Inayat Khan was raised spiritually in the traditional Indian Sufi way. He lived with his teacher for three years. He first received first-hand insight in how Murshid Abu Hashim Madani lived and once he was ready, he was introduced into the teachings of the four main Indian Sufi Orders with an emphasis on the Chishti lineage.

He realized this would not work in the West, as he was called to travel,³ and wasn't able to teach his mureeds by living with them. In order to adapt to the Western world, he thought out a completely new system of initiation and teaching, unknown in the East. Confined to London in the First World War, he dictated the *Githas*, lessons for advanced mureeds on a variety of subjects, such as psychology, healing, concentration, sadhana (spiritual attainment) and esotericism.

As it soon became clear he had been too optimistic, he later dictated the *Gathas*, a series of lectures and lessons that prepare the student for the more advanced *Githas*. Later, in collected interviews with his senior students at the Summer School gatherings in Suresnes, France, he added the more advanced *Sangathas* and *Sangithas*, thus finishing a curriculum for students for different levels of understanding.

In correspondence with these papers, he constructed a system of different grades of initiation, a *study circle* (1st – 3rd initiation), an *advanced circle* (4th – 6th initiation), an *inner circle* (7th – 9th initiation), and *higher circle* (10th initiation for khalif or shaikh and 11th for murshid). The different initiations would correspond with the series of lessons from the *Gathas* through the *Sangithas* and he envisioned students would be 'upgraded' every year.⁴

Realizing the immenseness of the task that his teacher Madani had given him on his deathbed, he knew he needed helpers, advanced students with enough attunement, spiritual insight, esoteric understanding and devotion and dedication to the work to assist him and – at some point – continue the work. This system, he envisioned, would serve the Message to raise these helpers.

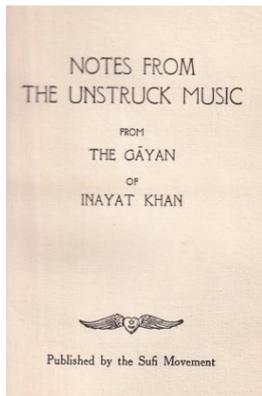
Again this proved to be too optimistic. His work in the West was the most difficult task he ever could have imagined and it was hard to find the kind of students he was looking for.⁵

² Ibidem, p. 146/7. Notice how Inayat Khan already uses a Ziraat- type description for his work in the West, ranging from tilling the ground to prepare for sowing.

³ See the maps in Autobiography (p. 540/47).

⁴ Traditionally, initiation on the Sufi path would take place *after* a period of training in what would be Inayat Khan's ninth initiation (*Sufi*).

⁵ See our *Draw us closer*, the chapter *Wearing out*.



Yet his lack of 'good helpers' did not deter him. As he prays in the prayer *Salat*, the Message of God had to be spread far and wide. This prayer for sustaining the Message, features with his two other two main prayers (*Saum* and *Khatum*) in the first publication of Inayat Khan's original maxims, poems and prayers, *Notes from the Unstruck Music from the Gayan* (1923).

The line *May the Message of God reach far and wide* seems to be coming directly out of Inayat Khan's heart as a deeply felt longing to support humanity in finding the path to higher forms of realization, leading to inner freedom and happiness.

In the Sangathas he addresses his senior students as follows:

I must appeal to the depth of your heart, that we sorely need ten thousand good workers to begin our Movement; as long as we have not got this, I do not consider that we have made a beginning.

A Cause which is for the whole humanity needs at least the number I have mentioned; and this will tell you, you must come and make every effort possible to make the number which is wanted just now, to serve God and humanity. Your devotion is really the only consolation I have in the difficulties, which are endless and which I can never explain in this world, difficulties which are endless and beyond imagination.⁶

A prayer, labeled 'unofficial' and of uncertain background, but in the style of Inayat Khan's prayers, expresses the same wish as follows:

*O Thou! The Giver of all Blessings,
Bless Thy Messenger and the Message he is spreading,
Grant us the ten thousand servers
for the beginning of Thy work on earth.
Thou are the Hearer, the Knower!
Send us many good and faithful workers as we are needing.
Our trust is in Thy Almighty and All-Sufficient Power.
Help us to fulfil the purpose of our life
under Thy Divine Guidance.
Amen*

As Sharif Graham, who cites part of the Sangatha quote above in his contribution to *A Pearl in Wine*, remarks, this many workers have not appeared. In fact, all mureeds of all Sufi Orders that emerged from Inayat Khan's teachings don't add up to ten thousand, let alone the number of good workers.⁷

Inayat Khan was a self-declared optimist, albeit one with open eyes. He kept his view on the greater cause and was not to be distracted by setbacks. As he relates:

Once when I was sailing in a boat, a sailor gave me some interesting advice. I asked him if he knew any remedy against seasickness, and he said, 'No, they have tried for a long time to find something, but nothing is any good. You must fix your eyes on the horizon, that will keep you from being seasick.'

⁶ Sagathas, Series 1, p. 39.

⁷ Pirzade Zia Inayat Khan (ed.): *A Pearl in Wine*. Omega Publications, 2001, p. 154/55.

I was greatly benefited by that advice, and it was a stimulus to my imagination, showing that the wider the outlook, the less are our troubles in life. If we fix our eyes on the horizon, as far as we can see, then we are saved from the little things which make our life unhappy. God is the horizon, as far as we can see and even further, for we can neither touch the horizon nor can we touch God.⁸

If we look at the horizon to perceive the greater and grander view of our life on earth, we may avoid becoming seasick by the waves of life, by the setbacks that usurp our energy and make us lose our stamina and perseverance.

Then, we can see that equanimity Grace and Blessing sometimes come cloaked in disguise⁹, enabling us to keep a positive outlook on life, based on gratitude and thankfulness.

By taking on that attitude, we can realize we needn't be pessimistic that Inayat Khan's goal is not yet achieved. Instead, we can see it as a stimulus to take this prayer and the line from *Salat* to heart, and listen to the inner call to support humanity on their path towards the Perfection of Love, Harmony and Beauty, each of us in our own way and to our best abilities.

Music and Meditation

May the Mes- sage of God reach far and wide May the
 Mes- sage of God reach far and wide Ya Nur Al- lah
 Ya Ja- mi Al- lah Ya
 Nur Al- lah Ya Ja- mi Al- lah May the

The last lines from the prayer *Salat* read (in brackets the adaptation for gender neutrality):

*May the Message of God reach far and wide
 Illuminating and making the whole Humanity
 as one single Brotherhood (Family)
 in the fatherhood (Parenthood) of God*

These lines inspired the following melody. Following our inspiration and adding something of Inayat Khan's original Sufi training, we chant the wazifa *Ya Nur* (O

⁸ Inayat Khan, IX, p. 53/4 and Mansur Johnson, p. 227/8. 'God is the horizon' is a fine example of the paradox of the One being both near and distant, both immanent and transcendent. The phrase can be used as an attunement for the spiritual walks of Murshid SAM (see there).

⁹ See our *Attunement, Direction, and Forgiving, Meditations on Sura al Fatiha*, p. 89/90.

Light) for *illuminating* and summarize the remaining ideal of being united in one family under the parenthood of God with the wazifa *Ya Jami* (O Gatherer).

Meditation

Bring the feeling, evoked by the music and the words of the prayer, on the breath into the heart by breathing into the heart 'May the Message of God' and breathing out from the heart 'reach far and wide'.

After a while, let go of the words and contemplate on what you can do the support the Message in the broadest sense of the word.