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**Memorial of *Murshida Sharifa Goodenough*
*Sufi Silsila***

(1876 – 1937)



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Introduction

This work was originally written in French under the title "Memorial of *Murshida Sharifa Goodenough*". "Memorial" is a word that conveys, both in English and in French, the double meaning of "remembrance of a great person (or event)" and "shrine". This double meaning is to be borne in mind while reading the pages which follow.

Such a Memorial can be carved in stone or written in words. This Memorial of *Murshida Sharifa Goodenough*, pupil of the great Sufi Hazrat Inayat Khan, is in words. These memories, appreciations and judgments come from those who knew the remarkable spiritual personality that she was.

This Memorial is not a biography; in other words, it is not the work of an author describing the life of an individual. Although it has certain biographical elements, this Memorial mostly contains a collective testimony, with the aim of bringing back to life a being whose memories have passed through a long "journey in the wilderness", and which must now be brought into the light of day.

~o~

Today we live in a world where rationality and objective science have brought about the extraordinary technological achievements and transformations, we all know in the milieu in which we live.

This being so, our civilization and our culture gradually forgot another aspect of reality, one which is inaccessible through our usual sciences and which can only be discerned and explored by the spirit. As a result, many are deprived of a fuller life which is able to satisfy that which neither science, nor culture, nor a religion which may have disappointed, nor a philosophy such as it is understood today, can bring about. This part of life is called spiritual experience. Spirituality is effectively experiential.

Thus, many today have the more or less conscious wish for a life complemented by a higher experience. But where they are conscious of this, they do not know where to find it, and especially they ask themselves if such an experience is liveable for them. In other words, their hope has the need to be comforted by what is in industry called "a feasibility study". In other words, they look for proof that such an undertaking is possible, what it resembles and what might be its end result.

This Memorial offers the reader such a study: of someone who from the end of her youth put herself to researching the divine and, in the end, attained it. Such people must not be forgotten, and the passage of time must not tarnish their example, nor wipe away their footprints, for they are our spiritual heritage and bear witness of the potential of the divine in us. They show that neither is God a theological invention nor is he a sort of personage, infinitely distant,

remote, unchanging, separated from us by an immensity of unknowing. It is rather that He lives in us, even if He has fallen asleep in the depth of ourselves, like in the Biblical legend of Boaz who fell asleep at the edge of his field. Such people show us that, without knowing it, we are woven into His life even before we know that He is woven into ours. It is this that Sharifa Lucy Goodenough comes to demonstrate by her life: that such a discovery, such an experience, is possible in our everyday life, in the life given to us to live. Through her existence on earth, she showed the way and the goal to souls close to her who were searching for light, through her teaching and her wisdom, but especially through that which she radiated.

This being so, Murshida Sharifa greatly deserves the respect and gratitude of the further generations of pupils of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan, her Master, as her work makes a powerful contribution towards preserving and spreading his Message, the Sufi Message of spiritual liberty.

Who are the authors of this Memorial?

Firstly, two people among all those who met or approached Murshida Goodenough, two who today are the only ones who remain to speak of this remarkable disciple of the great Sufi Sage Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan. Two people who had the double privilege of coming into contact with her, and to live close to women and men who followed her for long years, who knew her well, and who retained memories full of gratitude, light and upliftment.

However, as mentioned before, these two people would not have been able to write this Memorial without the memories and accounts of various others who knew or approached Murshida Goodenough, starting with the account of her Master, Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan himself. We attribute the greatest of importance to all these accounts.

Perhaps their diversity will, at first sight, appear to give a disparate, kaleidoscopic impression to an account which the reader might have wished more unambiguous. But we ask the reader to think of these objective documents as having irreplaceable value; they can be seen as so many points of view which together give a more complete picture, in the same way as walking around an object gives a more complete view.

This compilation of memories is all the more necessary as errors and hazardous and unfavourable interpretations which show Murshida Sharifa in an unfavourable light are still being expressed and spread by some few from a generation which could not have had contact with her or with most of her contemporaries.

This gives a further reason to re-establish the facts as they were and the events as they took place.

Murshida Sharifa left fairly abundant written teachings of which we will speak later. However, verbal or written teaching which may have been left by mystics and spiritual personalities is not all we can learn from them. Neither must their lives only serve as a beautiful example and as an edification for souls in love with idealism. But to attempt to understand with respect, I would

say with humble empathy, that which was, beyond appearances, a little of this ascension, a little of this sequence of inner experiences which led Sharifa Goodenough to the highest to which a human being can attain, offers in itself a very great upliftment and a teaching which is very much alive.

May these pages in turn inspire those who read them; and may they evoke in the imagination of the reader the benevolent figure of Murshida Sharifa, preceding by far the pilgrims who commit themselves to the Path.

~o~

*“There is one single line which links man to God;
the limited pole to the boundless pole”*

(retranslated into English from translation into French of Pir-o-Murshid’s words - original words could not be found). These words of the Master illustrate perfectly the development of Sharifa Lucy Goodenough, on the one hand on the sidelines of all those who surrounded Pir-o-Murshid, and on the other woven into the birth and growth of the Sufi Movement, in both of which, behind the scenes, she took so much part. At the same time, we will follow her own difficult ascension to the summit of the mountain where the soul finally finds *“the boundless pole”*.

However, the admiration and piety which may be aroused by the memory of Murshida Goodenough in no way overshadow the greatness and the remarkable spiritual dimension of her Master, Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan. She herself would have been horrified at such an idea. In writing this Memorial our conviction is rather that the illustration of the disciple only increases the glory of the master.

~o~

A word about our sources. Apart from personal memories and intimate reminiscences, we will borrow much material from those we did not personally know or meet her, as well as from others whom we only knew via an intermediary, or thanks to their writings, and whose goodwill, honesty and especially independence of spirit appears to us to be beyond question. Among these, special mention must be made of our much-missed friend Adriana Feizi van der Scheer, who was both totally devoted companion and friend of Murshida Sharifa in the last and difficult years of her life.

We extend our gratitude to all of the above.

Elise SCHAMHART

Michel GUILLAUME

~o~

Part 1

Introducing Murshida Sharifa Goodenough

- 1 -

Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan writes in his autobiography (Part II, 1914 – 1920):

“I found at that time of difficult beginning a mureed (1) Miss Goodenough (Sharifa), who stood as a foundation stone for the building of the Order (2). In Miss Goodenough, who was afterwards made a Khalifa (3), and then was promoted to be a Murshida (4), I found that spirit of discipleship which is so little known to the world and even rarely found in the East. Besides, I traced in her my own point of view.

“Miss Goodenough has proved by her career firmness and self-sacrifice for the Cause, to which she has devoted her life. There is certainly truth in the idea of heredity, which today people seem to ignore. Although in estimating a horse they still give great importance to heredity, yet they do not for man. Though retiring, exclusive and remote by nature, and independent and indifferent in appearance, which has turned many against her and caused many troubles, she has many pearl-like qualities hidden under a hard shell. She has proved worthy of confidence in the working of the Order and has been patient through all difficulties that we had to meet with continuously on our way. She brought out my ideas in the series of books named: “the Voice of Inayat”, three volumes of which are named “Life after death”, “The phenomenon of the soul”, and “Love Human and Divine”. But besides this she has collected, preserved and produced the record of my oral teachings and guarded them from all corruption. She has kept them for the coming generations in the most authentic form, which act of service the sincere followers of the Message will retain gratefully in their memory.

~o~

Two accounts

Elise Schamhart writes:

"It was a hot summer afternoon. I was sitting reading quietly in the Sufi Garden (5). There was never anyone there in the afternoons when there was no lecture or reading. I always found a great charm in this garden with its apricot trees which let their ripe fruit drop with little noises, the fruit almost falling into your mouth.

"At a certain point I heard the gate which led to the Rue de la Tuilerie open and I saw a lady dressed in clear grey enter. She skirted the wall of the 'stables' (by then converted into rooms) which bordered the garden on one side, walking slowly, very upright, her head slightly bowed. She passed in front of the foundation stone of the Temple (6) and then turned towards the little house which faced the Rue Victor Hugo adjoining the garden. I had seen Murshida Goodenough. Up to this day I see these images before my eyes with total precision. I was then 12 years old. I watched with eyes wide open with a sort of wonder.

"Back home, I declared to my mother that I wished to be initiated. My mother was not at all in agreement and explained wisely that I was too young to make such a decision, but that I could be received into the Universal Worship (7). I decided to go it alone and the next day I asked Feizi, Murshida Goodenough's secretary, to make an appointment for me. I was at that time rather shy, and this step had been difficult for me. But fortunately, Feizi kindly took me seriously, and later came to tell me that Murshida Goodenough was expecting me the next day.

"When the time came, I was terribly embarrassed, fearing that I had make a very rash approach, but Murshida received me with the delightful courtesy which was hers and which reassured me.

"Once seated facing her I was again entirely taken by the beauty of her face: a little triangular, eyebrows very arched, eyes calm and gentle. Murshida left me looking at her in peace. She remained quietly seated, hands on knees. I don't know for how long I gazed at her, but suddenly I remembered the principles of good upbringing which had been instilled into me, and according to which I should not stare at people. I was very scared that Murshida would think me impolite. But at this moment Murshida began to speak. She spoke slowly in French and I understood more or less what she was saying. She spoke to me about Murshid who loved to go to Paris to watch the jets of water rising up in the fountains. Then I no longer listened very well, because I had to come out with the little sentence which I had so carefully prepared: 'Will you initiate me'? I repeated this mentally without daring to say it, suddenly conscious of

the enormity of such a request. Finally, I said it all the same and Murshida replied immediately, touching me lightly with her hand: 'Yes, I will.' The next day she gave me the initiation.

"After this I always tried to be near her. Every year I came to spend a month in Suresnes and I went to all her lectures, although I had not yet learned English at school. I also attended the small meetings with the French mureeds for whom she translated the lecture Murshid had just given in English. I did not understand much here either, but I never tired of watching her and marveling that such a being could exist. Murshida often invited me into her home. I remember that in autumn I helped her pick apricots in her garden and that she gave me jars of jam which she had made.

"Later, when I was older, I could speak to her more easily. We spoke German, which is an easier language for Dutch-speakers. I remember that she explained what breath is and helped me to understand the difference between breath and respiration.

"She willingly spoke of Murshid, and to which point the well-being of his mureeds was close to his heart. She would not let anyone to say: 'I am your mureed'. 'One is always the mureed of Murshid', she said.

"I did not know her long enough and I was too young to ask her all the questions which came to me later. But if I've done anything in my life to which I think back often, with happiness, it is never to have missed an opportunity to be close to her.

"I saw her for the last time seated on the terrace in front of the impoverished apartment which she occupied the last years of her life. I was leaving for Holland the next day and I brought her flowers – white lilies and carnations which I had chosen with great care. I found her in the company of Zeb-un-Nissa (Baroness Tanfani (8)). Murshida embraced me and accompanied me out to the top of the stairs, which were very steep. At the bottom, I turned and saw her face for the last time. She was smiling at me.

"Later, when she had left this earth, I dreamt that I was walking behind her on a narrow sunken path. I was very happy to be following her. I lost sight of her at a turn in the path and hurried my steps to take the turn myself. When I had turned, I only saw the silhouette of Murshida. She had disappeared.

"I remember being told long ago by Mrs. van Wertheim (her Sufi name was Nassiban) that she too loved Murshida Sharifa. At her last interview with Murshida she had asked her for a souvenir, something of hers which had been useful to her and would retain her 'vibrations'. I think she had even suggested an old shoe or glove she no longer wore. (Nassiban was one of those sufis who really liked 'vibrations'.) Murshida Sharifa listed gravely and promised to reflect on what she might give her. The next day she sent Nassiban a little parcel in which she found a portrait of Murshid."

Michel Guillaume writes:

"Of all the meetings which proved to be decisive for the direction of my life, none was more so than that with Murshida Sharifa.

"I must have been twelve years old. Of our first meeting I only remember a lady who seemed tall and rather old, with grey locks of hair combed back with a certain neglect of fashion. She held herself very straight, just with her head a little inclined, and her bearing was very simple and kind. She seemed to give her full attention to the embarrassed boy who was introduced to her. Nonetheless something struck me which I had never noticed in an adult before. This lady looked like no other. Not physically: in a crowd she would undoubtedly have passed unnoticed. But the impression I retained was – how shall I say? – that of an ethereal being, or rather of a being who belonged to a different world, at the same time 'here' and 'elsewhere'.

"A child does not analyse or explain such impressions. It absorbs them like a sponge; but the impressions stay alive and the years neither alter nor tarnish them. Time restores them, complete with their flavour, and reveals something of their meaning when the person has acquired the necessary intelligence and experience. At the time I could clearly see that this person had something different to all those I had come across, in the Sufi Movement or elsewhere. I never thought of her without a sort of diffuse happiness or a sort of natural veneration. Nonetheless I hardly noticed this at the time; I had seen the light of a highly spiritual soul and I didn't know it.

"A few months later my mother took me, or rather dragged me, to Murshida Sharifa. I had reached an age where one no longer wants to do anything someone else wants you to do unless you also want to do it yourself. The suggestion to go and see Murshida Sharifa to help me overcome my dreamy nature, too shy, inactivity due to the growth process, and little inclined to my schoolwork, seemed to me a worrisome ordeal. We still went, my mother dragging a boy rigid with dread and frozen with shyness.

"Murshida met us on the first floor of the little house where she was living, invited us to sit, and turned to me to ask: 'Why did you come?' I remained silent; I had hoped that my mother would speak for me. And I couldn't say: 'I am here to please mama'. One cannot say such things. A silence followed during which I tried to put together a sentence which didn't come. The silence continued. But strangely it wasn't one of those painful silences between people who have nothing to say to each other; it was a sort of living silence; and then, in spite of my confusion, I noticed two other things: firstly, this lady didn't seem to know impatience; secondly, it was impossible for me to hide any part of the truth from her. Finally, I found the right sentence: 'My mother wanted me to come and see you because I have trouble concentrating on my studies'. Murshida nodded approvingly and gave me some advice – which I promptly forgot to follow.

"Then she asked me: 'Would you like us to have a silence?' Happy to get away so lightly, I said I would like this. I closed my eyes and the silence began

"... At first, I became aware that a sort of barrier had been removed: I had become like an open book which it seemed natural and effortless to read. But who was reading it? There seemed to be no one there any more. And then a presence came, the presence not of a person, but of the Truth.

"It was a very strange experience.

"I still remember that I had a feeling of lightness as I went down the stairs. It was different from the simple relief after an interview one had dreaded and which had gone well. It was as if a heavy mantle which I had worn all of my short life had been lifted. This feeling lasted a certain time and then gradually disappeared.

"Nothing noteworthy happened afterwards, except that, a few months later, at night before falling asleep I saw a light in a corner of my room. It was a strange yet familiar phenomenon, odd but reassuring. I took it as a sign that all was well, that I could fall asleep in peace.

"But in the course of this occurrence, which lasted only a few instants, another phenomenon occurred which I can only compare to that which happens in music when one tunes an instrument: the 'la' note had been given. And it has never ceased to resonate in the depth of this intimate memory. It is like a tuning fork to which it is always possible to refer to distinguish between the false and the true notes. In the course of my long life in search of truth I came to know many personalities, in the Sufi Movement and elsewhere. Not all were necessarily true in their approach, nor realistic in the level of their ambition. Despite this, with some of these, a spiritual reputation and the fragrance of incense floated about them. Only too often some very human weaknesses co-existed with a sincere aspiration. But what Murshida Sharifa showed me, for once and for all, was the evidence of spirituality, and it was the image of a unified being: of the all-round progress advocated by her Murshid: 'a global progress' in all aspects of the being, a progress full of balance in both strength and beauty of character as well as in the growth of the divine life in the whole of the human being. She was the accomplished personification of this unity, of this possible progress.

"Recognising this has spared me many disappointments, many bursts of enthusiasm, many dead ends.

"And then there is this: the spiritual note which she resounded also enables one to find an inner harmony (with greater or lesser difficulty, it is true) when the cacophony of life tends to shatter it. She strikes a tone as an encouragement to continue on the path, cost what may. And above all she is like an invisible thread which links the disciple to the Master, and she shows in this the illusion of our human mortality."

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Elise Schamhart and Michel Guillaume were married in 1948, and by the grace of fate they were still able to write this Memorial together. Elise Schamhart passed away on 13 December 2011 almost as soon as the last page had been written.

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Part 2

Introduction

No one's existence is like that of any other and each human being is unique. These are two primary truths, but they take on a special significance when it comes to the life of Lucy Marian Goodenough. For almost from childhood, she seemed marked by a destiny apart, as much by her birth into the high British aristocracy as by her character which showed itself from an early age to be very strong, rather unusual and very self-assured. She was reserved, very sensitive, markedly idealistic and with a very strong will. To this is added a tendency towards austerity, increased by a very strict education, as will be seen further on. To these traits is added a lively intelligence, which from early on reached towards the depth of things. This is so much the case that before understanding the nature of this person and her destiny, we need to acknowledge that, if one considers the generality of people, she was rather different to the average person. And this difference continues when much later she met Hazrat Inayat Khan, recognised in him her spiritual teacher, and embarked on a development which made of her a mystic of the highest order.

But before continuing, in order to mitigate any impression of unreality caused not only by the immense originality Murshida Sharifa, but also by the vastly different era, some details may help to set the scene. It was the time when electricity had not yet supplanted either gas or oil lamps for public and private illumination, and when one travelled by train and horse. The idea of electronics would have been thought of as a harebrained illusion. Queen Victoria would still reign for several years over a society and an empire so vast that it was said that the sun never set on it.

We can hardly imagine the life one led in this historic England, if not through the novels of Jane Austen or Matthew Arnold. And some of Oscar Wilde's writings give an idea of the social life of the class into which Murshida Sharifa was born.

Manners were paramount. Freud was still far from writing his "Introduction to psychoanalysis". Discussing psychology would have been in bad taste, and as permissiveness is in fashion today, rigorous etiquette controlled actions and interactions in the same uncomfortable way in which they controlled the shape of women's bosoms. Respectability, not only on the surface, was not just a word.

But it is in the midst of this world which to us seems so anachronistic, so outdated, that we must think of Lucy Marian Goodenough as a child and as a young lively girl, a being of flesh and blood.

All of this has to be kept in mind before approaching that which follows.



1.

Childhood and youth of Lucy Marian Goodenough

According to her personal memories and those of her family

“What is the cause of the different stages of evolution that one sees in the world of variety? There are three principal causes: first, the heritage of the soul, which it has brought from the angelic and from the jinn worlds (9); second, the inherited qualities that a soul possesses, having received them from its parents and ancestors; and third, what the soul acquires after coming on earth. It is these three things which make what may be called individuality, which in its result culminates in a personality”.

Hazrat Inayat Khan – “The soul whence and whither”, Chapter 20

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Murshid Inayat Khan gave much importance to “*the inherited qualities which a soul receives from its parents and from its ancestors*”. That is why he had suggested to Murshida Sharifa to write down her thoughts about this.

First, we give the memories of Lucy Goodenough’s sisters, as recounted by Feizi van der Scheer.

Her younger sister wrote:

“Lucy Marian Goodenough, second daughter of Colonel W.H. Goodenough (afterwards Lieutenant-General Sir William Goodenough, K.C.B.) and of Mrs. (afterwards Lady) Goodenough, née countess Kinski. She was born on the 25th August 1876 at Weymouth Street, London. Following her father’s various military appointments, Lucy lived at Dover, Shooter’s Hill near Woolwich, Chester, Chatham and the Cape of Good Hope.

“She was a very delicate child, but inclined to take the lead among her sisters. Taught by German governesses until she went to school in London with her elder sister in 1891; a year or two later she was sent to the well-known large girl’s school of St. Andrews, Scotland, where she gained a scholarship for Cambridge. She did not take it up, but in 1895 joined her parents at the Cape and took part in the social life of the Colony, hunting with the Cape hounds, etc. She was a fearless rider. After the death of her father in 1898, Lucy lived with her mother and younger sisters in London. During the Boer-war she went again to the Cape with friends for some months. From then till 1914 she travelled a great deal on the Continent, mostly with her friend Countess Silva-Tarouca, who was devoted to her. As Countess Silva-Tarouca was an invalid,

they spent several winters at Bozen, and were also often in Sicily. At the beginning of the Great War Lucy spent some time at Le Havre, with English friends, helping in a canteen. After her return to London, she met Inayat Khan”.

Let us open a parenthesis here on an incident noted above, which already allows us to wonder about one of Lucy Goodenough’s character traits: “... she gained a scholarship for Cambridge. She did not take it up”. It must be borne in mind that, at the time, to be admitted to a prestigious university was an exceptional privilege for a young woman. Why did she not accept the scholarship? Did she lack ambition? Was she easily offended, too selective, admitting few friendships, and unwilling to make her way in a crowd of male students? Undoubtedly a little of each. However, the hypothesis which seems the most likely is that the early clairvoyance of her spirit showed her that in this direction she would not find that for which, in the depth of her being, she was already searching.

But let us continue. Her elder sister, Mrs Colonel Soltau-Symons, writes:

“She should have been a boy. She was very independent and headstrong, which sometimes brought her into conflict with the authorities. She had inherited a talent for languages as well as an excellent memory from both of her parents. When she had not learned her French poetry, she took the book five minutes before the lesson, managed to get me to read the piece first, and then recite it quite reasonably well, something of which I would not have been capable. ...

“I married very young and saw very little of her. I never heard her speak of any sort of friendship with any man whatsoever. I once heard a vague rumour of a young man dying in hospital and that Lucy was very anxious to see him, but was kept apart from him by her sister. I never heard of any other person with whom she might have been smitten.”

Further on, Mrs Soltau-Symons wrote:

“She was the second child of my parents and for many years she was not in very good health, suffering from coughs and colds in winter.” She says further: “Her childhood was without unusual events; it was an ordinary life of an English child in the country.” And finally: “When she met Inayat Khan, she left our family like an arrow”.

Feizi van der Scheer’s account continues:

“During their childhood she and her sisters were brought up very strictly in accordance with fixed rules: no matter what the weather they walked for so many hours, and they would have lessons for so many hours. They were so used to these rules that once when the Prince of Wales (the future Edward VII) came for an overnight visit, Lucy started her practices on the piano at 8 o’clock in the morning, like she always did...”

Murshida Sharifa also recounts these stories:

“In my earliest days I cried and wept so much that all the house declared they had never heard an infant cry like that. But I soon became a most contented baby. There are many things, small events of my early childhood that I remember and that give me such a clear picture of what a child’s mind is at that age; how it feels and understands and does not know its surroundings, and how indeed it is like a traveller in a strange land where much is unintelligible.

“My earliest recollection is of sitting in a sunny meadow, golden with sun and buttercups, and my mother was pointing out to my sister, one year older than I, a heron which she saw at a distance. I so much wished to see, I asked again and again to see it, but my mother could not believe that I knew what a heron was. And at last climbing higher I saw the white bird in the distance. Then my mother, very pleased that I saw something, asked me what a heron was. I said: ‘A bird, a white bird’. This gave me my first lesson in independence. I was not yet two – I was a year and ten months old.”

The Ocean Within – p123

Feizi continues:

“Sharifa was very reserved by nature. Even in her childhood she never told anyone when she had toothache or didn’t feel well. She said too that when she heard her mother play a Viennese waltz this made her feel melancholy and that she left the room. It was because of this that the family concluded that she did not like music, and she preferred to let them think that rather than tell them the real reason.”

Sharifa’s childhood sensitivity shows in the following incident:

“When I was about five, we were one year in the New Forest where very often we played with the children of some friends who were a little older than we were. They were very pleased to play with the babies that we were at that time, and we liked their interesting plays and ways. And this friend of my family was building at that time a summerhouse in his garden. |One day he took me with him to look at it and said: ‘Next year we will finish it, and then you and I will come and sit here’. I said: ‘You must finish it this year’. He said: ‘No, next year it is to be finished’. I said ‘You must do it this year, it must be finished now’. He said: ‘Why? Next year is the time’. She replied: ‘Then we shall never sit there’. He said: ‘Why?’ I said: ‘Next year you will not be here’, and I felt very sad, feeling a change in the atmosphere, feeling it would not come about. General Maurice seemed impressed. He took me back to where the rest of the family were sitting and said: ‘Lucy says next year I shall not be here’. My mother asked my why I had said it. I could not tell, but I felt very sad. At home they asked me again why I had said such a thing, but I could say nothing. A few months afterwards General Maurice died and we never returned to that place.”

The Ocean Within (10), p.124

Feizi:

“Later on, she lived in the Cape with her father and went hunting and riding. In fact, she didn’t like hunting, but loved riding. She tells of a horse with which she was so much in touch that it knew in which direction she wanted to go without her giving it any prompts.”

~o~

It must be stressed that for most of her life, and until her Master, Hazrat Inayat Khan, departed from this world, Lucy Goodenough’s character made no concessions, sometimes showing inflexibility, also and especially towards herself as well as towards some members of the Sufi Movement. This caused, as will be seen, much lack of understanding and lasting enmity. The radical change in her character afterwards was unable to make up for these misunderstandings and this enmity.

Be that as it may, what heredity meant for her is shown by the following lines which she wrote when her honour had been grossly attacked, as will be seen in the fourth Chapter of this Memorial:

“I could tell something of the things that interest me in my life. I was born in London in 1876 and am a daughter of General Sir William Goodenough. My father’s family lived in Oxfordshire a long time, having been known there for some time, for there are memorials of knights in this family from the XII Century at a place called Boughton Poges which continued to belong to them till the time of my great-grandfather. They were, many of them, divines of the Church of England. My great-grandfather, Bishop of Carlisle, a man well-known in his day, was one of the first to seek for knowledge by a then new route, taking a great interest in scientific discovery and at the beginnings of research in that line.

“And I am descended collaterally from William of Wykeham, founder of Winchester, and this has interested me for two reasons: one being for the motto he gave to that school: ‘manners maketh man’, so consonant with Murshid’s teachings; the other that he, the friend of Edward the Black Prince, made a great speech from the steps of St Paul’s Cathedral in London upholding and defending the greater scope and greater power, given with the consent of that prince and his father King Edward, into the hands of the more capable and eminent men of the Church. It is unlike the levelling tendency of today, but in accordance with what Murshid has spoken.

“My mother is the daughter of Count Eugen Kinsky and had lived in Moravia and in Vienna until the time of her marriage; Kinsky, in ancient times Chynsky, being an ancient family of Bohemia in which there had been many leaders in warfare and in the state.

A Chynsky was one of the four knights who in the battle of Crécy accompanied and surrounded King John of Bohemia who – blind though he was – took part in a battle as the ally of the French. He was slain, his knights with him; and it is there that Edward the Black Prince, finding them slain upon the battlefield, moved by this action of the enemy, took his coat of arms, the three feathers with the motto 'Ich dien', which has since been the coat of arms of the Prince of Wales. This story has been investigated not long ago and proved to be historically true.

"I am also descended directly from Prince Kamitz, the statesman and prime minister of Maria Theresia who took so great a part in history.

"In the Napoleonic wars my great-great-grandfather Prince Kinsky took a prominent part, and at the battle of Aspern, by a manoeuvre executed contrary to the orders given, turned the fate of the battle: the only victory won over Napoleon during the time when his star was in the ascendant. In the Austrian monarchy there was an Order (a decoration), the Marie Theresien Kreuz, which was given only for such an action on the battlefield, contrary to orders and having a decisive effect upon the issue of the battle, and given only after the meeting of the Consistory. His action was so brilliant that upon the battlefield the Archduke Charles, the hero of the battle, took from his own breast the same Order and pinned it upon the uniform of the General.

"My grandfather had first taken a very great interest in politics, but as the course taken and the decisions made were quite contrary to his views, he turned his attention to economic matters. He was known for his extraordinarily prompt wit, and long after his death people were constantly quoting many situations and events in politics that he had foretold."

~o~

This concern – or rather: this importance given to the lineage and to the value of such and such ancestor may in the beginning of the last century already have appeared to some as being exaggerated and outdated and perhaps, as we explained earlier, as coming from someone who belonged to an incomprehensible and hardly admissible class.

This was, it seems to us, a total misunderstanding of the depth of this remarkable character. For, from her writings as well as from her life, one senses that Lucy Goodenough had in her depth something like a sacred depot of that which is the most precious of the past: that which one can call the ideal of chivalry: an ideal of rigour, of impeccable morals, with a sense of constancy going as far as sacrifice. And she showed subsequently that she never considered her nobility as entitling her to whatever benefit or privilege. In brief, one can imagine that this young woman embodied this ideal of chivalry. She also inherited, it has to be said, a certain germanic stiffness in addition to her British reserve, and this combination did not make her very approachable.

However, she herself could laugh at this stiffness. One day in a restaurant in Italy she heard one waiter say to another: "That one, she's a real old stick of bamboo", not knowing that Lucy Goodenough was fluent in Italian. Long afterwards she smilingly told Feizi this story.

~o~

Murshid must have recognised and appreciated Lucy Goodenough's spirit of chivalry. In his Biography, chapter "East and West", he says:

"The country which is commercially developed is alone considered to be civilized. Moral or spiritual progress has no recognized standard. The chivalry of the knights is now a story of the past, personality is not seen as important, but authority is. I was very amused once to hear a so-called democrat commit himself to the opinion that; 'It is the moneyed people who must have the charge of money, for only they know how to make us of it to its best advantage'".

For someone come to introduce and establish very different ideas into the collective consciousness of the West, it must have been a remarkable relief to find a soul of whom he could say that "in her he found his own point of view".

~o~

Feizi van der Scheer gives us a last character trait of Murshida Sharifa:

"She told me once that she never liked her first name Lucy, and as for the name Goodenough, when Murshid was asked who was his best pupil he replied: "That mureed who is good enough, and yet not too good"".

Murshid sometimes couched things with a certain sense of humour...

~o~

2. Murshid's disciple and her Sufi training (1915–1926)

It is time to turn to Lucy Goodenough's life after her meeting with her Murshid.

This meeting took place in 1915, in the middle of the World War, probably in London. The exact circumstances are not known. But it appears that Lucy Goodenough found in Sufism, as offered by Hazrat Inayat Khan, that to which she aspired in the deepest of her being, so much so that, almost instantaneously, she devoted her entire being to it.

But to follow "*a man of colour*" was to show too much independence of spirit for a young lady belonging to the high British aristocracy in the post-Victorian era. Her family reacted by disowning her, even removing her name from the family tree, which clearly meant that she was excluded. (Her name was reinstated much later, when the descendants of her family came to understand the nature of her action and the nobility of the life of their great-aunt Lucy Goodenough – for which they are to be commended.)

She herself never spoke of any personal difficulties she had in her outer life, nor of the services she was able to render to the cause to which she devoted herself. She never confided in anyone, verbally or in writing, about the experiences in the course of her Sufi training under the guidance of Murshid Inayat Khan. So much so that we would be faced with a blank about this period of her life were it not for three invaluable sources of information: that which Hazrat Inayat Khan wrote about her in his *Biography*, the letters of instruction she received from him, and finally the notebook in which she wrote down her dreams, annotated by Murshid. It is these three sources, in addition to some recollections of pupils of Murshid who were close to her, which enable us to form some idea of her life during this period.

~o~

We read in the Biography of Hazrat Inayat Khan:

"During the war, when my musical activities were suspended, patience was the only means of sustenance for me and my family. Yet a smiling welcome was always offered to friends at our table.

"In our very worst times I had with me Miss Goodenough's unassuming help and sympathy. She shared with me her loaf, and she shielded me from the hard and soft blows, coming from both my friends and foes; thus, proving to be a friend in need."

Personal account. p 180

Here follow three extracts from addresses Pir-o-Murshid gave to his followers on the occasion of his birthday celebrations (*Viladat Day*):

Viladat-Day 1924 – *“Now I have to thank most heartedly Murshida Goodenough, a friend in need, a mureed, who has from the first day of her coming to the Order up till now, proved to be as faithful as she is, as words cannot explain – that such friends can exist in the world whom you can trust as I do Murshida Goodenough.”*

Vilalat-Day 1925 - *“All those of us who know something of the history of the Sufi Movement know– if not as well as myself – the most valuable service rendered to the Cause by Murshida Goodenough in recording all the teachings without altering a jot or tittle. They will value most of all afterwards the Message as it is preserved by Murshida in its original form. Murshida has proved to us, and will always prove, to be the faithful trustee.”*

Viladat-Day 1926 – *“And when I think of Murshida Goodenough, how – from the beginning of the Message, when it began to come out in the world – how firm and steadily she has stood in the struggle, words are inadequate to express the gratitude that my heart feels for the help Murshida gave when there were very few by my side. And we shall always appreciate, generation after generation, the work Murshida has done in collecting the teachings and keeping them for posterity.”*

~o~

This praise takes its meaning from the great difficulties Murshid Inayat Khan encountered in the spreading of the Sufi Message in the West. He found these difficulties not only in the outer world, but also, unfortunately, among his own followers. He speaks of this in his *Biography*:

“In my long-life work in the West I found that in the West there are no disciples; there are masters...”

“Most of my life has been spent to prepare those who were attracted to the inner teachings, to grasp the idea of what is called 'Guru-Shishya Bhau' (11) which means the relation between the spiritual teacher and the pupil. And I found that where an Eastern teacher began, that was the end that I was to arrive at in the training of my pupils...”

And further on the Master, speaks of his external difficulties and the type of support received from his disciples:

“It has been my lot, especially in the beginning of my work, that I had to build the whole building with unaccommodating vessels and broken tools.”

Personal account

And further:

“Among some of my man-collaborators I saw a spirit of slight contempt towards the woman-workers, as man has always thought that woman is superfluous or too tender, too much devotional and unintelligent; and they have always sought for a man’s collaboration in the work. Nevertheless, however much qualified men proved to be in the work, the valuable service that women have rendered to the Cause has been incomparably greater. The way how some of them have worked unceasingly with sincere devotion and firm faith, has been a marvel to me. If it was not for some women as my collaborators in the Cause, the Sufi Movement would never have been formed.”

Autobiography

~o~

The photos and accounts of those who knew her during this period show Murshida Sharifa as withdrawn into her inner self, maintaining only those contacts absolutely necessary for the work which her Murshid entrusted to her and in which she so to speak absorbed herself. There is a striking picture of this in Theo van Hoorn’s (12) word portrait of her as he observed her in Suresnes:

“... after the talk in the Lecture Hall is finished, my attention is momentarily diverted during the answering of written questions by the horn of a car that disturbs the silence, so that I miss the question. As I look around me, I suddenly discover Murshida Goodenough on the corner of the first row. She has been completely hidden from my view thus far by the massive form of Auntie Kjoesterud, the National representative (13) of Norway.

“Murshida Goodenough sits almost without moving, totally absorbed by the taking of her shorthand notes, which she repeatedly improves and amplifies upon, so that not one of Murshid’s words remains unrecorded. Totally oblivious to all that goes on around her, she bends over with intense concentration, writing in shorthand and concurrently listening, reflecting a world of dedication.

“Intrigued, I continue to observe her. Suresnes brings out the extreme in every creature and here, again, is a figure of a kind that Balzac described in detail in his novels. It is only later that I had to become fully aware of the fierceness of her dedication to Murshid’s mission in the world, when I saw photocopies of Murshid’s letters to Murshida Goodenough. Even without seeing these, however, I can’t doubt the rare degree of discipleship that she embodies.

“A highly unusual question, which Murshid reads from a letter with some emphasis, brings me back to the proceedings. For reasons that we can’t fathom, someone has asked what a mureed might be able to achieve if, having opened up to a higher inspiration, he at last reaches complete contemplation through meditation. After Murshid has read this question and seems to be seriously reflecting for an instant, a deep silence settles over the room. Who has asked this question and does it applies to the one who asked it? Or does this mureed have someone else in mind, someone who captured his or her interest? And could there be someone in our midst to whom this is, in fact, to some degree applicable?”

“After Murshid has once more read out the question slowly and attentively, there follow a few simple words that embrace the world: ‘Then the mureed becomes the Master’. Is it my imagination? Does Murshid, while uttering these words, let his glance linger for a fraction of a second on that quiet, immobile figure, who, profoundly stooped, concentrates exclusively on her notes, oblivious of the recognition that had come her way? None of the others present have as much right to it as Murshida Goodenough, with her total mastery in all the activities that she set out to perform in Sufism.”

~o~

Murshida Sharifa’s tasks (and I speak only of her outer tasks) in the incipient Sufi Movement were indeed divers: from taking down rapidly and afterwards making her notes clear for most of Murshid’s lectures during his time at Suresnes, to discussing matters of organisation with the Master, and supervising certain works in progress.

Wazir van Essen (14) writes:

“I saw her for the first time in early June 1925. Murshid, who was seriously ill, had just returned from England. “Murshida was in the basement of Fazal Manzil (15), in whispered conversation with Sakina (Nekhbaht) and Kismet (who together with Sharifa acted as Murshid’s secretaries) It was clear that Murshida was leading the conversation. What struck me most on this occasion was her aristocratic appearance and her dignified and assured attitude.”

In parenthesis: among the two persons named above: Kismet Stam and Sakina (later Nekbakht) Furnee (we had the honour of knowing both of them, but especially Sakina who became a friend), Kismet was a very strong personality, one can even say a dominating personality. Relations with Murshida Sharifa could not have been easy...

Wazir continues:

“In subsequent years I often had the opportunity to speak to her briefly about matters concerning the Summer School (16). What always struck me was her willing, though reserved, attitude, and especially her unfailing loyalty to that which she thought Murshid would wish.

“During a visit to Murshid from a Sheikh from Tunis one Sunday afternoon, Murshid asked Murshida to translate into French his lecture on the Sufi Message for the Sheikh and his followers. This became a spontaneous demonstration of Tassawuri Murshid (17): Murshid spoke freely, and Murshida translated, wholly undemonstrative but accurately, without looking up, totally absorbed in her task, and above all reflecting the spirit of the lecturer.”

~o~

Murshid's correspondence with Murshida Sharifa

The few and precious photocopies we have of handwritten letters by Murshid Inayat Khan to Murshida Sharifa show, as if that were necessary, the predominant and yet very discreet role which Sharifa Goodenough played in the incipient Sufi Movement, as well as the absolute confidence which the Master had in her. And this correspondence reminds us – once more – of the type of difficulties which Murshid Inayat Khan incessantly came up against.

From Murshid to Sharifa Goodenough:

Polygon House Southampton, 7th January (year unknown)

My dear and trusted Khalifa,

I am writing to tell you that I am in England just now and expecting you to be in Geneva by now. I hope you will soon be able to go to Geneva if you are not there by now. You do not need to take classes if you did not care to do it because Mrs. Van Sautter (18) is a strong personality and she can manage to combat different natures some easy some difficult, perhaps you will divide some work between and Mrs. Van Sautter, you being a recognized authority on the subject.

~o~

Berlin, 18th October 24

My most beloved and trusted Murshida,

In Munich it went well although it could have been better, a group has been formed and given in charge of Mrs. Hoeber. In Berlin I commenced last evening before the University English speaking students, and it went well, now it is to be seen how it goes on. Baroness d'Eichtal (19) seems to escape from Summer school committee don't let her do so. Murshida Green (20) stayed at her house. She seems now inclined to do all work herself in Paris let her do as she likes and without her notice let all fall in your hands as it comes.

With everlasting love and blessing,

Murshid

~o~

Fazal Manzil, 22nd October 1924

My blessed and trusted Murshida

I was glad indeed to hear from you. Today I speak before a very large audience in Berlin. I am afraid this will cost us too much as we already have a great financial loss, officially in Germany we cannot expect differently. I am glad Baroness d'Eichtal wants you to speak. I beg you to take every chance possible to get the reins of the Society there in hand especially in regard to the spiritual work and let every other consideration go for the time. You will do so for my sake. The opportunity that is lost is lost. She has many to influence her against, so it is just as well we influence her as she is subject to influence.

Hoping you are well in every way,

Murshid

~o~

Then, there is this very moving letter – one of the last – that was sent to Murshida Sharifa during Murshid's stay in India, where he died within three months.

29 Nov. 1926
 c/o General Post Office
 Baroda

My blessed Murshida

Last week I did not hear from you. I expect to hear from you every week. The physician has given me one week severe treatment. So, I am all this week at home. Please send the M.S.S (the manuscripts) to the above address about the papers given on Psychology, Philosophy and Mysticism. I am invited by the University of Delhi to give six lectures. It is nice but it (one word illegible) I cannot have the quiet which is my greatest need just now. Ahsamul Huk, our representative here, has long ears, what do you think of that? (He is a nice man with a buffalo's mentality –Murshid added with a touch of humour in another letter) Please write to me all about yourself. I wish you every success in Austria.

With much love and many blessings,

Murshid

~o~

We come now to what is perhaps most characteristic in the connection between Sufi master and disciple (especially when the master belongs to the Chishti School (21), as was the case of Murshid Inayat Khan). First a brief few words about the character of this training. It favours the acquisition and development of human qualities in the disciple rather than soliciting in him the emergence of occult aspects. This training includes inculcating respect for what one may call natural harmony, in a similar way to a father showing concern for a willing child, rather than taking recourse to distressing trials and successive austerities, as is done in some other Schools, be they Sufi or Hindu.

Nonetheless it is a case of a common ascent of master and disciple towards the highest summit of human life, and that, as in all climbs, entails perilous and arduous passages, as we will see. But this is the consequence of the process itself, and not of the master nor of the method he employs.

Let us now see how it was for Sharifa Goodenough.

~o~

“Bhau” or “Sadhana” (22), spiritual training under the direction of Murshid Inayat Khan

“The esoteric sufi training does not only consist of prescribing various meditations and undertaking studies of philosophy, but also to try and to test a pupil: his sincerity, his loyalty, his confidence, his courage, his intelligence, his patience; it consists in weighing and measuring his sense of justice, his reasoning faculty, and to sound the depths of his heart. ... The aim of the Sufi Order is to awaken in a soul the human qualities, to make of them a human being complete, perfected and accomplished.”

(retranslated into English from translation into French of Pir-o-Murshid’s words - original words could not be found)

~o~

At the risk of surprising some readers, I would say that what a disciple sees in his master, that which makes him a disciple and not just a listener or a pupil in the usual sense of the word, is that for the disciple, the spiritual master is much more than a master in the usual manner of speaking.

This is how Murshida Sharifa later explained this relationship to the general public:

“The position of the teacher, the work of the teacher may be regarded differently. A teacher may tell certain facts which the pupil will learn, and then the work is done. A teacher will give his experience or his knowledge – not as he had learned from a book, but from his life, and the pupil will assimilate as much as he can or will fit in with his own temperament or ideas. Or a teacher inspires his pupil, gives him something which cannot be expressed in words. Besides the facts he teaches or the knowledge he gives or his ideas, his views, his knowledge of life, he gives something that cannot be said in words. It is not that he influences or turns the mind of the pupil, but there is something which will always remain in his heart and his mind and which will make him the expression of the teacher – more even than the child is the expression of the mother and father.

“The teacher can be regarded as a living book or dictionary to give information; he may be regarded as long as the information is regarded by the pupil. Or perhaps the teacher is like an experienced friend, for instance in art; the pupil takes the teacher as one who gives a hand to help him on the chosen path. Or a teacher may have more importance; it may be a sacred work to teacher and pupil. The first thing taught in the East is to bow before the teacher. Sometimes now the opposite is taught: pupils are taught to keep their minds apart from what they are learning and to look critically upon what is taught to them.”

The Ocean Within – An Inspiring Teacher – p94

To a modern westerner, a man, even what one would call "a great man", is a person like all others, subject to all weaknesses, to all foibles, vulnerable to all the various temptations of existence. He sees in the world only that which he sees in himself. He is an individual locked into the limitations of his skin and for whom the only light which exists is that of the sun, of fire or of electricity. The modern westerner cannot imagine that there is a light which is at the same time intelligence and that by that light all that is on earth and in Heaven becomes as clear as an object in full sunlight, and so he does not believe it. It is the same down-to-earth vision which makes the injunction of Christ: "*Be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect*" sound like a flagrant impossibility to a Christian who is just simply pious, unless the words are interpreted in such a way so as to lose their primary meaning.

Now, if we take the life of *Murshida Sharifa Goodenough* as example, we see that a human being can attain a different dimension, one which may well be obvious to a mind devoid of preconceived images and not confused by ambient dullness and mediocrity.

The perfect illustration of this fact can be found in the early pages above, where two children (the authors) whose ideas were still unspoiled by any ideas of human pettiness, whose outlook had not yet been polluted by the trivial, small, down-to-earth side of our current humanity, spontaneously perceived that which this soul radiated beyond the appearance of merely the old lady who was before them.

This is what a disciple perceives, and this is what makes of him a true disciple, if he is sufficiently mature. This is what Lucy Goodenough perceived when she drew near to Hazrat Inayat.

~o~

One finds a reflection of this vision in what she later wrote, showing how she had experienced that which one received, that which one lived, in proximity to Hazrat Inayat. On 5 July 1929, two years after the death of the Master and on the occasion of the anniversary of his birth, she wrote:

"Our Murshid has always glorified his Murshid, but found few who have glorified him. The Messenger has sometimes quoted the words, 'The bringers of joy have always been the children of sorrow' – the children of sorrow, themselves happiness itself, bringing with them their own happiness, the happiness of the soul, yet formed by the sorrow in the midst of which they live. For the world cannot understand them, the world rises up against them on every side, opposing them, causing them pain. ...

"And so, he suffers and then rises above it all. He meets it with a smile; he is thankful under all circumstances. We read in the Gayan (23), 'Nothing can take away happiness from the man who has the right understanding of life'. He had this happiness more than any other, whose knowledge of life was so extensive, whose understanding deepened at every step he took. And this could be plainly understood by the way he spoke – how the distinctions and differences faded away in the light of unity, where at last there was no more

any dividing line separating man from God. It is a happiness beyond comparison. The Messenger saw, on looking at every being, his nature, his character, his merit, his strength, his weakness. He knew in a hall full of people, in the most crowded audience, the condition of each one, the state of his physical being, the condition of mind, his aspiration, the tendency of his soul. 'Happiness is his whose soul is disclosed and discloses to him the secret of every being and every object'. Happiness is his who has found his soul which is happiness itself, and who lives in his soul, who has probed the depth of life where there is only love and happiness. How should not happiness be his indeed who is the source of all beauty, the creator of harmony?

"The happiness of innocence is seen in one who, as an innocent child stands as a king in the midst of his representatives, free from them all, independent of them all: who, while giving does not seem to give; who, quite unconsciously it seems, heals and inspires, whose first impulse is to believe, to accept, to love. The innocence of Jesus has been known to the Sufis. This innocence is found in every Messenger of God.

"And then there is that which he (Pir-o-Murshid) has spoken but once: the consolation if he has brought the Message of God to some few souls, and if it has helped them in their lives. If all here will think of what their lives were, what they were before they met their Murshid, what they were after, they will agree with me, as someone said whose soul was bound to Murshid, that gratitude is too gross a word for what they feel.

"In the Vadan we read,

*'Thou moulded my mind and body
to make the clay kneaded to make a new universe'*

– the clay of a new universe, the substance of a new universe and the example of a new universe.

"Asia is full: of Buddhas, personalities moulded by the contemplation of that calm and peace, of that compassion. There will be more beauty in the world, more harmony, more love, the more mureeds, by their concentration, by their meditation, by their union with Murshid, will show in their lives a glimpse of that perfection which was here."

The Ocean Within – p112

Once again, this testimony may surprise the reader. Most of us seem to be unaware of all the splendour and all the beauty of life, and seem locked into a vision which is too poor, too down-to-earth, limited to that which our senses and our intellect can show us. And this changes the way we habitually look at our fellow creatures. Are we not all shaped from the same clay, subject to the same weaknesses and imperfections, the same psychological limits, morals? Are these not impossible to uproot, inescapable? This egalitarian outlook, which the majority of us have, veils to our eyes the fact that every human being is a unique specimen. And this is not just by the particular blend of the various faculties of intelligence, feeling, by the degree of emotion, of sensitivity, of knowledge, but above all that by the level of evolution: from animal

to angel, passing through the jinn stage, there are all the graduations in the great human family. But we have forgotten all this: such distinctions are not in the air in these times. That there are beings who, so to speak, transcend their human skin and reach a stage where they live in the divine consciousness and bear witness of this to others by their life and by their elevation, by the inspiration and happiness which they bring, such thoughts are scandalous in the context of the democratic conceptions of our era.

Nevertheless, the foregoing account of Murshida Goodenough is not an isolated one. We have known several direct disciples of Pir-o-Murshid who were able to say the same things. They met a unique being who uncovered for them an aspect of themselves and a vision of life they had till then never believed, or dared believe, existed, except in the beautiful legends and myths of the past. That this being was also proof that human existence could situate itself at a level so much superior to that of the generality, continues to dazzle them.

What is more, the nuances of this account are no different to those which come to us from the circle of very great mystics, for example Ramakrishna, who is today rightly or wrongly considered by many Hindus to be their last divine incarnation.

~o~

In any event, Sharifa Goodenough's connection with her spiritual master offers a perfect example of that essential phase in mystical ascension which is called "*fana-fi-sheikh*" by the Sufis—literally: "absorption in the personality of the master".

Of all the types of connection between human beings this one is unique and cannot be compared to any other. And as this connection completely explains the course of Murshida Sharifa's life and even her appearance and conduct, we will expand on it a little.

~o~

**The *fana-fi-sheikh* of the Sufis realised by Murshida Sharifa
and the results this had on her life and her personality.**

"Fana" is generally translated as "annihilation", which tends to give us, westerners that we are, shivers of horror. But this what she herself says about this:

"'Fana ', absorption, which is also translated as 'annihilation', is a word which frightens many. However, it is a natural process: we continually see it at work in our everyday life. Two beings who spend long years together end up looking like each other; or otherwise, the one starts to resemble the other. Sometimes after a number of years all the persons who live together in the same house take a similar expression. This resemblance stretches even to animals: the dog will have a family resemblance, the cat also... The process of absorption is an effect of concentration.

"We all know that a child which is exposed to happy influences when it finds itself in the presence of good beings, of noble character; we very well know that we will find the reflection of these personalities in the child if it has spent some time in their company.

"The process of absorption has two stages. In the first, the image on which we are concentrating is produced in us by the effect of the concentration. In the second phase, this image is reproduced not only in us, but through us, in the sense that our being begins to become that which is the object of our concentration, whatever it may be; whether our concentration is on a human being or on an ideal, the effect is the same.

"In the spiritual life, the path of 'Fana' leads straight to the goal. Though it means 'annihilation', it is a path which comes very naturally to the human being. It implies a sacrifice, but it is the most natural sacrifice that a human being can make, because any being that contemplates a beautiful object or personality, loses himself in it for the duration of the contemplation. And there is no greater happiness than that which results from the feeling of losing oneself in an object of beauty; it is a purification; it elevates and liberate some of many things."

"Fana, Absorption" in "Soufisme d'Occident"

Further on Murshida Sharifa gives a biblical explanation of the foregoing which further clarifies her thoughts on the subject.

When the disciple has perfected himself by the path of "*fana*" - she says, he finally reaches God. It's a process, a path ...

"which is described in the story of Ruth and Naomi which we find in the Bible. This story tells us that Naomi had gone to live in a country that was not her own. She had two married sons in this country. These sons both died. Naomi was left alone with her two daughters-in-law and she wished to return to her mother country. She told her daughters-in-law. The first said that she wished to stay with her people. But her daughter Ruth said to her: 'I will go with you to your country'. Naomi then told her that the travels would be long and difficult, that this new country would not be not her own, that she didn't know its language. Her daughter-in-law replied with the beautiful words which find in the Bible: 'Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God.' And, leaving behind all that was hers, her country, her parents, her family, she left with Naomi. After a long trip they arrived in the country of Naomi, Bethlehem, in the land of Canaan. It was the time of the harvest; Ruth had to glean. Naomi instructed her and showed her how to collect the fallen grains. Later, Ruth had to make a petition to the Lord of the area, Boaz; the custom of this time required that if a member of a family was left alone, it be adopted by the family of his or her leader, so that there would be a relationship between the adopted one and the head of the family. Naomi told her daughter-in-law this; and told her how to approach Boaz, how to frame her petition. And Ruth did as Naomi said, and was adopted into the family and united with Boaz.

"In this story, Naomi represents the Guru who has pupils and wishes to return to her spiritual country. One of her pupils does not have the courage to make this trip, remains attached to this world. The other wishes to accompany the Guru. When the latter arrived in his country, after many difficulties, he teaches his disciple how to harvest, how to gain the divine knowledge which is represented by the grains, and also teaches him what he must do to for the accomplishment of his goal. The disciple did what he was taught and found the country which is truly his: he is united with God."

Soufisme d'Occident - *Fana*, Absorption

Murshida Sharifa, as we have said above, never spoke directly of her own mystical experiences. But when it came to presenting a spiritual subject, it was perfectly clear to her listeners that she was speaking from her own experience.

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The journal of dreams

When someone with the vocation of following the path of mysticism is initiated by a master, it is common that he starts having dreams which have meaning for his path, in the immediate or in the future. These dreams rarely show things clearly. They are very generally symbolical. Their meaning may be obscure to the dreamer, but clear to his master, if he is a true master.

The journal in which Sharifa wrote down her dreams illustrates this perfectly. She started it in 1915, shortly after she had been initiated.

“They are very clear”, says Feizi van der Sheer, who had access to this journal after Murshida passed away, “and the imagery is often beautiful. Besides this, they give a good insight into her character. Often, she is travelling, sometimes by train, sometimes on horseback or in a carriage and then she is most anxious that the horses will not be overstrained or be injured. A small creature: a child, a cat or a small animal, often gives her the inclination to help it on in some way or other. She cares for others and often wishes to show them what she sees. This tendency to help, revealed through dreams is most remarkable and rarely to be found in an average person’s dreams. Sometimes she starts travelling with others but then goes her own way, a way which is often steep and slippery, but by following it she sees and experiences things that others don’t. Underneath some of the dreams Murshid makes his remarks, remarks which were surely fulfilled during her life. There are far too many dreams to write them down here, but I quote some of them:

“Saturday Sept. 4th. I dreamt that I was walking around a large reservoir. Suddenly I saw a very large black fish. It swam towards me and turned into a very large sea-lion. It also seemed to make for me, but stopped, and raised itself in the water on its tail. I thought how pleasant it was, in this old town that the people in the poor part of the town should have that piece of water, and something so interesting to look at.”

“Thursday Sep 16th. I dreamt that my bedroom was a room in which there were water-taps and people drew water. The bed was several yards high. Two or three bedsteads were stood on each other. It was very uncomfortable. There were two high windows and a great deal of light, and the room was white. An old gentleman came to draw water. I would not let him in. Then a woman walked straight in and began to draw water. She talked to me a great deal”. (Murshid’s comment: ‘You will be a fountain of inspiration for yourself and others whom you may choose’).”

“I dreamt that my sister, who had been ill, sat next to me and we were having a music lesson. She wore a pale-blue drapery. Someone else began to say that she and other people were learning too, but they were learning esoteric music. They said their way of learning was much the best. Murshid was teaching us. He asked the other people whether it was their wish to go on, in that way. They said it was. He said they might. But he taught us a different and simpler way and I was very glad. My sister began to quarrel with me. She said she would not share with me or stay with me. She would have a music lesson with me but the rest should be separate and she did not like me... I did not answer my sister at all, but, after a while, I got up, went round to where she was, and pretended that I would smack her. She was very much frightened and ran away. Soon she came back again, complaining of me”. (Murshid’s comment: “You will be specially trained in esoteric music and will experience great opposition and jealousy.”)

“Tuesday Oct. 18th, 1924. I dreamt that Murshid sat by the window, near a street which led to the sea. I sat opposite him. He said to me in French, 'this subject of indifference is very interesting. It is very deep'. I said, 'It is very deep'. I could not hear very well what he said. I said, 'Today I cannot hear very well and I cannot see very well'. Then I could hardly see Murshid, everything became dark, then light again, and then everything became quite black, and I fell from my chair. I little while I hung on the chair, then I fell to the ground and rolled over twice. I could not see nor hear, but I could feel that I was alive. In that condition I saw as in a dream, first: a man kneeling on a prayer rug spread on the ground and praying; a camel beside him. I saw his head against the full moon. Second: two men and a boy making a fire and preparing food in a pot, on a road in the white dust. Third: a seagull standing next to its nest, on a rock – in a very bright light. Fourth: a woman’s voice said: 'White socks! They used to wear them. My grandfather wore them. How I used to hate them!' I saw her grandfather, a thin old man, sitting on a bed, dressed in dark clothes and with white socks. 'And when I went to school', she continued, 'they were not school worthy'. Then I rolled over. I put out my hand in the direction I supposed Murshid to be. I thought then that if Murshid touched my hand I might be dead, as from an electric shock. I felt that I was breathing hard and that my mouth was moving. I thought, 'I am probably having a fit. The thing is to be very self-possessed. And I am quite calm'. I thought that Murshid would not allow anything very bad to happen to me'. – (Murshid’s comment: 'The dream of Murshid was the most wonderful revelation to you. Its interpretation please ask to-morrow').

“Saturday July 31st. I felt Murshid’s presence. in the night and that he knew my thoughts and words and feeling and sorrow and all.”

"Monday August 2nd. I thought I felt Murshid telling me what to do at every moment and approving and disapproving what I did and thought. I saw Murshid's face and heard his voice saying: 'All right'."

"August 3rd. I dreamt that I was waiting in my room, and Murshid came in. He was a woman. He said to me: 'Sit here on her knees'. When I came near, I was astonished to see how black her black dress was, and there was something white near her head. I laid my head against his heart, while he spoke to me. I did not hear his voice, but understood that I may always be close to him and know what he tells me. This created a security and peace about me as I never experienced before, that remained long afterwards, when I was awake."

There is also a little note-book in which Antoinette Schamhart (24) copied Pir-o-Murshid's annotations about some dreams (which have not been found). Here are a few of these annotations:

"a/ Have courage, illumination lies in suffering.

c/ You are tied to Murshid in all planes of existence.

g/ Your illusion will fall down before the reality of you soul.

i/ You cannot depend upon Murshid for your progress, but you must do it yourself too.

j/ You will go on in your spiritual journey regardless of surroundings and circumstances

l/ All, friends and belongings you will have to leave, before you enter the Kingdom of God.

n/ This shows that the bearer of God's Message for you is Inayat Khan.

p/ This shows that every person eats just like the animals eat grass, but wanted something better, which you got from the shop of God, which is, sweet devotion, the essence of all which is sweet and beautiful.

q/ Your difficulty in progress and help of Murshid, and then upliftment to the ideal goal."

We have transcribed some of these dreams in detail, with Murshid's remarks, because they illustrate the process of this "*fana-fi-shaikh*", this progressive absorption of the qualities of the master, and even the impregnation of the psyche of the disciple by the master, such as developed in the case of Murshida Sharifa.

If one was unaware of the realities of the inner life, one could call this an alienation of one person taken advantage of by another, a domination, or an abdication of the personality, or even a sort of loving obsession (the pupil on her knees before the master, placing her head on his heart). But all these interpretations would only address appearances and would, in a way, be victims of appearances: they would only see a caricature. For when interpreting dreams, one generally forgets the fact that each person is at a different level of evolution. This means that a particular image could mean a certain thing in the dream of one, and something very different in the dream of another, who is at a different stage of evolution.

Yet it is possible to outline the real meaning of these dreams, because we know much more about Murshida Sharifa than she herself knew when she had these dreams; things that she learned afterwards, as we shall see further on. We will not give an exhaustive interpretation of all these dreams, which might become tedious. We will just take as example the dream of 18 October 1924:

"I dreamt that Murshid sat by the window, near a street which led to the sea".

The path which leads to the sea is the spiritual path and the sea represents the infinite, independence itself. Indeed, when one is at sea one sees nothing on the whole horizon except sea. Furthermore, the sea depends on nothing, asks nothing. The whole cycle of terrestrial and atmospheric waters contributes to the sea, but the sea can also do without them. Infinitude and independence are two qualities which belong only to God, and not to man. Other qualities like for example leniency or kindness, can be reflected in man. But man could never be independent of all, and still less infinite, bound as he is by the limitation of the human condition.

"*Murshid sat by the window*" means the master who "could see through the window", in other words who is conscious of the inner life and the mystical path.

"This subject of indifference is very interesting. It is very deep". I said, 'It is very deep'. I could not hear very well what he said."

Oh! How this becomes clear to her, later, when she herself "realised" this indifference! But at the time she "*could not hear very well what he said*".

This is how she later explains this in "*The Ocean Within*":

"As a person advances through life, he finds more and more indifference coming to him. A child is interested in everything, he wants to look at all that comes before him, he wants to touch all he sees, he asks a question about each thing. But when the child is a little older an indifference comes and he is no longer interested in the toy that once attracted him so much. Then there comes a time in the life of man when indifference increases, when – he knows not why – he finds he is no longer interested in what held him before.

"Is this indifference a loss? It is no loss; it is the sign of maturity of the soul. It means that a person is rising above what once he was stretching his hand to gain.

*'Independence and indifference are the two wings that enable the soul to fly'
(Gayan).*

"Is interest less than indifference? The two together make life. 'The world was created by interest, and it is withdrawn by indifference', Hazrat Inayat has said. First a little movement, then interest in that motion, then more and more activity creating all things and beings in the universe. And then gradually interest ceases, the hold is given up, and life returns to its primal state which is peace, which is the last attainment.

"Interest produces joy, indifference creates peace, and in the alternation of interest and indifference life is passed.

The Ocean Within: Indifference

...

"As a person matures in his heart, grows older in his soul, his indifference grows. He is not unhappy, he is untroubled and he is at peace. On the other hand, when that which seems beautiful loses its beauty in the eyes of a person, when the fruit which up till then was delicious becomes bitter in his mouth, that is when affliction and disappointment come. But with indifference comes happiness – however, it is a happiness which one can barely distinguish from sadness. In the language of the East, one calls this indifference 'Vairagya'.

"A person to whom this indifference has come feels that his heart is alive, it has its full capacity, its whole life. Its strength is preserved, and is not spent indiscriminately. He feels that his heart blooms like a rose, not ornate in order to please: it blooms, happy of its beauty because its nature is beauty. His soul shines like a diamond, which does not sparkle to give light nor to attract: it shines because its nature is light. Such is the perfect state of indifference.

"Can indifference become absolute? Yes, one has the experience of absolute indifference in daily life, consciously or unconsciously. One has this experience in deep sleep; one has this experience in meditation. It is the primordial condition of life. As soon as there is movement, interest awakes and indifference is no longer absolute."

Lecture given in Paris

Then follow other parts of the dream, which are perhaps of lesser importance, but which put us in touch with something of the mystical experiences and the progress of a soul. We learn that the dreamer *fell off her chair, that she rolled over twice, that she could not see or hear, but could feel that she was alive.* There are many experiences, many phenomena on the spiritual path. These dreamlike experiences – for once only half symbolical, the other half being a rung of the ladder leading to the goal – these experiences signify leaving the material body: the chair. The dreamer, - her conscience – rolls over and returns, with difficulty, into her body.

This second part of the dream also shows that Murshida Sharifa was not a passive victim of what was happening to her; she masters herself and controls herself and she rolls over. *She puts out her hand in the direction of her Murshid, and she thinks that her "Murshid would not allow anything very bad to happen" to her.*

This calls for a remark: there are certainly those with a mediumistic nature, who may have this type of experience. But then, even if there is control, there is no protection by the greatest ideal there is: Truth. For a real disciple the master is someone who has touched the Truth, who has cloaked himself in the Truth. But this is beyond the reach, beyond even the possibility of the conception of someone who is not a true disciple. This is why occult experiences in themselves - even if they occur spontaneously - are a dangerous realm of experience for the equilibrium of the medium, who may no longer have the capacity to control himself and so may become the plaything of his occult experiences.

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It is not for fun that we offer these interpretations. Once more, they appear clearly because we know what followed in the evolution of Murshida Sharifa and we can make the connections, the comparisons. No, it is not a game, nor an intellectual curiosity. It is rather that the dreams as well as the visions of a mystic are always significant in his evolution and in his destiny, inner as well as outer: they are part of his development. Besides, many of mystic's dreams are more than dreams, and have greater meaning than those of an ordinary person. They are, as we have said, experiences in the more subtle planes. These planes are as real as the terrestrial plane, and in these experiences the mystic dives into the profound truth of his being, from which he does not return with empty hands, but rich in an intimate knowledge and in remarkable certitudes.

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The closeness of Murshida and Murshid

Feizi continues:

«Sharifa always had permission to see Murshid without appointment, and in the course of a distressing illness of Murshid, only she could visit him and he asked her to keep the others away. Many of them took this very badly and made lots of difficulties for her. One can further see the high esteem in which Murshid held her in this little event: one day she was at his home just after the birth of one of his children, and he placed the baby in her arms.

“During Samadhi (25), when Murshid saw some of the mureeds as resembling an animal, he did not see Murshida in this way.

“Sharifa took Persian lessons from Murshid as well as lessons in playing the vina. She felt a special link with Persia. ...

“In a book containing Persian characters and words I saw the meaning of her Sufi name: Sharifa = virtuous. I could have known this long before because she told me one day, but in speaking of the word virtuous, instead of saying ‘that is the meaning of my name’, she said: ‘that’s what I am’. I felt disconcerted that she could say such a thing about herself and I did not understand what she had meant.”

And Feizi adds, a little astonished it seems:

“There is no greater virtue in this world than proving kind and trustworthy to one's friend, worthy of his confidence. ‘The difference between the old soul and the young soul is to be found in this particular principle.’”

Murshid in Character-Building

And on Viladat Day 1925, he said of Murshida Sharifa: “Murshida has proved to us, and will always prove, to be the faithful trustee.”

Perhaps it is necessary to say something in parenthesis about the “Sufi names” which Murshid gave his pupils, a practice which continues to this day. Let us take note that this is not just an eastern custom. When a monk or a nun enter a Christian religious order, he or she is given a new first name, usually that of a saint from the past, to serve as role model or to give protection.

First of all, what is a name? It is that with which we identify. If, in a crowd, a station for example, you hear someone call your first name, you instinctively feel concerned and may even turn around to look. You don't stop to think that it may not be you who is being called, that it could be a namesake. Your first name and you are, at that moment, one and the same thing, and to hear it completely mobilises you.

Murshida Sharifa was very aware of this phenomenon of identifying with one's name. But rather than identifying with our name in our limited ego, as you and I would do, a real adept will have consciously meditated on the quality which his or her name invokes, and will have intimately absorbed this quality. This is why Lucy Goodenough was able not only to say but to think: "Sharifa, 'virtuous'", that is what I am". This would, in the case of just any old person, have been a laughable claim, but it was true in Murshida's case.

It was not her way to give detailed explanations: a word, a sentence from her, and then it was up to the pupil to receive and to reflect on this lesson, which did not always have a name.

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The "closeness of Murshida and Murshid" does not mean that there was never a cloud between them. Even between master and disciple there is no such thing as a cloud-free connection. We know of at least one instance where such a cloud momentarily obscured the harmony of their mutual connection, and this incident is interesting in more than one way. It is of interest because it shows an aspect of Murshida Sharifa's character; and also, because it concerns the private life of Murshid Inayat Khan himself, and shows how difficult this was. We know of this incident from Sakina (later called Nekbakht), one of Murshid's secretaries, who became, as we said earlier, our friend. In the course of the Summer School of 1925, she and her cousin Kismet Stam (another of Murshid's secretaries) saw Sharifa arrive in a terrible state, as it were beside herself. She had just encountered Murshid's anger; he whose pupils never saw him in this state. We repeat word for word what one of us heard from Sakina: "If you had asked for my head" – said Murshid with a terrible look – "I would have given it, but *this!*"

What was "*this!*" which had produced a complete change of attitude in Murshid whom one had always seen so composed, calm and benevolent? Sakina realised that it had to do with a recent banquet, organised by Sharifa, which had brought together Murshid, his wife Begum (26) and all the mureeds at the summer school. She had placed Murshid at the head of one table, surrounded by his murshidas. Begum was at the other table, at the head, but it was a secondary place, one which isolated and separated her from her husband. This may be justifiable from the point of view of protocol, but the effect was presumably disastrous. For Begum to be separated from Murshid, from whom she was already often apart because of the incessant travels of the Master to and from America and within Europe, must have been seen as an insult as well as a sign that she counted for less than these women who surrounded Murshid. It showed publicly that they were closer to him than she was. God knows the turmoil which must have followed; for, having come to know Begum subsequently, we know that she was certainly an admirable person, but hypersensitive and easily offended. For Murshid it meant that Sharifa had bluntly ignored the relationship which linked him to Begum. What is more, from an oriental point of view, which was that of Murshid towards Begum, this was a type of insult to the dignity of his wife, and so to also himself.

Be that as it may, at the time the cousins saw Sharifa arrive at their house in a state of extreme agitation, and she immediately began a rapid recitation of a whole part of Dante's Divine Comedy, in Italian. Then she finally sat down, relieved of a terrible tension, but exhausted, and told them of Murshid's anger which had brought about this strange agitation.

We chose to relate this incident not only because of its historical value. We need to understand that the shared path of master and disciple brings trials which affect them both. A Sufi master is not a lecturer on a stage, who does not need to worry about the state of mind of his listeners. He is rather a being whose heart is infinitely more sensitive than that of others, so that he is able to understand the language of each of the hearts he meets. More sensitive means more vulnerable. Nevertheless, his heart must be stronger than that of others; to be able to resist the blows he receives from all sides. The path which is travelled together is thus one of trials, as much for the master as for the disciple, and one may say that such trials are often endured mutually. For the pupil these are occasions of awareness which can lead to corrections. For the master, these are endurance tests, to which Murshid Inayat Khan only rarely referred. Still, the following passage reveals an aspect which applies specifically, we think, to the circumstances which we are considering here:

"It is difficult for a master whose perception keen, whose feelings are delicate, not be angry with a pupil who is inclined to make mistakes. But this would do the mureed no good, either spiritually or in ordinary life. The displeasure of the master can fall on a mureed as a malediction, and could crush him before the master even knew. Nevertheless, it is good that the mureeds be advised of the sensitivity of the master, (for it is natural that as much as the satisfaction of a master can be great, so his displeasure can be deep), so that the mureed may take care, and does not always depend on the compassion of the master, while continuing to make mistakes.

"The master must consider his own displeasure as his worst enemy, and must think that if this falls on his mureed, it is as if it had fallen on, he himself. And it is often irresistible to express a reaction that a mistake of the mureed may provoke."

Extract from a Collective Interview (27)

(retranslated into English from translation into French of Pir-o-Murshid's words - original words could not be found)

We think that quoting these lines does not detract from the memory of him whom we consider to be our own master. He was a liberated soul, yet he was also a human being, and not a stereotype image of an infallible and perfect idol in the eyes of the world.

And then he wrote in the Vadan (28), in the invocation to the Pir, the spiritual master: *"Beloved Teacher, thy very being is forgiveness."* That is how it was between Sharifa Goodenough and her Murshid. It suffices to refer to the gratitude subsequently expressed by the Master on the occasion of his birthday in 1926, and in his letters to her, which are quoted above.

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It is time to conclude this period, which was a preparation for the plunge into the “*Ocean Within*”

It is not without interest to know the impression Murshida Sharifa made among those with whom she mixed at that time. Theo van Hoorn traces the following word portrait:

“ Murshida Sharifa Goodenough, daughter of an English general, with her aristocratic reserve, was a complete contrast to Murshida Fazal Mai’s radiant charm. Her reserved attitude to life sometimes gave the impression that she was aware of no one and nothing in her surroundings. As a result, getting to know her was difficult; I never managed to approach her personally.

“However, those whom she accepted into her intimate circle always expressed their unreserved admiration and respect for the nobility of her character, her absolute devotion to her chosen ideal, and her infallible judgment.”

Theo van Hoorn, "Herinneringen aan Inayat Khan en het westerse Soefisme",
Chapter “Haras de Longchamps” p 37

Murshida Sharifa clearly appeared as someone who did not wish to socialise with the other members of the Sufi Movement, as someone who did not look for friendship. Few understood this. Few realised that they had to do with an ascetic temperament (the Hindus would have said that she was a “yogini”, a female yogi) and that her apparent unsociability was not so much that of an English aristocrat as that of a being profoundly engaged in the search of this “kingdom of God within us”, and for whom all the rest was only of secondary interest. It is true that she did not follow the same path as most of the Sufis. The difference is explained by Murshid Inayat Khan in the following passage:

“The way of the Yogi is to work in order to dive deep within himself and to pass through all the different planes which stand between himself and God, the self within. The way of the Sufi is the way of expansion. As he draws within himself he widens his outlook on life, so that by the time when at last he has touched the innermost of his being he has embraced almost all that is living.”.

Sacred Readings, The path of asceticism

“The attitude of the Yogi is to keep everyone at a distance. He will bless someone, but he will bless from a distance, and he will gently say: ‘Do not approach me’. It is not that he has an aversion to people, but he prefers to be left alone. The Sufi comes with open arms to welcome all who come, for in all personalities he sees the glow of the divine being. As a result he becomes all-encompassing. It is in this way that he broadens his point of view.”

(retranslated into English from translation into French of Pir-o-Murshid’s words - original words could not be found)

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But this was appearance only. In reality, underneath this fairly cold, seemingly indifferent exterior, a deep development was taking place. This development would later open up this ascetic, this “yogini”, to the world and to others, to welcome and guide with wisdom and compassion the various persons who surrounded her to the end, as we will see further on.

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The effect of *fana-fi-sheikh*

"*You are tied to Murshid in all planes of existence.*" What does this mean, if not that the lesson of "*fana-fi-sheikh*" had been learned? During the whole period beside her Master, Sharifa had profoundly transformed herself. She was, spiritually speaking, as a newly born soul who little by little experiences a new life. But one could say that while a new-born baby comes from happy spheres and arrives in a limited life which contrasts harshly with that to which its soul is accustomed, for the soul of the spiritual person it is the opposite. In this case the apprenticeship consists in leaving this outer world to enter into the higher, more subtle spheres where in the end happiness, light and love reign supreme.

~o~

Sharifa had not lost nor alienated her personality in favour of that of her master, which a misinterpretation of the term "*fana*" could be taken to mean. Her personality had been refined, cleaned of impurities, those of the densest ego, our "I-me", our egotistic self, which separates us so firmly from others. And then she added this dimension, the most essential that she inherited from her Murshid: the experience of her inner being, which is like the exploration of the highest rooms in a house. Most of us live only on our ground floor and only know this floor. Some even live in the darkness of their cellar. We do not know to what extent we are more vast, more noble, truer and happier than we imagine. And there was something else: the very same thing which attracted her to her master: this light which is not of this world, this Light of which St John says: "*It is the light of man*", and that to which the Koran alludes in the famous Sura XXIV where it is written that "*God is the Light of the heavens and of the earth*". All that exists on all planes is seen, experienced, known by this Light. In her closeness to Hazrat Inayat Khan, Sharifa Goodenough opened herself to this Light which is also the divine life.

But her main work still lay ahead, and the rest of her destiny in this world was still to unfold.

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3.

Departure of the Master and diving into "the *Ocean Within*" or The transformation

Now follows a passage from "The *Ocean Within*": it is an account of a lecture given by Murshida Sharifa. The date is uncertain and would have been between 1930 and 1932. As it is of the greatest importance, we have transcribed it in bold:

"Life has been compared by mystics to a sea, the ocean of being, on whose surface are the waves moving up and down, while the depth is still. We are the foam, the bubbles that appear on the surface. Rumi (29) says: 'He is the depth; we appear on the surface a moment and return to the depths'.

"In this ocean there are some who swim; they can manage their affairs in life. They are the master-swimmers who can swim with or against the tide. There are those, the masters, who walk upon the waves, and the mystics who dive into the depths, and from there they bring up precious pearls. ...

"... When the consciousness is drawn very deeply within, there is a blank. One says: 'I was lost', and the mind holds but a portion of what it has received there. Sa'di (30) says in the first page of the BUSTAN, the Rosegarden, that he and a friend were sitting together in a garden and Sa'di for some time became absorbed within. When he again looked at his friend, the friend said to him: 'Where have you been?' Sa'di replied: 'I have been in a beautiful garden'. His friend asked: 'And have you brought me nothing from there?' Sa'di replied: 'In truth I had thought to bring you all the roses I had plucked there, but as I was holding them in a fold of my garment, the fold slipped from my hand, the roses fell, and only these few that I could keep I have brought you'. These roses are the verses of the BUSTAN."

"Hazrat Inayat Khan says: 'Even men who, born and brought up on land, make a practice of swimming and diving deep into the sea and bringing up from there the pearl shells'. For this diving there is a process. The one who without the practice of any process would attempt to dive into the depths would be a very long time learning how to dive and would take a great personal risk. But with the practice of a process the diving becomes safe and easy. So it is with diving into the ocean of being, which is the natural inclination of the soul. This process may be followed by one who has the earnest desire to dive into the depth of life.

"This process is given by the mystic – not to those who are careless, not to those whose chief occupation is with the surface of life. It is given to those who are turning in their sleep, turning from the outer side of life to the inner."

These lines, written several years after the departure of her Murshid, indicate clearly the nature of the experience through which Murshida Sharifa was to go. While Hazrat Inayat was physically near he had guided her, supported her, trained her to plunge into the " *Ocean Within* ". Now she was left to her own devices, like a pupil is left by his instructor after a long accompaniment, because he must prove his own mastery. But the mastery in her case was far from the usual.

~o~

Wazir van Essen recounts:

"When the news of Murshid's passing reached Murshida she was in Vienna, where she continued the work for a short while. So, I do not know how she initially took the news, but I do know that shortly afterwards she wrote to Sirkar (31) that: 'She felt how the mureeds in their desolation often turned to Murshid, but: 'that the restless vibrations of this sphere should not be sent up'.

"Back in Paris from Vienna Murshida spent a time in seclusion, in the house at 7 Rue de la Paix in St Cloud. This was after she had spent a time in a sanatorium in Paris. At St Cloud she was looked after by a French domestic worker, Madame F, who greatly admired her. Madame F recounts that at times strange things happened in the little room where Murshida lived, and how for example heavy easy chairs flew through the air and then landed back in their place without being touched. There is no doubt that Murshida passed through a period of imbalance, from which she slowly recovered.

"During this period Murshida Rabia Martin from the United States tried to obtain the papers recording Murshid's words, which were in the care of Murshida Goodenough. She managed to get to see Murshida, who replied to her with a smile that 'everything had been arranged'. Murshida Martin then tried to procure a sleeping powder from the lady doctor in Paris who was treating Murshida, so as to obtain the documents from her in this way. But the doctor refused this every firmly, saying: 'She is excessively exhausted, but perfectly lucid'. So, while there were moments of strangeness, Murshida was 'perfectly lucid' when this was necessary.

"When she returned to Suresnes and was living at 32 Rue de la Tuilerie, I tried to visit her, but I was not admitted. Because there was no answer to my knocking, I walked up the stairs to slip a note under the door. The only response was another note saying 'nobody must come up'. Later I understood the reason for this, when the French resident in the house, Madame L, told me that Murshida had not (yet) regained control over certain bodily functions. A few days later I received an invitation to come and see her. The only recollection I have of this visit was her loving and extremely sensitive glance."

Later Murshida lived in the house of Margaret Skinner (32), where Feizi looked after her. Here Murshida rapidly regained her equilibrium.

The preceding passage is that which was seen from the outside. To summarise: she was a person who was “excessively exhausted”, who had lost her equilibrium – but was “perfectly lucid when this was necessary”. “At times strange things happened in the little room where Murshida lived, for example heavy easy chairs flew through the air and then landed back in their place without being touched”. A little later she “had not (yet) regained control over certain bodily functions”, but she “rapidly regained her equilibrium”. In truth, a strange and unsettling illness. But was it an illness?

There is in general a large lack of knowledge, even in the east but even more in the west, about certain phases of the mystical way. But whereas in the east no one discusses such things, in the west, when one finds oneself before unexplained phenomena, the tendency is to speak of hysterical phenomena –to explain what has happened and which is beyond current understanding as only appearing to be beyond that which one knows – and even the ecclesiastical authorities show reticence in this domain.

It is nevertheless not sacrilegious to try to understand, at our humble level, Murshida Sharifa’s trial.

We read in the apocryphal gospel of Thomas (33) (Edition Matanoia) in the second verse:

*“Jesus said,
Let him who seeks continue seeking
until he finds;
when he finds,
he will become troubled;
when he becomes troubled,
he will be amazed,
and he will rule over the All.”*

And we will also see what the Sufi tradition has to say on this and what the known phenomena of the Hindu yoga tradition are.

To return to the second verse, we read that “*when he finds, he will become troubled*”. But troubled how? When you take a pack of cards well packed by value and by colour, and you shuffle it, you so to speak trouble the order of the pack. In other words, you create disorder in the pack. But what upset, what disorder will be befall a being who “finds”, who has reached this critical point on the inner path?

We have already related the saying of Hazrat Inayat Khan that “*there is one single line which links man to God; the limited pole to the boundless pole*”. In this continuing ascension there must needs be a meeting point between humanity and divinity. The Sufis allude to this in what they call “*tajallî*”, a divine “glow” or “eruption” in a human being. The Hindus speak of the work of the divine “*Shakti*”, the divine Energy which penetrates into the adept to do its work of redemption.

This can happen more or less progressively; with one inner advance following another, like drops of water falling on the earth soften, penetrate and fertilise it.

But it can also be devastating. In Islam it is said that there was a moment in the life of the Prophet, when he meditated in the Cave of Hira, in the desert mountains, where the angel Gabriel, the Angel of Revelation, swooped down on him, and that he felt broken, destroyed. Terrorised, not understanding what had happened to him, he ran to take refuge with his wife Khadidja, who enveloped him in her garment. She comforted and reassured him. And with her remarkable and loving female intuition, she broadly understood the meaning of what had happened and she strengthened the Prophet in his mission.

Now, what is it that is troubled in him or in her who have this experience? To start: his or her own reality. All of us, in our normal human condition, think of ourselves as a compact whole, an inalienable individual: there is "me", and there is "all that is not me", that is things, beings, nature, other people with their awareness and their spirit. In the course of this experience this good order of things vacillates, or rather is troubled, overturned. There is no longer in this "me" an aggregate which can be dispersed, momentarily held together by our sense of ego. Nothing is certain, nothing is definite any longer, except the Consciousness, which stands as an immobile witness looking at all this from on high, or from afar. Nonetheless, the consciousness sees, observes one more thing. It finds itself linked to all, to all which is on earth, and to all which is in the heavens. There is no longer any separation. In other words, the consciousness is free, the weight and the limitation of individuality have disappeared. That is the state through which some mystics who speak of it have passed.

With this mechanism explained, the experience becomes comprehensible to our intellect which always so avidly wants to "understand" and to satisfy itself of the good order of its ideas. But the actual experience of the living reality, which is the domain of the mystic, is completely different. This is why it is useful to listen to a more authoritative voice, which gives another aspect to what we have just said and which resonates at a different level of profoundness. It is the voice of the great Sufi master of ancient times, *Najm ad-Din Kubra* (34):

"The realisation which (mystical) science has attained through these events (recounted above) is that the sacrosanct spirit is a subtle celestial vehicle. When this overwhelms by the force of its visionary concentration, it attains heaven in the sense that heaven plunges into it. And then, heaven and spirit are one and the same. This spirit does not cease to fly, to grow, until it acquires a nobility superior to that of heaven. Then the mystic is outside of himself".

This is how the last verse of the gospel quoted above is realised:

"and he will rule over the All".

Then comes a moment when the sense of ego and the consciousness which accompanies it are also perceived as being labile, erasable. But then, what is left? In a way the adept finds himself before his own annihilation, his own Destruction, with a capital D.

Hazrat Inayat Khan, in the play "Una", dramatised this event under the veil of symbolism. Una, an artist, sculpted a statue so beautiful that she says to herself: "It is not possible, it is not I who created this statue, which has no equal. Oh, if this creation could live, could speak to me".

At this point the statue comes to life and proposes an exchange: Una's life for his own. Una accepts and the statue gives her a cup of poison to drink. Una falls down dead. The statue, now living, lifts her up, restores life to her and says:

"Thou hast gone through death, but hast not died. The sacrifice thou madest did not after all rob thee of thy life. It has only raised thee above death. Now thou art living with my life. It is thy love which has given thee the life after death, a life to live for ever".

And Una answers with these words, which are also found in the first Raga of the Gayan:

*"Thy life hath illuminated the dark chambers of my mind.
Thy love is rooted in the depth of my heart.
Thine own eyes are the light of my soul.
Thy power worketh behind my action.
Thy peace alone is my life's repose.
Thy will is behind my every impulse.
Thy voice is audible in the words I speak,
Thine own image is my countenance.
My body is but a cover over thy soul.
My life is thy very breath, beloved,
and my self is thine own being".*

~o~

There is still another aspect to consider. To try to give an idea of the whole manifestation of the inner life is like trying to have a good look at a statue: it must be looked at from various angles, a two-dimensional photo would not show it like it is.

We may say that that which Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan called the mysticism of sound can help us understand a little more of the unusual events in Sharifa Goodenough's life at this crucial moment in her experience. We know from her dreams that she had been *especially trained in "esoteric music"*; what does this mean?

In the Sufi tradition there is the knowledge of *Saut-e-Sarmad*, the sound of the abstract, the sound which resonates in the depth of all things and all beings. To the extent that a being listens to this sound and concentrates on it, it invades the entire being, penetrating each cell of the body. This sound is not just a sound, it possesses an energy, a life one would call transcendental, a life above the life we know. This subtle life is extraordinarily penetrating. Its action activates the subtle centres which remain asleep in our normal human condition. These centres, confirms Hazrat Inayat, have so to speak two sides. One side is exterior and works to regulate the circulation of the breath, of prana, in the whole organism, and so act on the physiology of the body. Their subtle "inner" side brings the consciousness in touch with the entire cosmos on all its planes, in all its modes of reality. Among other things, some of these centres are known to produce results which seem to defy the natural laws. On this latter point there are plenty of examples, including those of western mystics.

For example, there was Therese Neumann who passed years without drink or food, there are all those who received Christ's stigmata (and there are many in the history of Christianity). But this has nothing to do with individuals who could or who can develop what one calls "powers"! These powers do not give authentic proof of spiritual development. If they are a development, it is without equilibrium. Their counter-part is the intimate union of the consciousness with the divine.

We read in the *Mysticism of sound*:

"The more a Sufi listens to Saut-e-Sarmad, the sound of the abstract, the more his consciousness becomes free from all the limitations of life. The soul floats above the physical and mental plane without any special effort on man's part, which shows its calm and peaceful state; a dreamy look comes into his eyes and his countenance becomes radiant; he experiences the unearthly joy and rapture of Wajad or ecstasy. When ecstasy overwhelms him he is neither conscious of the physical existence nor of the mental. ... His mind is purified from sin, his body from all impurities, and a pathway is opened for him towards the world unseen. He begins to receive inspirations, intuitions, impressions and revelations without the least effort on his part. He is no longer dependent upon a book or a teacher, for divine wisdom - the light of his soul, the Holy Spirit - begins to shine upon him."

~o~

This divine eruption can come as a torrent, or in a more gradual way and it is important to bear this in mind when picturing the path taken by a mystic. And then of course the development of each mystic is unique - there is no standard development. In any case it seems that in the case of Murshida Sharifa this crucial experience occurred at this precise moment in her life, and that it caused an intense though temporary upheaval. We do not know exactly what she went through, as until the last she retained an exemplary discretion about her experiences. But we can be certain that after this experience she reached a very high degree of spirituality. What the co-authors of this work have experienced since their childhood and subsequently, as well as various events witnessed by others as we will see below, could only have been the work of a major spiritual personality and a being who knew and lived the divine life.

We ourselves have not directly witnessed nor been confided in about this period of upheaval in Murshida Sharifa's life. But we know what Murshida had become when she returned to her life in the world as a changed person. Let us once more turn to Feizi, who quotes Pir-o-Murshid and summarises the process in this way:

"Among those whom we consider as having lost the faculty of logical reasoning, there are many whose balance has been upset, and yet they are right to say that they see something. Their imbalance does not lie in this but in the rapture between the world outside and the world within them...."

It is the aim of the mystic always to maintain his balance in the experiences which he undergoes. When he has succeeded in realising existence and life at their deepest levels, and at the same time remains conscious of external life, he has attained the true wisdom."

And Feizi adds; *"It is that wisdom she attained."*

~o~

The foregoing considerations are lengthy but we think they help in understanding the trial through which Murshida passed. It must be remembered that she endured this alone; her Murshid was not at her side to support and advise her. She needed great courage and an unflinching discipline to regain her equilibrium and all her bodily functions, so as to be able to once more brave the exterior world. For during such a phase, the existence of the physical world is perceived as being painful. But Murshida was lacking in neither strength of soul nor in courage.

~o~

The life of Murshida Sharifa after this great experience, by a witness

To get some idea of this period of Murshida Sharifa's life we have the precious manuscript written by Feizi van der Scheer in 1955, just a few years before her death.

"It was during the Summer School of 1929 – when she was still in seclusion – that I was told Murshida needed some help a few hours a day. When I went to see her, I was very much impressed by her personality. It is true that in 1926 I had seen Murshida Goodenough and also heard a lecture of hers, but then my mind was quite focussed on Murshid. What I remembered from her lecture was her voice and especially the way in which said: 'And yet...' "

Elsewhere, Feizi wrote this:

"All those who met Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan and became his mureeds will always consider this meeting as the greatest privilege of their lives. How can one explain the feeling of upliftment one experienced in his presence? With him faith came easily, even for those who, like me, were brought up in an intellectual and sceptical milieu. When Murshid had left this earth, things became more difficult. A question arose in my mind: can a westerner be intellectual and mystic at the same time? Certainly, Murshid reunited in himself the East and the West, but that was Murshid; he can be compared to no other. It was in Murshida Sharifa that I found the answer: 'yes, it is possible'. ...

"My spirit tended to be critical and I was not an easy pupil for Murshida. I tested her, always, comparing her actions with what I had understood of the Message of Pir-o-Murshid. I could not follow her blindly. And during the years that it was my great privilege to live beside her, I saw the extent to which her only thought when faced with any difficulty was: 'how would Murshid have wished me to act, how can I best serve the Message?'. I saw that she was not content with reflecting the Message in its verbal purity, but that she lived the Message.

"I understood that she oriented towards Murshid all who came to seek her help and her guidance.

"There was in her a great pride: 'Blessed are the proud in God, for they will inherit the kingdom of heaven' - says the Gayan. And this pride went alongside the greatest humility. One day, when speaking of the Sufi poets of the past Murshida said to me: 'I feel as dust at their feet'. And yet if anyone understood them and followed their path, it was she.

"When I came to Murshida Sharifa, two years after the death of the Master, I felt myself in the presence of someone who lived much more in another world than in this one. Murshida only gradually returned to this plane of existence. It was for her the greatest sacrifice, but this sacrifice was necessary for the Message.

"Even for me Murshida's return to the world seemed a loss. The preceding period had been so beautiful! Yet how did the world accept her sacrifice? How few understood."

During the summer of 1929 Murshida received a few mureeds. She was then living in a room in the Rue de l'Hippodrome (in Suresnes). The following year she received more mureeds and started giving lectures in the Hall. In November 1929 she moved to a house near the Sufi field. Let us return to Feizi's manuscript:

"There are very few people I think, and perhaps there is no-one, who can quite imagine the sacrifice Murshida made by this return to the world. I found a scrap of paper on which she had written; 'March 1st, 1929. I had a vision in which Pir-o-Murshid made a sign to me to go on with the work I was doing...'

"To work for Murshid and the Message was her only aim in life. She also once said; 'When a person by his love becomes absorbed in his ideal, it is never cut out of his mind, but in everything he does, it is before him'. And indeed, so it was with her.

"Sensitive by nature she had become still more so by this seclusion. To receive letters, often I think, was felt by her as a burden, to her it meant a call of the outer world which she had to answer. Once it struck me so much when during a lecture, she said that the eyes of grown-up people are always hurting, not the eyes of a child. When - later on – she went again to Paris to give lectures, she often crossed the street by another way that was indicated; probably because she felt the unpleasant influence of some places.

"It was only gradually that Murshida returned to the life of this world. The first winter after she has moved, I slept in the Mureeds' House (35) and was only with her by day. She then got very ill, so ill and weak that she could not even stand on her feet, but she was so independent that she would rather creep on hands and feet to fetch what she wanted, than ask my help. However, once while taking a bath, she had to stay in it for hours, because she was alone in the house and could not get out. After this I was allowed to help her.

"Murshid tells how the light of the soul when active, beams through the eyes, through the radiance of the countenance, even through the pores of the skin; and once, when she was taking a bath, it struck me how shining her skin was, so shining that the idea of a golden idol all of a sudden flashed through my mind.

"In the beginning, Murshida was much more aloof than later on. I had been with her for over a year, when I saw her smile for the first time".

~o~

4.

The trial and the sacrifice

It is clear that Murshida Sharifa came out of this period a changed person. Her mantle of the ascetic, of apparent indifference, now manifested human warmth, and her sympathy filtered through. A little phrase of Wazir's quoted above - which one could easily read over - is significant in its simplicity: *"A few days later I received an invitation to come and see her. The only recollection I have of this visit was her loving and extremely sensitive glance."* Up to that point who in the Sufi Movement who had met Murshida Sharifa spoke of her feeling and her affection? No doubt these sentiments existed in her, but they remained distant, inaccessible to others because of the extent to which she concentrated on her Murshid and on her work for the Sufi Movement, and the extent to which her meditation was focussed on the depth of the Being.

She had changed; she was now open to the outer world. But one may reflect that, because the objective of her evolution had not yet been fully attained, a last and hard climb awaited her.

The Trial

"The only way to live in the midst of inharmonious influences is to strengthen the will power and endure all things, yet keeping fineness of character and nobility of manner, together with an everlasting heart full of love."

Inayat Khan, Bowl of Saki - thought for 13 September

One sometimes wonders why nearly all spiritual beings have to suffer so much hereon earth. One sometimes imagines that their spirituality should enable them to become almost insensitive to pain, or to rise above pain by taking refuge in the world within. (There are some examples of this, but they are limited and momentary.) In order to justify the trials endured by those who follow the path of Truth, some say that their suffering is "the will of God" - which leads others to say that in this case God must be a torturer, or else that He is powerless to protect those who serve and love Him. But Hazrat Inayat Khan sees it differently: *"God", says he, "wishes for man that which man desires for himself"*. So the question is: what does a soul desire the most? The answer is not always the one expected by our superficial spirit ...

Let us search for other reasons for these trials, for the question is worthwhile, and the reasons are interwoven.

~o~

The universe (to which our sub-lunar world belongs), has its physical and psychic laws. Hazrat Inayat tells us that these are part of its automatic functioning. One of the laws of the animal world of our terrestrial life is that that which is perceived as strange to the group is eliminated. One could feel indignant at the view that the expression "animal kingdom" is seen to include to us humans. But how often do we react as animals rather than as human beings? And the most surprising thing is that we are quite unaware of doing so.

Our human society, like the animal world, has generally tried to reduce to silence those individuals who were too much out of tune with the average (be it in the case of spirituality or of saintliness). Furthermore, our human ego takes offence, is jealous of anyone who seems to it to be too superior; it seems to our ego that such a being puts it in the shade. Often, in addition, spiritual personalities may raise their voice in order to shake up conformity and to awaken conformist souls who are asleep in the comfort of their own good conscience. Without mentioning Christ, how many Christian saints, and in Islam, how many Sufis, had this harsh experience? However, this is only the outer aspect of things.

There is another reason for these trials, which has to do with the necessity of the witnessing of the Spirit, without which, according to the evangelical wisdom, our humanity "would lose its salt". The work of a spiritual being is to bear witness, to remind man by his own example, his own vocation, of the very real call of the Spirit. Without this vocation all civilization would degenerate and die out. So, if the spiritual beings remain in retreat, unknown and silent, they will no doubt reach a very high state, but where would the echo of this be? How would it benefit society? Even outside religion there exists a spiritual functioning of which our current world seems to be terrifyingly unconscious.

To do their work, those who live the divine life must leave their retreat and pay the price for doing so.

And then there is a further aspect. As iron must be heated until it glows and then tempered in order to acquire its strength, or as the dye must work into a fabric for it to endure the aggression of its surroundings, so a spiritual person must be hardened to the trials of the world, must be hardened against the "*inharmonious influences*" mentioned in the saying quoted at the beginning of this section. But why? So that the virtues of souls, which are proof to others of what these souls have attained, may become stable and solid. Without this process these virtues would have remained hidden and vulnerable. Among these virtues there is the courage and the endurance without which it would be impossible for them to fulfill the mission, big or small, which they are destined to fulfill for the good of the world.

There is a final aspect. A saying of Inayat Khan reads that "*the bringers of joy have always been the children of sorrow*". Joy must be theirs, so as to enable them to bring it to others. This joy is at the same time uplifting, consoling, understanding. This joy of the soul comes as a sort of reaction to an inner suffering lived in resignation to a Will on high, lived in the consciousness of God, God who by whichever name we use is the supreme Being. All, absolutely all, has its origin in the perspective of this Being.

Thus, to be able to help others towards inner joy, Murshida Sharifa had to pass through this painful trial.

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If we have dealt with the foregoing at length, it is because a drama, whatever it be, has causes which lie much deeper than the apparent "responsibility" of this or that protagonist. Responsibility, the notion of fault or virtue, is linked to the free will which we experience in an immediate, pragmatic way, valid for individual and practical life. As soon as one looks at things from higher up, there is only the immense field of cause and effect, interlinked and stretching out to infinity.

We are saying that the trial of Murshida Sharifa was necessary, that it was the tempering of her courage and of her spiritual integrity.

The theatre of her trial was the Sufi Movement, and the motif was the succession of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan. It is time to set up the decor and relate the prologue.

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The prologue is an imbroglio.

A few years before his departure to India, and his death in February 1927, Hazrat Inayat took great pains to put in place a Constitution for the Sufi Movement, after a revolt of the majority of the leaders who, though they were his disciples, found this constitution to be undemocratic. Murshida Sharifa and the then *executive supervisor* of the Sufi Movement, Mr Emile de Cruzat Zanetti, were alone in supporting Hazrat Inayat during the discussions. Be that as it may, the Constitution, which was then supposedly imposed by Murshid, stipulated that Pir-o-Murshid, that is to say he himself, should designate his successor.

This is where the imbroglio starts. For when Pir-o-Murshid died in 1927 he had not designated a successor.

Nevertheless, in 1925 he had conferred on Murshida Sharifa the function of "*Sufi Silsila*", which means that he saw in her a link in the transmission of "*baraka*", the divine influx, the divine grace which flows from master to master since the prophet Mohamed (and some say since Abraham), in order to reach the disciples, to help them in their progress and to bless their lives. But Murshida Sharifa never expected that she herself would succeed Pir-o-Murshid. What had been conferred on her was the responsibility of transmitting the spiritual current of "*baraka*" to him who would be capable of taking charge of the Sufi Movement. As evidence of this function, Pir-o-Murshid had given Murshida Sharifa a seal which indicated the function and was engraved with her name.

But who would this leader be?

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During the years following the death of Murshid there were numerous difficulties around the succession of this Representative General, the Pir-o-Murshid of the Movement. It was only in June (or July) 1929, more than two years after Murshid's death, that Khalif Maheboob Khan, brother of Murshid, was established by Murshida Sharifa, under the title of Shaikh-ul-Mashaikh, in the function of Representative General and head of the Sufi Movement. She did this in her capacity as "*Silsila Sufian*" (see Chapter 7 below), which function Pir-o-Murshid conferred on her in 1925, at the same time giving her the seal engraved with her name. (This seal is reproduced on the cover of this memoir.)

Maheboob was certainly fully qualified to give individual guidance to the mureeds. He had been trained in the spiritual path by Murshid and he was certainly an evolved soul. Besides, his life was beyond reproach and his nature was particularly gentle and kind. But he was an artist, a musician, very reserved in character. He lacked the natural authority which makes leaders indisputable and undisputed. To take over the succession of Pir-o-Murshid would prove to be very hard and very difficult for him, and consequently for certain others, including Murshida Sharifa. But at the time there was no one else on whose shoulders this task could be laid down.

In brief, for the events were complex (photocopies of handwritten correspondence on the subject between Murshida and on the one hand Khalif Maheboob Khan, and on the other the Secretary General of the Movement, Mr Dussac, would fill many pages), this is the chronological order of what was taking place in the background of the Sufi Movement.

Since October 1927 Khalif Maheboob Khan kept in touch with Murshida Sharifa - then in seclusion - by correspondence, to ask her help and her advice when necessary. For example, a letter dated 24 October 1927 reads:

"I'll be very thankful if you will kindly send me the Esoteric Constitution at your earliest convenience, as it is urgently needed, as I am afraid several things might happen in their own way, not knowing Pir-o-Murshid's wishes in that line..."

And another dated 5 January 1928:

"... It is a great pity that I was not able to come to Suresnes before going to Geneva; nevertheless I will not take any decision on important matters before seeing you."

For the year 1928 Feizi's typescript indicates that:

"It was asked of Khalif Maheboob Khan to represent Murshida Sharifa Goodenough during the Summer School, which he did".

And from the same source we find this further indication, in Murshida's hand:

"1- After Maheboob Khan had asked me to make some Shaikhs and Khalifs, seeing me not quick to do so, he asked me to let him make some, saying; 'I need not have the title, but the work must go on'.

"2 - When in the spring of 1929, after esoteric leaders had asked him to 'assume the position of esoteric head and to act in that capacity in the future' and I had been asked by the Headquarters whether 'I approved of this', I said to Khalif Maheboob Khan that I would transmit to him this charge. He replied that he was so pleased that it should 'come from above instead of from below'.

"3 – In the autumn of 1929 I thought that many mistakes had been made and that it would perhaps be better if I held that position. I said to the Shaikh-ul-Mashaikh that it would perhaps be better. He replied, 'You will take Murshid Dussaq (36) as Madar-ul-Maham (Secretary General), and I will go into retirement'.

In fact "this autumn", as the typescript goes on,

" a great split had come in the Movement, several very important mureeds – National Representatives appointed by Murshid himself – were put or went out of the Movement." It was clear to Murshida how disastrous it would be for the growth and unity of the Movement if the tendency continued, to put aside everybody that could not give devotion in the way that was expected of him.

From another draft may be seen how she tried to warn against it :

"The Sufi Order is centred in the Messenger. It is to him that devotion goes. No-one can claim devotion, that devotion is his right, it must be given to him. What devotion would that be that is an obligation? Devotion can only come spontaneously, from the heart. If the mureed can have devotion for an Initiator, for a Murshid, for an esoteric head, that is the best thing for the mureed. Devotion for the Messenger will naturally bring about devotion for his representatives, but lack of personal devotion for any particular representative must not be considered as a mark against a person, as a reason for not recognizing his merit, for keeping him aside of the work, if he has devotion for the Messenger and the Message."

"Murshida once told me", comments Feizi, "how Murshid always – however difficult the situation might be - tried to keep his mureeds, and I noticed how she herself tried to do so and paid attention to the feelings of mureeds who were rather troublesome and easily vexed, even though they seemed to be of little or no importance".

Devotion ... devotion ... taken to mean devoted obedience to the hierarchy of the Sufi Movement (the disciple must blindly obey the guru), had become the watchword, which henceforth gave access to the various positions and to new dignitaries. The enthusiasm for the teachings of the Master, the desire to spread his work and to continue in his spirit, desire which drove most of Murshid's close mureeds, hardly counted any longer. One had to show that one was henceforth cast in the new mould. Some complied yet still saw clear, and used various mental restrictions and taking their distance in order to be able to continue, cost what it may, to work for the ideal their Murshid had showed them. We knew many who did so and later on we learned of their disillusion despite their efforts, disillusion which only grew with the years. Murshida Sharifa was one of these, and how hard the price she had to pay would be for her!

"I know how Murshida tried to keep harmony", Feizi continues. "However, she felt it as her great responsibility to do whatever she could to keep things going in Murshid's spirit – which she knew so well. This was also the reason why she could not and did not give out of her hands the sacred trust given to her by Murshid to handle and keep all his manuscripts - (i.e. the typescripts of his teachings concerning esoteric matters that were not yet duplicated). The Shaikh-ul-Mashaikh being an artist, it was not at all in his nature to do this kind of work. Besides, during Murshid's lifetime he was occupied with his music and had no prominent part in the Movement. If he really had understood the heavy load of this responsibility, he would not have taken it as a personal offence that Murshida did not give him the free disposal of the manuscripts, even though the way in which she did stick to them was rather rigid".

Be this as it may, at the time it was becoming more and more clear that the leadership of the Movement tolerated her less and less. The type of guardianship which Murshida found it her duty to exercise because of her faithfulness to Pir-o-Murshid, in all areas where she saw appear even just a shadow of a deviation (we know her meticulousness, we know she had an inflexible side to her character), annoyed many. Add to this the dearth of friends she had made among the mureeds, and the tendency to introversion she had always shown and which many took as aristocratic arrogance, and you will understand that in the end one wanted to exclude her from all decision-making.

End of the prologue

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The consequence was a type of execution. It took place in 1934.

A pretext was needed. This pretext became a lost letter.

In 1925 Murshid had given his trusted co-worker a sealed letter, to be opened only after his death. For one reason or another (she moved house several times between 1927 and 1934, the letter could have been mislaid among the many documents which she had under her care, or destroyed along with various papers she was said to have burned), Murshida forgot about the existence of this letter, even after the death of Murshid.

An assembly of leaders of the Movement took place in Geneva in October 1934. Towards the end of this assembly, Murshida wrote to Feizi:

“Here, every meeting is a test in which I walk through fire. (That is a purification, isn't it?). But progress is being made. It has been a crucifixion for me, but ‘after crucifixion comes resurrection’. There is one more meeting this evening. Perhaps I will stay till Thursday...”

But, reports Feizi: "Thursday evening however I waited in vain, it was only the next evening she came home. And how! Even before she had put off hat and coat, she sat down and told me what had happened in this ‘one more meeting’. She told me how a letter given into her care by Murshid had been lost, how this letter was supposed to contain his last will, and how they suspected her to have embezzled it. It was one of the members of the meeting who by a slip of the tongue, suddenly said it. At first, Murshida did not understand what he meant, until he said, with great emphasis; 'But you were HIS secretary, you know'. Then she understood of what she was suspected, though at the moment she could not remember anything of this letter, the existence of which, as she said 'had passed into oblivion'. But that night, putting her mind on Murshid, the recollection of it came to her in a flash, and also the manner he gave it to her, sealed, without any explanation. She said also that she never opened this letter and that during – most probably – a removal from the Salle Centrale, Geneva, this envelope had disappeared.

"She wrote a letter to the Headquarters (12 October 1934) explaining all these points and giving precisions about some others. And she concluded: 'It is a matter of infinite regret to me that there has been this oblivion on my part, with resultant troubles in the Sufi Movement. And I am extremely sorry that the Shaikh-ul-Mashaikh Maheboob Khan has had to go through difficulties and to suffer in consequence'.

"Shortly after the accusation", writes Feizi again, "the Shaikh-ul-Mashaikh said he did not believe she did it on purpose and would stop the rumour going around. Murshida then hoped so very much – thinking the distrust had gone – that a better understanding and co-operation would be possible. How much she was disappointed in this! ... Once she said to somebody ‘Apart from being a Murshida, I would not have been worthy to be a mureed, if I had done such a thing’. For the loss of the letter, she felt very guilty and she, with her reserved nature and self-control, even wept before others”.

Did she weep for herself? This was not her nature. She wept because of the harm which was beginning to be done to the spirit of the Sufi message of Hazrat Inayat, harm which henceforth she would no longer be in a position to ward off, in spite of all her efforts towards greater harmony.

For her efforts towards appeasement had no effect. Her letter of 12 October 1934 was not even published. The insane accusation remained. Not only did it remain, but it was greatly amplified. Murshida Sharifa became persona non grata in the Sufi Movement, an undesirable member, pushed away by those faithful to the hierarchy in place, and by those who just

believed what was being said. All her powers were withdrawn, and she had to witness, powerless, innovations which she anticipated as being disastrous for the future of the Sufi message of Hazrat Inayat Khan, which she held higher than she held herself.

What can one say of a moral wound? Being unjustly accused by default without this being justified by objective proof was, according to Feizi who witnessed it all, as a death for her. Her honour was denied and scorned, yet she remained silent towards her accusers. Some time later Feizi found a bit of paper on which Murshida had written:

"To remain pure, the accused must not only be not above the accusation, but above those who accuse her: the accused must neither accuse, nor despise her accusers".

Higher up I used the expression "insane accusation". It was so for more than one reason. What interest could Murshida have had to make this letter disappear, as was said? To cast a doubt on the legitimacy of the hierarchy now in place? But she herself had appointed it! And she never tolerated any doubt of it. Or had she destroyed the letter out of spite and unfaithfulness to the will of her Murshid? Her whole life proves the opposite. Or was it to give herself importance by having taken the initiative in the nomination she had made? Nothing was more contrary to her character and her line of conduct, and she herself specified that she had every reason to believe that it was the plan of Murshid himself. Is there anything more? There is nothing more. None of her accusers seemed to have reflected on the fact that to consider Murshida Goodenough capable of an act which was not only dishonest but also stupid, meant that their Murshid had been blind in placing his confidence in a collaborator whom he knew better than anyone else. These accusers do not seem to have been aware that they had made one of those accusations which judges its accusers.

We are not alone in calling the said accusation futile. In his obituary of Murshida Goodenough - which we will find further on - Mr de Cruzat Zanetti, who was ex officio present at all the assemblies, wrote as follows:

"The serenity with which she attended these meetings was a lesson. Sometimes she would be under attacks which were ridiculous in content and unforgivably vulgar in form. At such times she showed what degree of perfection a disciplined intelligence and a self-controlled spirit may attain".

There was someone else who witnessed all this, but as a mute witness. Our old and revered friend Shanavaz van Spengler (37) had been nominated by Murshid as a sort of assessor of these assemblies: he did not have the right to speak. He too was present on the day of the accusation. Thirty years later he was still indignant. "I was standing behind the chair of Murshida", he said, "and out of anger I drummed my fingers on the back of her chair". "And", he added with candid conviction, "she must have found my reaction very sympathetic."

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It is not the intention to put anyone on trial here; besides Murshida herself would never have tolerated an attack on those who spoke ill of her. Nevertheless, it is important for the very honour of the Sufi message of Hazrat Inayat Khan that the memory of Murshida Sharifa be totally cleared and that her name may be honoured by those who follow, and will follow this message in the future.

We do not wish to accuse anyone, nor do we wish to show any condescension in our remarks. Who has never committed an error of judgment about someone else, who has always, in all circumstances, conducted himself in the best possible way? Passion is an evil which can blind anyone at a given time, and sometimes at the worst possible time.

And then, as we tried to say in the beginning of this chapter, a high degree of fatalism is at work behind all this. And who would commit the folly of accusing fate or destiny?



The gift

Yes, in the life of Murshida Sharifa there certainly was a fatality, a destiny which had elements of tragedy. But there was also a strong sense of her free spirit and especially of her powerful will. Thinking only of fate, one could have said that this had made of her, whose health was already diminished, a pitiful target for the malevolence of those around her, who did not understand her, who did not tolerate her exclusive and unsociable nature. Besides, she had become, through the difficult circumstances of- the loss of the letter, a victim of atonement. But looking at it this way would mean not seeing how, in spite of this destiny, and in face of the disgrace and the opposition which surrounded her and which sought to prevent her from working for what was her sole purpose, the unfailing ideal and the uncommon strength of will of Murshida Sharifa prevailed. And so we see once more how contrary circumstances permit a great soul to give in full measure.

Pir-o-Murshid has often spoke about free will in connection with destiny: "Man has two aspects in him", as he says for instance in "Destiny and Free Will – The Smiling Forehead" (38).

"One aspect is his mechanical being where he is but a machine controlled by conditions, by his impressions, by outer influences, by cosmic influences, by his actions. Everything working mechanically turns his life accordingly: he has no power over conditions; he is just a tool of influences. The more this aspect is pronounced in man, the less evolved he is. It is a sign of less evolution.

"Another aspect in man is creative, in which he shows the sign of being the representative of the Creator, in which he shows that he is not only linked with God, but part of God; his innermost self is God".

During all the years that Murshida lived through this trial, which became worse and worse, that is from 1929 to 1937, she never stopped, not even for a moment, to spread her Murshid's teachings. She did not cease her public speaking. And as for the help she brought to Murshid's individual mureeds, to those who felt disoriented by the departure of the Teacher and who did not find elsewhere the purity of spirit they saw in her alone, it is necessary to hear them speak, as we did, to realise what she meant to them.

We must bear in mind at the same time - let us repeat - that this woman was regarded as suspect, that her reputation - at least in the eyes of some - was tarnished. She was vilified by covert words; defamation was her lot; and one sought to keep away from her those who wished to see her or listen to her. An objective fact will help understand better the type of difficulties this opposition caused her. One dared not, during the Summer Schools, prevent her from speaking in the meeting hall in Suresnes, but a man placed himself at the entrance and approached those who came with the confidential information that the speaker was someone "who was not in the right line and had a harmful influence". Many went away. A certain number of people nevertheless wanted to see for themselves, and they generally stayed.

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These included a certain number who subsequently played an important role in the spreading of the Sufi Message of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan. We will come back to this later, but we would like to mention here the principal of these:

There was the oldest son of the Master, Vilayat Khan (39) - who later became Pir Vilayat. Defying the "sanitary cordon" which isolated Murshida Sharifa, he often came to her lectures during the Summer Schools. He was one of the few who tried to be of service to her during her last illness; and he always honoured her memory. There were also a certain number of leading personalities in the Sufi Movement: like Sirkar van Stolk, National Representative for the Netherlands, and Wazir van Essen, who between them later introduced the Sufi message into South Africa, where it flourishes today. There was Shanavaz van Spengler, the philosopher Louis Hoyack and several other Dutch personalities, besides the little group of French mureeds who were close to her for the rest of the year (that is, before and after the Summer Schools).

Among the few faithful Netherlanders, we wish to cite the case of Antoinette Schamhart, because it typifies the effect Murshida Sharifa had on these people. We speak of her knowingly, as she was the mother of Elise Guillaume Schamhart and a second mother - and spiritual mother - to Michel Guillaume. She was also one of the few friends and close confidants of Murshida Sharifa.

Starting already in her youth, Antoinette Schamhart had searched for the truth all her life. Her religion had not been able, or perhaps did not know how, to bring her what she hoped to find. Her spirit tended towards the philosophical aspect of existence, and she had studied many works, esoteric and spiritual, from hermetic doctrines to the accounts of Vivekananda of the different yogas. She had also frequented several groups with spiritualising claims, from spiritualism to Christian Science (40). She came out of these experiences with her hopes dashed and with an increasing thirst after a truth she sensed existed even though she was unable to find it.

While she was in this state of mind circumstance brought her to Suresnes and there she heard about Sufism. She entered - without enthusiasm - the hall where Murshida Sharifa was to read a lecture of Murshid Inayat Khan on Spirit and Matter. But this was exactly HER question, the question which had been tormenting her for a long time. For the first time she was fully satisfied with the answer she received. Then she realised that the words to which she had been listening, far from being the fruit of simple intellectual cogitations, seemed to echo a deep experience of their author, and that this experience was shared by the reader. Antoinette was deeply impressed, saw Murshida again, and bonded with her for ever.

Antoinette Schamhart-Scholte later conducted the Sufi centre in Haarlem in the Netherlands with great competence and efficiency.

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Murshida Sharifa continued until her death to lecture during Summer Schools in Suresnes and to receive mureeds and interested persons who "forced the barricades" and of whom we have cited some examples. She devoted the rest of her time to speaking about the Sufi message and spreading the teaching of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan among the French public, by giving lectures in Paris and through individual contact. Twice a week at home, or after her lectures in Paris, she met the mureeds, and advised and gave guidance to those who sought this.

Until towards 1932 or 1933 the hierarchy wished her to retain the function of National Representative of the Sufi Movement in France. After this it sought to retire her and install someone else, no doubt deserving, but nearly unknown to the local mureeds, and of course entirely devoted to the hierarchy. These mureeds had to send a petition to Sheikh-ul-Maheboob Khan to ask him to reconsider the nomination he had made. In short, the deaf and saddening opposition to Murshida Sharifa did not diminish.

But Murshida had entirely given herself to the cause of her Master's message, and continued the task with which he had entrusted her, cost what may, through all her health difficulties, her material problems and all sorts of other hazards.

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Part 3

5.

Life with Murshida Sharifa

One can say that all of life is like fabric and has its warp and its welt. The warp consists of events which are generally not dependent on our will, briefly, we say, they are from "Destiny". And the welt completes the fabric we weave onto the warp. If one is not master of one's warp, anyone can weave the welt and push the shuttle across the warp of one's destiny, using the thread he or she chooses. We have seen something of Murshida Sharifa's warp, and the extent to which it was prickly and hard. And we have seen the colour and the fineness of the threads she chose to weave her welt to refine the pattern of her life. We have seen the quality of her thread. It was "*Beauty, truth, and rarity, grace in all simplicity*", as one who knew her would later write, borrowing words from Shakespeare. And the effect of the complete fabric remains fascinating.

Up to now we have only looked at Murshida Sharifa so to speak from afar and from above - except for a few rare instances. It is time to take a closer look at her in everyday life. How did this unusual person live, this mystic with the temperament of an ascetic, this "yogi" lost in time?

We have the long account which Feizi van der Scheer left us (in English), as well as a few memories left by those who approached Murshida.

It seems opportune to continue with Feizi's diary, repeating some passages already quoted, before passing on to new material:

"The work for Murshid and the Message was her only aim in life. She also once said : 'When a person by his love becomes absorbed in his ideal it is never out of his mind, but in everything he does it is before him'. And so indeed it was for her".

This was the dominant note behind all her conduct and which, added to her great sensitivity, explains the precautions she took, the things she tried to avoid in daily life.

"Then," adds Feizi, "sensitive by nature, she had become still more so by this seclusion. To receive letters often I think, was felt by her as a burden; to her it meant a call from the outer world which she had to answer. Once it struck me so much when during a lecture, she said that the eyes of grown-up people are always hurting, not the eyes of a child.

She was very particular in all kinds of things and often gave instructions in the smallest details. At a certain time, there was a plague of wasps and I had to catch and destroy them. After catching them, I thought it the easiest way to let them disappear in the W.C., but then she told me not to do so as a wasp had such a fine sense of smell.

Also, once I bought an ink fish (octopus) as food for the cat, but I had to throw it away. This cat did not really belong to Murshida, it belonged to poor people in the neighbourhood. But in a cat's way it had insisted so much to come in that she could not resist any longer and from then it became a regular visitor. Murshida told me that it could see and avoided things most people did not see. This cat, during her illness, when she felt how her knees got quite cold and rigid, jumped on her bed, first put itself on one knee until it got warm and then on the other. In this she saw a sign that she had to live on.

"Murshida Sharifa gave names to the rooms. The drawing-room was called 'daftar' (41), the room where lectures were given, 'durbari' and upstairs was a room which she called 'khankah'. When I asked what 'khankah' meant she said 'library', and I laughed because there was not one book in all the room. But Murshida did not want me to laugh. Surely there was another meaning behind it, which she did not tell.

Later on, when I had to rent a room or hall to give lectures in Paris, there were certain numbers I should avoid. Also, the room should not be in the basement so that one had to go downstairs. When there was an assembly at her house of which she was to be the chairman I noticed how careful she was in the in the placing of the persons. Those from whom she expected help were put at one side, the others at the other side. Though she was not influenced by them, she observed omens. Once, when going to give a lecture in Paris, a small tree on the Sufi-field which she passed, was broken. That evening there was a revolt of royalists and hardly any-one came to the lecture.

As it is mentioned already in her sister's letter, she had a great talent for languages. With the char-woman, who was Italian, she always spoke in that language. (Someone told me that sometimes she spoke Persian with her in the presence of a mureed who could not stand it very well, just to tease him a little). Once she was asked how many languages she spoke and answered: 'It would be a good thing if one could speak one language well'. I think she meant the language of the soul."

We open a parenthesis here. Murshid explained once that each soul possesses, so to speak, its own language. He who can understand this language can communicate fully with the soul. He gave the example of the twelve apostles who spoke "all the languages" after receiving, at Pentecost, the gift of "languages of fire". By "all languages" was meant that they understood and could speak the language of each soul.

To resume Feizi's account:

"It was a habit of Murshida not to speak during a great part of the day, only when she especially wished for this, there was a conversation. If some shopping or something else had to be done she wrote it on a scrap of paper. These scraps always were more long than wide. Often these messages came with a small humoristic drawing, sometimes also she said things in a little rhyme.

"Murshida most time was dressed in old dresses and wore a clean white apron. She once said, 'I either want to be dressed very well, or I don't care at all'. Yet, in whatever way she was dressed, she always remained 'la grande dame'.

"She had a slow and even pace, and took notice of her breath and what foot she used first. Her posture in sitting or walking always was very erect, however tired she might be. She was tall and slender. She did not gesticulate much during the lectures, her movements were quiet but very expressive, often she made a movement with her hand pointing inwardly.

"As a child she had brown eyes and fair hair, later on her hair grew dark. Sometimes I noticed how her eyes, though brown, had a smoky colour.

"There were no pictures or portraits in the rooms, not even a photo of Murshid. Murshida preferred emblems. Of portraits she said 'I feel as if they are always ringing the bell'. In the drawing room an old Sufi calendar was pinned on the wall with the Sufi emblem on it and Persian characters, and a poem of Rumi which she liked very much:

*I died as a mineral and arose as a plant.
I died as a plant and rose again as an animal.
I died as an animal and arose as a man.
Why then should I fear to become less by dying?
O lover, cold- hearted and devoid of loyalty,
who from fear of your life shuns the Beloved!
I shall die once again as a man,
to rise an angel from head to foot.
Again, when I suffer dissolution as an angel,
I shall become what passes the conception of man'.*

"Murshida very often quoted Rumi, and also Shakespeare. Once when she went a few days to Chantilly for repose, I notice how she took with her the 'Masnavi' and a copy of the works of Shakespeare.

"For some time, a woman came to bring food, but then she cooked herself. I think it was Murshid who had told her to do so. As she was not adroit by nature and never had been accustomed to do this kind of work, this surely must have been not always easy for her. She prepared my food too. For a long time, she cooked on a charcoal stove, later on she used gas".

In her always candid style, the devoted Feizi comes to other memories, more personal, under the heading:

"My relationship with Murshida"

"I should have liked very much to look after Murshida and cherish her, but never had the opportunity to do so. One day she told me she would make me a murshida – for one day only – ('for one day' she repeated and though I understood quite well this was in order to teach me the right attitude of a mureed, my first thought was 'that day I'll put you in your bed, all day long'. Once complaining that she needed me so little I got the answer: 'Do you not think there is a difference between needing and valuing; and that the diamond that is valued, is held higher than the stone 'meulière' (a kind of brick) that is needed?' A beautiful answer to get, but the situation remained the same. Yet this tendency in me was difficult to suppress and I was not always quite submissive. Once therefore she called me a 'Haus-Tyrann' (a house- tyrant) and not quite without reason. Yet there surely was not the slightest possibility to develop this quality vis à vis Murshida.

"This was during a time Murshida Sharifa gave all the money she had to help someone who always had been kind and helpful to Murshid. This person was a Russian princess, one of the first Russian mureeds, a refugee, who had lost everything during the revolution, and now had fallen into the hands of what I called a cheat, though I was not at all allowed to say such a thing. For a long time Murshida believed this man was really going to help this lady (something which surely may have been his intention) but I had not the slightest confidence, and in my opinion Murshida became a victim of her own generosity. She not only did not pay the rent of the house in time, which brought her into difficulties, but often there was no money left for food and then she fasted, giving me a meal just the same. Of course I protested. However, after a long time she saw herself, it could not go on in this way and stopped providing him with money. When some time later this man died and I said I thought it a good thing for this lady, Murshida did not at all want me to say such a thing of some-one who had passed on.

"It must have been also during this time that I said to her that though she of course was much more spiritual than I, I surely had more common sense. The answer I got was: 'A good use for your common senses would be to find my common sense. You know that like attracts like'.

"Yet, there remained always a certain distance, and it would never come into my mind to be with her as with an ordinary person – though sometimes I should have wished this to be otherwise. However, this distance was more in appearance than in reality, and surely not because she wished this to be so".

"... A spiritual person will feel a link uniting him to all other beings, and at the same time will feel himself far from all, raised above the earth into another sphere, aware of life and of nature, and happy in himself, without needing external circumstances to bring him happiness..."

Extract from a lecture given by Murshida Sharifa in 1934 on Happiness,
at a time of great turmoil in her life.

Again Feizi:

"The only cause of the distance I felt was the great difference there was in evolution. Once after a misunderstanding, on my part, Murshida said: 'The thing is, Feizi, that it is not nearly so bad as you think it is. Then, there are things in which I agreed with you. There is no need for you to give up any idea you have and there is, at bottom, not so much difference in what I see and what you see. If there is a difference, it is momentary. There is no disagreement, on the other hand there is a oneness!'"

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Feizi van der Scheer's thoughts on Murshida Sharifa, and other memories

The observations and opinions of someone who lived in Murshida Sharifa's daily company for the last eight years of her life, is self-evident. To visit an eccentric personality (and no one can deny that Murshida Sharifa was such a one) on a daily basis one sees them, so to speak, with a very narrow view. One comes across their shortcomings and their pettinesses. Many writers of memorials and biographers have taken a malicious pleasure in this and used it to bring great men down from their pedestal and sully their stature. For example, one great philosopher was said to be stingy, another scholar with an international reputation pinched the ideas of his colleagues and made them his own, a great artist was a drunkard in private, etc. There seems to be something reassuring for the readers (and also for the authors) of biographies to be able to say to themselves: "In the end, he was a person like us. He just had a touch of genius."

This is why a personality such as Murshida Goodenough is disturbing. And so she was for those who did not approach her, or who did not understand the level she had attained. They were not able to place her in the catalogue of human beings they knew, either from their own experience or from hearsay.

Feizi van der Scheer's opinion which we bring here is not one which belittles the person being described. And Feizi's opinion has particular authenticity because she was a very positive person, often critical, whose natural generosity in no way prevented her from seeing clearly and speaking plainly.

"Murshida Sharifa", she writes, was "very typically was a jinn-soul." And she explains further on: "Of this kind of soul, it is said in 'The Inner Life' of Inayat Khan (42) that: 'They are less absorbed in the life of this world, so more attracted to the inner life. It does not mean that they do not take interest in this world; in fact, it is the interest in the external life which brings the soul towards it'

"Also, the description of the 'Vairâghi' (43) and how this soul develops, in the same book, gives a typical image of the life and spiritual development of Murshida Sharifa. As a matter of fact, I often marvelled at the great interest she had for every aspect of life, and when sometimes I complained, she always said: 'It is interesting'.

"She had a mystical temperament, and the very fact that she lived on another level than most people, often caused them hurt, which surely was the last thing she ever wanted to do; even if others did hurt her, it was not in her nature to hurt back. On the other hand, I noticed how she had consideration for others in a way most people would not think of. So, she told me never to speak unnecessarily of someone's illness or poverty, and when I said 'But it is not a shame to be ill or poor', she said, 'You may not consider it as such, but in a way, it diminishes them'."

"A very small thing by which she often hurt others was by forgetting to greet them. Of this she said, 'It is not because I do not see them, but because they are so much in my mind, that I think quite natural when they are there'.

"Opinions clash when two people of different stages of evolution express themselves. Therefore, the wise are reluctant to express their opinion', says Murshid.

"This I noticed very much in connection with Murshida, who because of the Message often had to express herself. But even if she kept silent, this in itself often became a reason for misunderstanding. It was her principle, if she had to accomplish a certain thing, only to tell it to those directly concerned with it. So, for example when she was ill she went to a physician and started a cure without telling me, which made me feel sore, though I might have known this was not a lack of confidence".

"She was indifferent only in appearance. What to most of people seemed indifference was only a difference to things concerning herself.

"Sometimes it happens that a human being reaches a stage where he becomes a little indifferent. It is not everyone who arrives at that degree, but it is a natural development; there comes a time when a person says, 'But I wish for nothing more. I have no great desire for this or that'. And it is then that he can turn his attention towards others, for whom he can surely be something – whom he can help, and with whom he can sympathise"...

"This indifference was also the reason why she never strove for personal devotion....

.... "It is written on a note she left:

*'He said: I have come to Suresnes
I said, For what have you come
He said, I have come for you
I said, You have not come for me,
But for the perfume of the Master's presence'.*

"Once she said to me, 'You see the reason why I have not given much explanation is that in a general way I do not burden myself by speaking or thinking much on such matters of daily life, which make life very heavy."

And Feizi, in support of this, quotes further fragments of a lecture by Murshida:

"He who knows the life of the spirit feels free from matter, which for him does not constitute a burden weighing him down and crushing him. It seems that he is above all that, that he has a life apart from it all, and that this life apart is his true life. He feels that he is essentially detached from material life which is only a phase of his experience; that he lives somewhere else, and has only to waken the consciousness of this other life to be freed from the constant preoccupation with accumulating material things, which are the condition of life..."

The more one cultivates consciousness of the spiritual life, the more it becomes a part of us. Thus it is very easy for those who know how to take refuge in this consciousness to turn their back upon the material world and face the life of the spirit...And in this way life becomes complete, and also balanced, because one lives in contact with the spirit and also with matter..."

Feizi continues:

"I remember, one day I felt hurt about something Murshida had said or done and had talked it over with her. Some minutes later she called me back, looking very happy and wishing to impart her happiness to me. Yet, though I felt this quite well, it was impossible for me to partake of it, still being in a rather sorrowful mood. This was not the first time that I noticed that Murshida in a moment's time could live in a quite another sphere. To her it only meant a changing of sides.

"For her, it was not always easy to pay attention to time and to think of a certain date. Once I remember, during a Summer School, she went to the Hall and gave a lecture at the time somebody else was meant to do so. I saw the comical side of it and laughed when I heard it, but she took it very seriously. And right she was; it was said she had done in on purpose and it was explained in a very unpleasant way. At another time she forgot the date she had to speak, and when someone came to remind her, she went and gave a splendid lecture.

"Her suffering was a means to spiritual perfection. Outwardly Murshida Goodenough's life ended in a complete failure, inwardly it ended in the 'resurrection' of which she wrote in her letter. Of this resurrection, I have been the eyewitness, though it was only several years after her passing that I could see all that has happened with a heart and a mind no longer upset by the dreadful experiences she had to go through during her lifetime. The humiliations - small and great - she had to suffer were innumerable, but worst of all to her was that the work for which she felt responsible was taken out of her hands. At the end of her life her hands and feet were nailed down. A few weeks before she passed, she told me, 'That I have fallen ill is not because of what has happened to myself but because what is happening to my friends and because of the corruption there is, now already, in the Movement'.

"As I can see now, all these experiences she took as a means towards spiritual perfection. I have seen how she took the path of 'no resistance'. Once, when I proposed to say or do something in defense, she answered, 'I have chosen another way'. Often the suffering she had to go through made me revolt, and so, when in a lecture she had been speaking of the saintly attitude - a lecture in which I saw so much of her own life reflected - my reaction was, 'I will never be a saint', and her answer, 'It is no profession, Feizi'. In one of her lectures, she said that saints never sought suffering; they sought for a happiness which caused them to pass through suffering. In order to impart happiness to others and to create that which was the happiness of the soul, the saint had to pass through many sufferings inflicted upon him by others ...".

“And in another lecture, she says: ‘Shakespeare in his plays shows us the suffering hearts which are cured by love, not by the love which others pour upon them, but by that little spark of love which we can find in our own heart and which, if we pay attention to it and do not stifle it, will become a flame, a brazier warming our whole being and doing good to all those who feel its warmth in everyday life...’

“To help others is the central theme of her life. She left a poem in which this also can be seen so clearly:

*‘The ego: ‘people push me and hustle me
throw slippery mud under my feet
and try to catch my ankles in a snare;
they hold before my eyes a mirror where I see
my reflection twisted
they slander my friends and shout insults in my ears’.*

*The soul: ‘My self, do not suffer,
I uphold you and give you relief,
and with the Water of Lethe that you drink,
I give you the forgetfulness of injury;
I give you paradise, and you will open it to others’ ”*

~o~

Last memories of Feizi van der Scheer

We will summarise some of her memories. In 1935 the owner of the house let to Murshida Sharifa, next to the Sufi field, gave her notice, for obscure reasons. It proved impossible to find a suitable house as close to the field, or with the same view, conditions which to Murshida were of major importance. This area had been specially blessed by Pir-o-Murshid, and for Sharifa, his presence there was palpable. In order to stay in the area, she had to move to the other side of the field, to a place which formed part of a series of brick buildings named the "Haras" (stables). This space was unhealthy and heated only by a coal stove of which the chimney passed through a window. It was humid and smoky, with a persistent bad smell. Murshida's fragile health could not endure these conditions.

Nevertheless, in February 1936, she went to Vienna. Here, in two months, she gave 23 lectures and multiple interviews to mureeds and to people interested in Sufism. She returned via Zurich where she gave more lectures and interviews... She returned to Suresnes exhausted.

Once more in Feizi's words:

" In 1936, after the Summer School, Murshida Sharifa resumed classes and lectures in Paris, but on the way home she sometimes had to stop walking for a moment. Yet she would not say a word of feeling tired or ill. (During this time, she once said, 'Now I can understand my sister – (a sister who died young) – who always wanted tea, when we were not thinking of it'). However, after some time she became too ill to go on. Then she went to a specialist and began a cure, but, though she did all her best to recover, it soon became evident that no hope was left.

"Three weeks before her passing she gave me some instructions of what I had to say or to do in case she might not recover, messages to her family and to some mureeds. To the mureeds of the French group she told me to say: 'Ask them if they will forgive me', and she also asked this of me. Murshida did not want me to warn her mother or sisters. Also, she did not want to see any mureed. She said the best thing for an ill person is to have only one person around him. Yet, the last weeks a devoted French mureed helped me to nurse her, but being an elderly person, she got tired in the end and when I asked Murshida whom she wanted to replace her, Murshida told me to ask Wazir van Essen – who had come from Holland – if he could give some help. She then also received another Dutch mureed who had especially come to Suresnes to see her.

"Three days before her passing, Vilayat came to bring her something, and when he had gone and I told her so, she told me to call him back and tell him that though she would not speak, he could come and see her. He stayed for some time and this evening she said, 'This has been a good day – a very good day' –

And Feizi adds in a note her personal opinion – 'If ever the 'Sufi Silsila' was transmitted in silence, I think it was during this evening, when Vilayat was still too young to receive it openly'.

"The day before her passing she told me to put her in a certain posture for prayer. Though this caused oedema in her face, she remained for a very long time in this position and did not want me to change it. Murshida Sharifa suffered very much, but never would complain. Once she said, when Murshid was ill and suffered very much, he said, 'These are glimpses of His mercy'. Though the respiratory channels were quite blocked up, her mastery of the breath was such that it always remained regular. Often, she has a high fever, yet until the end she held the reins in hand. At the very last, when there was the change in her eyes which announces death, Wazir and I began to say a Wazifa (44) for healing. She then, while the life in her eyes returned – said to me, 'Who told you to do so?' and gave another Wazifa, which we repeated till the end. For a long time, I held her hands, and when in order to fetch something, I loosened them, there was again this change in the eyes, and then very quietly and peacefully she passed away.

"The last words she spoke were:

"As for those who hurt you and do wrong, you must forgive them. Deep within everybody is good. Even if they hurt you, to them it seems right at that moment". And again:

"Everyone is good, they don't always see it in the right way, yet they are good".

And also: "Life is difficult and it needs more than a life-time to know how to live it" – "Yet one can be happy, and I am getting happier every day."

~o~

Memories of Wazir van Essen

"Never will I forget the first time she went out, after her years of seclusion, to give a lecture in the Hall. Dressed all in white, as in the well-known photo of her, she was partly still estranged from the world, yet already transparent.

"Soon after this she started going to Paris again, to give lectures. This must have been very difficult for her, especially the rides in the noisy little old tram, and then the metro! One day she asked me to accompany her on one of her trips to Paris. For years she had not done anything about her passport and other identity papers. On the way to Paris, I wanted to walk up the Rue de la Tuilerie to take the tram, as this would spare her the crossing of the busy Boulevard de Versailles (now Boulevard Henri Sellier). But this would have meant walking away from her destination, and this Murshida did not want: 'The psychology of going in a direction opposite to your goal is not right', she said. At the British Consulate she was given a reprimand because she had so neglected everything. She said very humbly: 'I am sorry I have neglected the matter for so long', and the way she said this immediately took the wind out of the sails of the official who was helping her.

"Once Murshida was going out again she started to take an interest in the problems of the mureeds who visited her and whom she always received lovingly. The letters she wrote also spoke of her attitude to Murshid and the Message, among others to Shanavaz van Spengler, who was at times inclined to negativity. Murshida always replied in a positive note, ignoring the negativity....

A small illustration of how much Murshida felt connected to Murshid, and saw in him the Rasul (Messenger) (45) was when I once said, 'in Murshid's time...'. She interrupted me with these words: 'Wazir, it is always Murshid's time'.

On her deathbed it was as if the inner spheres opened to welcome her, after a life of devotion, struggle and great fruitfulness. In his autobiography Murshid speaks of her as a pearl hidden in 'a hard-looking shell'. A few among us had the privilege of seeing this shell open and to reveal the hidden light of the pearl."

~o~

Two anecdotes

These memories of Murshida Goodenough would be incomplete without recounting the following incidents.

Antoinette Schamhart, who was a friend of Murshida Goodenough and considered herself to be her disciple, told her daughter Elise and her son-in-law Michel that one day, while in Holland, she had to write to Murshida to ask her for precise instructions concerning a very urgent matter. Before she could possibly have had a reply to her letter, she received one, after an incredibly short delay. In this letter Murshida Sharifa gave point by point replies to Antoinette's questions. Looking at the postal stamp of Murshida's letter, Antoinette realised that they had written practically at the same time, she with the questions and Murshida with the answers.

Yvonne Guillaume once told her son Michel that one day, when leaving Murshida Sharifa's house in Suresnes, she accompanied her to her taxi. But instead of saying goodbye then, Murshida started walking around the taxi, glancing briefly at it from all sides. Yvonne was very surprised by this action, but said nothing. After a while, they said goodbye and the taxi left. When it arrived at the Saint-Cloud bridge a fatal accident nearly occurred: a heavy truck's brakes failed and it headed straight for the taxi - and the driver did not see it. At the last second the truck driver, acting out of some unconscious automatism, executed the only possible manoeuvre to avoid the taxi, and there was no accident.

Yvonne did not tell Murshida about this. Some time later Murshida gave a lecture entitled "The spiritual being". At a certain point in the lecture, she said, looking Yvonne straight in the eye: "*The influence of a spiritual person may prevent a serious accident ...*". Yvonne remembered the incident at Saint-Cloud and Murshida's unusual behaviour of walking around the taxi, and now she understood the reason behind it.

~~o~~

6.

Eulogies for *Murshida Sharifa Goodenough*

Few among those who really knew Murshida Sharifa have written about her, even though she helped many, inspired many, and lightened up "*life's puzzling ways*" (46) for them, and that she guided some towards self-discovery. As the written word completes, bit by bit, the image left by this great soul, we will devote a generous part part of this Memorial to their words.

We knew certain of these men and women, and many were, in spite of the age differences, our friends. Among them were instructors on the Sufi path. We do not doubt their sincerity.

~o~

Firstly, here are the words Mr de Cruzat Zanetti (the first legal advisor to Murshid and later to the Movement), who observed her during practically all the functions she held in the administration of the Sufi Movement in Geneva:

"It is difficult to find words to describe the loss which Murshida Goodenough's death represents for the Sufi Movement. It is beyond question that the loss is great and occurred at a time when the Movement would have had the greatest need of the qualities and the strengths of this personality.

"By personal observations over many years I acquired the conviction that no one was ever in closer communion of thought and objective with Inayat Khan. When I came into contact with the Movement, this closeness was so to speak perfect. I saw in a public meeting when she hesitated in her translation of Murshid's words, how a simple look from Murshid enabled her find the perfect translation of his word. Reciprocally, I was once at a committee meeting where Murshida spoke softly to Inayat Khan, in Persian, and that this led to a new situation in the meeting.

"Many know of her complete devotion to Murshid during the first difficult years of missionary work in several countries. But I fear that only a few realise the extent to which we are indebted to her for the expressions of the Message. In truth I am convinced that without her and her extraordinary capacities which she placed in the service of the Cause, the vast field of words and thoughts of Inayat Khan which came to light since he left us would have been neglected. I discreetly suggested to her once that she alone would be able to provide the interpretation and to find the desired expression to that which must have struck everyone as having the appearance of a shapeless pile of notes and transcriptions. Her immediate retort: 'Each sentence, each word left by the Murshid is perfect in form'. By this answer she gave a magnificent example of her loyalty. Nonetheless, I stand by my opinion.

"This exalted sentiment of loyalty once gave me the occasion to observe during a meeting, with admiration, her only direct, crushing attack, but always remaining within the limits imposed by her so admirable intelligence and her perfect manners. I myself was the victim of this attack. She believed that I had taken liberties with 'the sacred word'. But what I had done was with the agreement and approval of Murshid.

"Alas! How this so admirably developed spirit and manner will be missed at the future meetings of the Movement! The serenity with which she attended, often while she was under attacks which were as ridiculous as they were unforgivably vulgar in form, was a lesson which showed the degree of perfection which can be attained by a disciplined intelligence and a spirit which has mastered itself.

"Her mind was one of the finest I ever had the privilege of meeting. I saw once how, without preparation, she repeated the terms of the minutes which had gone astray of a meeting held a year previously. When the official minutes were found and compared to Murshida's account, this was found to be rigorously accurate. Yet at each such meeting she could give the impression of being far away, as if detached from the subject under discussion. This fact can serve as a visible illustration that the methods of mystics result in making more powerful and sharpening the instruments God has given us to use on this terrestrial plane of existence.

"My own limitations, my personal lack of experience of the conduct of mystics, our differing conceptions as to that which produces results in the life of this world, meant that our co-operation on a was not always to be easy. But what I can affirm with equal candour, is that no one held her qualities in greater esteem than I did. She became for me, in a certain way, the touchstone within the Sufi Movement, which enabled me to discern alloy from pure gold. Surely no one who hears of her passing will do so without a experiencing a feeling of sorrow for the Sufi Movement."

~o~

Antoinette Schamhart-Scholte, moved by her love and her inexhaustible wisdom:

"In writing these few lines to the memory of her for whom I had infinite love, I see again the calm and sober room where I was privileged to spend so many happy moments with her. The simplicity of her attitude was in such harmony with this atmosphere where everything spoke of perfect peace and harmony. She was a source of wisdom, a wisdom which she communicated in words and in silence, for her silence sometimes revealed more than words can, expressing things which are too subtle, too fragile for words.

She was not only the Master, but besides that and especially, the friend on whom one could count in all circumstance, the friend who knew before a complaint was put into words, the friend who understood without explanation. She gave in a torrent of infinite love. She dedicated herself to the work of the Master, becoming more and more the instrument through which the Message was spreading. She was devoted to this sacred work, continuously, in spite of all the difficulties she had to endure, endlessly giving her love and her inexhaustible wisdom.

"She lives on in the memory of all those who loved her and, in the lectures she left - these lectures bear witness of an inner knowledge and an inner intelligence which are not of this world. Her death was, for many among us, an irreparable loss. Yet somehow from this apparent loss arose an intimate connection which gives rise to the certainty that in reality there is no separation.

"Towards Her who showed us the path to follow by her example, walking in the footsteps of the Master, our affectionate thoughts go when we read the following lines:

*"May your foot on the ground leave a noble print
And perhaps, following your footsteps,
Some spirit, agitated by doubt and fear,
Will again find hope, courage and faith."*

~o~

We take the following passage from the eulogy of Louis Hoyack:

"She lived and died unnoticed by the eyes of many, who were unaware of the heights of her spirituality. Exquisite beings and things find few admirers in this mediocre world. But those who discovered the radiance of her spiritual evolution and who won the tender friendship of her loving heart, will feel connected with her forever...

"This is how the life of this initiator was completed: life of pain and of tragedy, but also life of prayer, promise, hope and bliss. For she possessed real happiness, the happiness of those whose glance passes above the sorrows of this life of illusion, to contemplate the vision of the Eternal."

~o~

And this last souvenir of Olga Chayés:

"She never imposed herself... She was somewhere in the depth of my life. When I lacked will or courage, miraculously her strength was there to put things right.

"She never imposed herself. It was enough to come to her and remain in her silence. And so sometimes I came, feeling unbearable grief and revolt, and went away galvanised by a current so powerful that it made me giddy, and insensitive to private pain.

"Of her I knew little; but she has done more for me, a stranger, than any close friend. I saw also that her self-control was faultless, and never throughout the five years I knew her, I heard her express a single word against anyone.

"She still remains in the secret garden of my life. And my greatest wish is that she will always be there. For this bit of herself which she left me, showering on me her goodness, her sympathy and her light, remains an intangible element which I take care not to desecrate by any act with which she would not agree."

~o~

7.

Note on the *Sufi Silsila*

In the course of this Memorial there have been several mentions of the "*Sufi Silsila*". The cover page carries these words and shows the image of the seal which is its symbol. What does this "*Sufi Silsila*" signify, and how does it affect the function and the fate of *Murshida Sharifa Goodenough*?

In 1925 Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan gave *Murshida Sharifa* the responsibility for transmitting to Sufis who were to come after him, the "mystical link" which connected him with all the Masters which preceded him on earth, so that the spirit of Sufism would not be extinguished nor tarnished, but would continue. To concretise this act, he had a seal made which was engraved with her name and which showed this function.



The meaning of "*Silsila*" ("*Chain*" in English) is at the same time very important for the understanding of Sufism, and very subtle its meaning. It was not even always well understood within the Sufi Movement. (Someone - who should have known better - said long ago that *Murshid* conferred this title to his co-worker "to reward her", in this way confusing this function with a sort of medallion or decoration!) This gives further reason to expand this subject somewhat.

So, what is the "*Silsila*" in the idea of a Sufi? Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan tells us that it is about the "*entire flow of spiritual life which manifests through all the illuminated souls who form the Spirit of Guidance*". In other words, these illuminated souls, these Guides on the spiritual path, form a steady chain - the *Silsila* - and they are the vehicles for the current of divine illumination. As for the flow of the divine current of illumination itself, in Arabic this is called the "*Baraka*". It is in this way that the Muslims who have some understanding of this speak of the *Baraka* of the Prophet.

One can also find more scholarly definitions. Here is one, written by John A. Subhan, in "*Sufism, its saints and shrines*":

"The teachings given in the Sufi Orders are said to be transmitted by means of a more or less continuous chain of succession which has its origin in the Founder. Such a chain is called 'Silsila' (plural 'Salâsil')."

The merit of this type of definition is that it may be understood by all. But it does not touch the essence of the subject. Still, it is interesting to examine such a definition more closely. In the first sentence it mentions: "*the teachings given in the Sufi Orders*". Which *teachings* are meant here? In certain Sufi Orders a distinction is made between on the one hand the "*Silsila el weird*", that is the transmission of the practices, prayers, meditations, etc by the Sheikh who is the instructor responsible for a group, to the members of this group. And on the other hand there is the "*Silsila el Baraka*". This leads to another question: **who** can transmit to another the *Baraka*, the current of life and of spiritual illumination coming from the spheres on high?

We embark here on a subject which is very sacred and at the same time very subtle, which words can hardly evoke. Let us first say that a human being, suitably prepared, may become an instrument, a canal, of this subtle and penetrating current from the divine spheres. This current illuminates and spiritualises such a person. It may happen that this current illuminates just one disciple, without this disciple being able to transmit it to others. But it also happens that the current comes to chosen beings with greater purity and intensity of radiance, so that they are able to share it with the heart of one or more disciples, and so to illuminate them in turn. These are the blessed ones who form the chain of the Masters, the *Silsila*.

But we are speaking here not only of the *Silsila*, but also of the ***Silsila Sufian***. What does this mean? Should there be a specific *Baraka* for Sufism, which differs from that of initiated Christians, Jews or Hindus? One can only reply to this question in both the negative and the positive. Negative, because the flow of illumination which has its origin in the divine can only be one single flow: it is self-evident that there are not two Gods, nor as many Gods as there are religions and initiatic schools! And positive, because something in this flow is specific to each of these religions and these schools. It is necessary to explain who and how.

To help us understand these nuances, let us look again at the definition of John A. Subhan. He mentions "*a succession which has its origin in the Founder*". This notion of Founder will help us understand. But because words are inadequate and an abstract language is not the best when one enters into these subtle questions, we permit ourselves to fall back onto analogies.

~o~

Pir-o-Murshid once spoke some enlightening yet mysterious words when he said that the first string instrument, the lyre, was modelled on the human heart. Did he say this because the shape of the lyre even vaguely resembles the shape of a heart? But this is not the case at all! In fact, the comparison relates to music. It is because each string of the lyre vibrates differently, just as the human heart vibrates differently with each nuance of sentiment which moves it. And just as one might compose a certain melody on the strings of a well-tuned lyre, so the divine Musician can play His score on a heart which is attentive to His music.

Pir-o-Murshid also spoke in a more definitive way: "*He who knows the mystery of vibrations in reality knows all things.*" In other words, all things, in all planes of existence, are intimately composed of vibrations. If this holds for the audible sounds of the universe, it is also holds for the spiritual world. Thus, each of the great Masters of the inner path, hearing the celestial music of the *baraka*, ***transmits this in the key of their own heart.***

This is why that which one sometimes senses in for example a Christian monastery, may be as soothing, as uplifting, as inspiring and wonderful, and yet different, from that which one may perceive in the presence of a real Sufi Pir (47), a person who has become the instrument which emanates and interprets the music of his own Order, for the nuance differs from one Sufi Order to another. In other words, the inner music which is the background of an Order, which determines its way of working with souls, guiding them, is specific to that Order. Nothing is interchangeable in the world of the Spirit - this would risk disturbing the Music of the Creator.

And then there is the Music of the Message, such as Hazrat Inayat Khan interpreted it, and which he has so to speak caused to resound in the air of our time. If this music continues and expands, it is thanks to the souls who hear it and who will hear it in the future. This Music of the Message owes a great deal to the music of the Order. In fact, the music of the Order is its background, a little like an ongoing bass note, a note which suits the age of humanity in which we find ourselves today.

This is how we may understand the importance Murshid gave to the transmission of the *Silsila*, which we have compared here to music. He needed a pure channel for this function, and he considered that Murshida Sharifa was perhaps the purest of heart among his disciples.

One question remains: how is it that all initiated mureeds do not hear the music of their Order, nor its tone? Their soul hears it, it is that which drew them to this Order, or to this Master. Their heart, once purified, will hear the music.

~o~

It is perhaps useful, at this point, to dispel a doubt. No woman's name appears among all the Sufi chains of succession. Choosing a woman would surely have shocked certain male members of Muslim origin among Murshid's entourage. To see Murshida Goodenough appointed to this function was not in their tradition! But Murshid himself broke very quickly with the idea that spirituality could only be transmitted by men. He had appointed four Murshidas and not one Murshid to help him in the spiritual work. Furthermore, he had appointed another woman, Miss Sophia Saintsbury-Green (20), to head up the religious activities, well before any woman had been called to a pastoral function in the Christian Reformed Church!

This leads to another idea, sometimes spoken and often implicit, that feminine spirituality is different from that of men. This is a strange illusion. In the domain of spirituality there can be no difference between the sexes. During the conscious return of a soul to its Source - another definition of spirituality - the first thing this soul searches for, to which it reaches out with all its force, is divine Unity, and not human duality. Whether male or female, the idea of one sex or the other quickly disappears from the sphere of the soul's consciousness, and it comes to understand that the difference between the sexes exists only in life on earth.

Some good souls will ask (sometimes perhaps with a touch of anguish): "So, in the hereafter will we never meet anyone of the opposite sex?" One may reply that to live in the hereafter, even in a very pleasant hereafter, is not necessarily the same as consciously searching for the divine there.

Some souls in the hereafter will surely continue their spiritual quest, but what will become of those who did not follow this quest in this earthly life?

~o~

8.

The work and heritage of *Murshida Sharifa Goodenough*

Her heritage

The heritage of Murshida Sharifa is with those who loved and followed her. She herself would not have appreciated us calling these her "disciples": "*One is always the disciple of Murshid*", she would say. This is certainly true in the world of Unity, but in this life on earth it is she who taught us the essential. And what is this essential? It is that progress on the inner path is not a question of knowledge, nor of "initiations", but depends on the right attitude towards God and towards life. The right attitude makes knowledge and initiations come to life, that is to say makes them fruitful for oneself and for others.

And then Murshida advised and encouraged many mureeds of Pir-o-Murshid who were distraught after his death, and who did not find in the new direction of the Movement the openness, elevation of the spirit, or the spirit of universality which had prevailed before. She always counselled them towards tolerance and harmony.

There was indeed a time when these persons entertained leaving the Movement and starting a new movement with Murshida Sharifa at its head. They were disappointed by the rather narrow direction taken in the teaching of Sufism and by the way Shaikh-ul-Mashaikh handled the new situation. Murshida refused. Elise Schamhart reports hearing Murshida's rather lively retort to one of these disappointed souls, Louis Hoyack: "*Yet, he is the Shaikh-ul-Mashaikh!*" Whatever and whoever the opposition, Murshida remained wholly loyal. And it is thanks to her efforts that many mureeds and important leaders, among them Sirkar van Stolk, stayed and worked within the Movement and avoided leaving it in spite of their disappointment and their reluctance, of which we were often confidant and witness.

We must also make mention of the little group which gathered around Murshida in Paris. Before her death she left the leadership of this group to an aged mureed, one of the first mureeds of Murshid Inayat Khan in France, Yvonne Detraux. She had the same attitude towards Murshid as Murshida Sharifa herself, and though she had few papers and lectures at her disposal (at the time these had not yet been translated into French), and that she was ignored by the leadership the Movement - which she herself preferred to ignore just as much (what would she have gained from it?) - her inner world, her experience and her human qualities sufficed to maintain the cohesion of the group until her death in 1946. It was she who transmitted the initiation to Michel Guillaume when he was 20 years old, at the same time giving him the irreplaceably precious and quiet example of true spirituality, lived in everyday life. Among the other mureeds in Paris who gathered around Yvonne Detraux, were Yvonne Guillaume, mother of Michel and mureed initiated by Murshid, also Marie-Madeleine Frère, artist and decorator Cohen-Cortis, the poet Olga Chayès, Jeanne Guérineau (who took down Murshida's lectures in French in Paris and in Suresnes), Mr Stubert and Mrs Buchmannn, and a few others - in total a dozen people.

But it was especially when she saw them individually that she "rekindled the light", and many of us needed this, the more so during the dark period of our Occupation (during the 2nd world war).

We have dwelt on the personality of Yvonne Detraux not only out of personal devotion, but because spirituality which is lived does not need splendour, nor great theoretical knowledge, nor brilliant use of words to do its work. The purity of a personality, its calm integrity, the soundness of its words, acts and even gestures, transmit infinitely better the essence and the inner light, than eloquence and explanations, be they learned, of spiritual matters. Yvonne Detraux, with her modesty and her innate discretion, brought more to her friends than many others with a reputation for spirituality, or who openly claimed to be spiritual.

What still remains of the heritage of Murshida Sharifa? There remains a spirit and an example which we have tried to bring to life in the course of this Memorial. A spirit which lives and will continue to live in all the souls who seek to take inspiration from it, and who will keep alive in their spirit the image of Murshida Sharifa, an image through which will appear the Light radiated by her Master. And this image will also set an example which will serve as a point of reference for thought, thinking, feeling and action. As Olga Chayés said so beautifully: "... her goodness, her sympathy and her light remain an intangible element which I take care not to desecrate by any act with which she would not agree."



How did Murshida Sharifa teach?

Like everyone else she taught in words, both in public and in private. We will shortly speak of her words spoken in public. Her private words were characterised by the discreetness of her character. From what we remember, and from comments we heard from others, she would not say directly: "*Instead of acting as you are, rather do this*". Yvonne Guillaume tells that one day:

"in the course of a lecture, she illustrated certain imperfections, and certain favourable ways of seeing things and of behaving, with what appeared to be imaginary examples. At that moment she cast a quick glance towards one person, a glance which clearly meant 'here you are, this is for you', and the person would understand."

Or Murshida might just make a remark, but never a reproach, and even less an accusation.

She taught even more by her conduct, by way she listened to the words of others, and one would know if she approved or did not approve, if she encouraged one in the right direction or advised one to reflect more on the attitude to take.

But above all she taught in silence. For she was one of those rare beings for whom silence is more eloquent, communicates more of the essence, than all spoken words. Michel Guillaume's account near the beginning of this Memorial of his interview with Murshida is a good example of this.



Her work

We cannot do better than to repeat what Murshid said of her in 1925:

"All those of us who know something of the history of the Sufi Movement know– if not as well as myself – the most valuable service rendered to the Cause by Murshida Goodenough in recording all the teachings without altering a jot or tittle. They will value most of all afterwards the Message as it is preserved by Murshida in its original form."

For it is thanks to Murshida Sharifa that most of the invaluable texts which comprise the work of Hazrat Inayat Khan have been preserved and later printed, for his disciples and for the general public.

At this point we need to correct another inaccuracy. It was said, and one still hears this rumour today in spite of all evidence to the contrary, that she had "altered" the words of her Master, and that it had later been necessary to restore them to the original. The reality differs. One fact illustrates this perfectly. A first edition of the texts of lectures such as they had been spoken by Murshid and held in safe-keeping by Murshida had appeared in English, edited by Kluwer in the Netherlands. The English-speaking public protested. These readers said it was not good English, not very readable, it "did not pass" (48). One will understand better by referring to the passage from the eulogy of M. de Cruzat-Zanetti which I repeat here:

"This exalted sentiment of loyalty once gave me the occasion to observe during a meeting, with admiration, her only direct, crushing attack, but always remaining within the limits imposed by her so admirable intelligence and her perfect manners. I myself was the victim of this attack. She believed that I had taken liberties with 'the sacred word'. ..."

And then this, from the same person:

*"I discreetly suggested to her once that she alone would be able to provide the interpretation and to find the desired expression to that which must have struck everyone as having the appearance of a shapeless pile of notes and transcriptions. Her immediate retort: **'Each sentence, each word left by the Murshid is perfect in form'**. By this answer she gave a magnificent example of her loyalty. Nonetheless, I stand by my opinion."*

In response to these criticisms from the public, Mr van Pallandt, assisted by an English person, later revised the texts, which now comprise a part of the collection called "*The Volumes*", edited by Barrie and Rockliff.

Later however, a committee of several persons sought to return to the authentic words. The shorthand transcripts and the transcripts in the handwriting of Murshida Sharifa were re-examined. Some new "Volumes" resulted from this work.



Her personal contribution

Under the general heading "*The Voice of Inayat*" Murshida Sharifa published three small volumes: "*Akibat, Life after Death*" - August 1918, "*Love, Human and Divine*" - February 1919, and "*The Phenomenon of the Soul*" - April 1919. The contents of these volumes appear to have been precisely memorised from lectures giving by the Master, as she herself explains:

"While under the spiritual guidance of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan, the bearer of the Sufi Message to the Western World, it has been my great privilege to hear from his voice things of the essential truth taught by all the great teachers of the world. Recognising the value of his lectures, and considering of how great importance they would be during this time of the world's spiritual awakening, I have tried to put on paper a record of them, which I have named 'Voice of Inayat Series', with the hope that they will be helpful to those who tread this path."

There is also, written and corrected by her, a collection of 45 texts or lectures, named "*The Ocean Within*". (We quoted from this in Chapter II). This collection comprises her memories of Murshid, teachings on the inner path, and remarks on the works of Jelal-uddin-Rumi, Dante and Shakespeare, always from a mystical perspective. The whole still awaits publication in English and a translation into French.

Lastly there is the much more voluminous work of the accounts of Murshida's lectures in French, taken down as best she could by Miss Guerineau and completed with the help of other listeners to these lectures, notably Yvonne Guillaume, and Vilayat Khan for some of them. These lectures were transcribed, tidied up and published many years later by Michel Guillaume. A first collection was offered to the public by the publisher "La Colombe" in 1962, under the heading "*Soufisme d'Occident*" (Sufism of the West). (We found this title unfortunate, making it sound as if there are two Sufisms, one for the East and one for the West, glaring at each other, in the way that East and West often do. Sufism is universal or it is not at all.) The other lectures by Murshida Sharifa fill nine "Notebooks" which are currently available in photocopies, but of which extracts may be found on website (<https://www.lsp.fr/> or www.soufi-inayat-khan.org). These Notebooks are named: Lectures, The Way of Beauty, Spirit and Matter, The Ideal Path, Nature and the Nature of man, The Word, The Language of Poetry, The Music of Life, The Book of Practical Wisdom, and Lectures for Mureeds. More lectures remain to be revised and published.

To give a detailed catalogue of this material in this Memorial would not be of great interest. On the other hand, the character of the teachings given by Murshida Sharifa deserves close study. She deals with most of the principal subjects developed by Hazrat Inayat Khan, by lighting them up in a more practical, more familiar way. She most often indicates the way in which we can apply them to the detail and circumstance of our own lives. However, her work in no way constitutes a popularisation. Her words retain the same light, I would even say "charisma", as those of her Master. And if the flavour is slightly different, the food she brings us has the same nourishing force, and the benefit we derive from it is complementary.

One may say that what characterises both the life and the work of *Murshida Sharifa Goodenough*, is the way it complements the life and work of Hazrat Inayat Khan. By her life she demonstrated that Sufism can be lived and followed to the end of its quest by a westerner who was not subject to religious confession and obedience, thus showing the spiritual universality and the freedom of the Sufi Message of her Master. By her own teaching she indicates how best we can to apply to ourselves "the lesson of life", the lesson of harmony, preached and offered by her Master Hazrat Inayat Khan to all the souls who are today exposed to and will tomorrow continue to be exposed to the degeneration and disorder in our modern world.

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Conclusion

What have we learned from this Memorial?

We have approached an exceptional being. Through this exceptional being we have perhaps better understood, perceived, who Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan was, because it is through the best disciples that one may appreciate the greatness of a Master. As the saying goes: one knows the tree by its fruits.

The inner development of Sharifa Lucy Goodenough shows us various aspects of the life and the experiences which await a soul who commits to the Path, given that it has the necessary aspiration, courage and faith.

We have also learned that a human being can reach that point where she expresses a divine reflection through her light, for her more than human qualities - and yet so magnificently human - of forgiving insults, of great love for the souls who turned to her because they were lost in the puzzling path of their existence and blinded by their own darkness, and whom she helped by her spirit of wisdom and her profound vision of the things of life. And by her hope in the midst of the worst of circumstances, she shows that victory, even when not of this world, is no less resounding and is certainly rich in favourable outcome for those who, in their turn, are searching and will be searching for the light in the future.

Nonetheless if the contents of this Memorial can serve to instruct, encourage and inspire those who have a spiritual ideal, the life and development of Sharifa Goodenough cannot serve as an example to be followed slavishly and blindly. Each human being, whether reaching for the heights or staying on the ground, is unique in his or her own temperament, heredity, circumstances of life, and is in the course of a life-long development which is particular to him and which remains unique. One who begins to look for the spiritual goal must make his or her own way and leave his or her own heritage.

What would be the essential, the nucleus, the most alive seed of the teaching Murshida Sharifa she passed on to us during her life on earth?

It seems to us that she described this herself in the following words taken from a lecture she gave on 6 November 1932, and which clearly reflect her experience and reveal the principle which governed her life. This lecture is called "The disciple".

" One often wonders why the Masters are so few, while the disciples appear to be so many. But this is not really the case, as actually the disciples are very few. There are many pupils, many who aspire, but it is rare to find a disciple. And those who became Masters were able to do so because they were able to be disciples. The Masters themselves, when they became masters, are disciples, disciples not of only one Master, of one being, but of all: they know how to learn from all, they know how look on each being they meet as coming from God.

"What conditions must be fulfilled to be a disciple? The 'I' must be totally renounced. One may claim to renounce all: property, security, one may say that one accepts destitution, that one can live alone, that one can bear the lack of all the comforts of life, but it is something different to deprive oneself of one's self, which is the essence of one's pride. This is the first and the last step of the disciple.

"The disciple does not apply his reasoning faculty to that which comes to him from his Master, to weigh and measure his words; no, he accepts them as a little child, without criticising, without question. He cannot say to himself: 'Look what I have just learned', and he renounces thinking 'as far as I know...', for the attitude which expresses itself in this way precludes discipleship. But the question which comes naturally to someone who is searching is: 'Must I surrender myself to a being, however elevated, to be a disciple?' One clearly needs to think it over before taking this step, and to ask oneself: 'Am I ready for this? Am I confident to do this?' One must be slow to take such a decision, for once engaged on the path, the time to weigh the pros and cons is over. And one must not say to oneself: 'Can I place the teachings of the Master next to that which I already know?' No. The disciple accepts all that comes to him from his Master as forming the essence of his understanding, at that moment he puts his reason aside. Later, he will use his reasoning faculty to assimilate, thanks also to the example which comes from his Master, and will use it to apply the teaching, to understand it more deeply.

"There is a story of a murshid surrounded by numerous mureeds who were listening to him religiously. One day he said to them: 'For a long time I have been living in the same meditation, but now I feel the desire to go and prostrate myself before the idol of the goddess Kali, with the hideous visage.' The mureeds were shocked. They all left him, except for one youth. At the threshold of the temple of the goddess the murshid said to him: 'All have left me; perhaps they were right. Do you still wish to follow me?' 'Yes', he replied, and together they prostrated themselves. The Master then asked him: 'How is it that you, a good Muslim, followed me here?' - 'You taught me that only God exists, that nought exists outside of Him - this idol is also a representation of that which we adore'. This pupil became the great Sufi Moïn-uddin-Chishti, founder of the Chishtiya School from which we come. He used his reason not to go against what his Murshid's conduct suggested, but, searching for the depth of the Murshid's idea, he succeeded in understanding him.

"It is man's ego which opposes all and even goes against God. He sets himself in opposition to his own soul, which is of God. His soul desires the spiritual life, his ego opposes this. The ego wishes to affirm the personality; the soul, which yearns for the light, is saddened. The ego projects its shadow over the soul, he holds it like a rock before the soul which longs for its own light.

"It is also here that resides the tragedy in the life of the Messenger. All souls are attracted to him, yet the ego of all repels him. From this comes all the suffering in the life of the Messenger, all the anger against him.

Among those who are attracted to the Master, the mass desires only a ray of his light, and there are those few who understand that man has an inner life, a being which he must uncover if he wishes to find all the possibilities in his life. It is these few who are called to become his disciples.

"One may also wonder if it is not desirable to have a distinct personality, and to be able to maintain one's own ideas. Will we not one day regret having lost our distinct personality in the hands of the Master? On the contrary. He who renounces in this way gains a much deeper personality, because he has broken the limits of his self; he has entered into the consciousness of a much bigger domain. The first step that one takes on this path is to renounce one's personality before one single being; the last step is to annihilate oneself before God. This idea does not please us. For us, it means to face nothingness, it is like a death, like something which prevents us from existing, and the soul desires life. But if there is an annihilation here, it is not that of the soul, it is that of the soul's prison.

"Man's ego, man's mind, his body, are the instruments of the soul, which is not destined to live in prison. This annihilation means breaking the prison bars as one sets free a caged bird in order to return it to its natural element.

"It is easier to forget one's self when we are before a being in whom we find a force and a light which attract us, than to annihilate oneself before an unknown God who is invisible, incomprehensible. And then, if in the heavens which we would like to be pure and clear, there are clouds, we say: 'This is not God's heaven'. This is how our world is, where we see so much that is wrong, so much ugliness, so many imperfections. And if someone maintains: 'God is in all human beings', we ask ourselves at once: 'Then why are there so many shortcomings, in everyone else as in myself? Is God imperfect?'

"For this reason, it is easier to place before us an ideal in the guise of a Master, a Messenger in human form, than for us to recognise and realise God directly. This does not mean that we should not try to realise God, to recognise Him in all forms, in all beings. But this attitude only really becomes possible when one has prepared oneself by taking the path of the disciple who keeps before himself his ideal and not his self, and who says:

"From the moment I take this path, I aspire to always have before me the object of my devotion, I aspire to assimilate myself more and more with him, so that my own spirit may reflect that which I value and admire in this being. For such a one the path is open for he himself to become a Master.' "

To those who have read these last pages well, it will be self-evident that Murshida Sharifa was describing her own path.



As for us, we have tried in this Memorial to paint the most accurate portrait possible of Murshida Sharifa.

Is it the portrait of a "saint"? But what is a "saint"? There are so many stereotypes in this term, so many preconceived ideas, ready-made images which are interposed between the reality of a spiritual destiny and our imagination! Murshida Sharifa was a being of flesh and blood, and not a figure in a stained-glass window. She had to endure all the constraints and ordeals of the human condition. And yet, with a heroism and a courage which were so much more than just badges, she raised herself from this limited state up to the Unlimited. In so doing she showed us, the present and future generations, that without having the same exceptional stature as Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan himself, such an ascent is possible for us too and that we may in our turn attempt it.

The stake of this enterprise was superhuman, but the victory was no less.

Suresnes, November 2011

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Translator's note

The aim of the translation is simply to make this Memorial available to English-speakers. It is a relatively literal translation in the hope that this will convey the meaning and atmosphere of the original. Where it was not possible to find the original English words of Hazrat Inayat Khan, the French was re-translated back into English, as indicated after such passages. The diary of Feizi van der Scheer, written in English though Netherlands was her first language, has been only slightly edited.

For me, doing the translation was a wonderful opportunity to learn more of the life of Murshida Sharifa, and of its meaning. She was held in the highest esteem by both of my parents Wazir and Zohra van Essen, who always had her portrait in a prominent place in their home and passed on their reverence for her. Wazir inherited Murshida Sharifa's desk, which has now come to me, and doing the translation seated at this desk, brought her ever-closer to me.

Magda Alberts van Essen, Cape Town, December 2013

Notes

Memorial of Murshida Sharifa Goodenough

- (1) Mureed - initiated follower of a Sufi master
- (2) Order - Sufi Order: founded by Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan, with the purpose of helping the disciple on his inner path by means of an adapted teaching and the counsel of one or several persons with a certain experience of this path.
- (3) Khalif (a) - Represents the master of the Sufi Order in various functions.
- (4) Murshid (a) - Guide and spiritual counsellor under the direct authority of the Pir-o-Murshid. Hazrat Inayat nominated four Murshidas: Murshida Rab'ia MARTIN, whom he nominated as head of his mission in the United States, Murshida Fazal Mai EGELING, who had the charge of his House, Murshida Sharifa GOODENOUGH, especially charged with receiving and preserving his teachings, Murshida Sophia SAINTSBURY-GREEN, who devoted herself especially to the teaching and religious aspect of the Message of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan.
- (5) Sufi garden - This garden stretched out in front of the house of the Master and his family for about 75 metres, slowly rising from the Rue de la Tuilerie to the Rue Victor Diedrich. It was planted with apricot trees. To the right going up, it was separated from the group of little dwellings known as 'The Stables' by a high brick wall, while on the left was the house where Murshida Sharifa lived and where she received her visitors. At the top end of the garden was the Hall with its bay windows, where the Master gave his lectures.
- (6) Foundation stone of the Temple - In 1926 Pir-o-Murshid laid a stone in the middle of the Sufi garden, which was to be the foundation of a temple where the activities of the Message, in particular the celebrations of the Universal Worship (see next note) would be centralised. It has never been possible to erect this Temple on this exact spot, nor according to the plans approved by Murshid.
- (7) Universal Worship - This is a part of the religious activities of the Message. It is a public celebration in the course of which six great world religions are honoured: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christian and Islam, as well as 'all those who, whether known or unknown to the world, have held aloft the light of truth through the darkness of human ignorance'. Passages from the scriptures of each of these religions are read, as well as from the Gayan of Hazrat Inayat Khan. This celebration is dedicated to the idea that all religions are one in their essence.
- (8) Zeb-un-Nissa, Baroness Tanfani - Disciple of Pir-o-Murshid, poet. Her colourful personality often enlivened Sufi meetings.
- (9) The angelic and the jinn worlds - In the Sufi teachings of Hazrat Inayat, and particularly those set out in the volume "The soul, whence and whither", the soul is described as a ray from

the divine Source, a ray which first assumes an angelic body, a body of radiance, made of purity and of the light of the plane which is closest to the Source. Next the soul assumes a body descended from the world, or of the next plane, which is a body of intelligent mental substance. It is only after this that the soul incarnates on the physical plane. The "jinn soul" to which Feizi van der Scheer alludes is that of a soul which has received a very strong imprint from the jinn world, to the extent that its attachment to the things of the earth is not always well developed.

(10) "The *Ocean Within* " - Collection of articles and lectures written or given by Murshida Sharifa and edited (corrected) by herself.

(11) Guru - Shishia - Bhau - Three vedantic terms which mean the master, the disciple and the mode of the relationship which unites them. It is an inseparable trilogy: none of the terms can exist without the other.

(12) Theo van Hoorn - Dutch mureed of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan. He left very striking memories, which manage to invoke not only the facts but also the unique atmosphere and spirit of that which could be experienced beside the Master.

(13) National Representative.- In each country where he had started centres, Pir-o-Murshid nominated one of his disciples as Representative, so as to continue the activities in his name.

(14) Wazir van Essen (1905-1981) - Was attracted to Sufism very young and became disciple of Pir-o-Murshid. He was at first the secretary of Sirkar van Stolk (see note 30) for all that concerned the Summer School in Suresnes. He played a more and more important role and eventually, after the death of Sirkar, had the responsibility for the Sufi Movement they had co-founded in South Africa. He was respected by all for his wisdom, his moderation, and the equilibrium of which his life bore witness.

(15) Fazal-Manzil - (The House of Blessings) - This is what Pir-o-Murshid called the house where he lived with his whole family, at 27 Rue de la Tuilerie, in Suresnes. The Sufi field was across the road.

(16) Summer School - Each year from 1923 to 1926 from July to September, Pir-o-Murshid lived in Suresnes, where he lectured, held meetings with those in charge, received individual mureeds and meditated with them. Especially his morning and afternoon lectures from these times now form the greatest part of the written teachings he has left us.

(17) "Tasawuri-murshid" -literally: mental visualisation of the murshid, with the aim of eventually leading to a spiritual union with him. Here it is clearly a question of a spiritual union.

(18) Mrs Hart van Sautter - was appointed in 1920 as being responsible for the Geneva centre.

(19) Baroness M.C. d'Eichtal - National Representative for the Sufi Movement in France. Except during the summer schools, the lectures and meetings in Paris were held at her apartment.

(20) Murshida Sophia Saintsbury-Green - With a background in Theosophy, she was very quickly attracted to Sufism and became a mureed of Pir-o-Murshid. She was gifted in literature and gave numerous lectures on the teaching of the Master. She wrote two books: "Memories of Hazrat Inayat Khan" and "Wings of the World". It is thanks to her that in 1921 the Universal Worship (see Note 7) was instituted and spread. She was the first to be appointed responsible for this activity (Seraja).

(21) Chishti School - School stemming from Khwaja Abou Ishaq Shâmi de Chisht, this School became widespread in India thanks to Hazrat Kwaja Mo'inudin Chishti Sanjari Ajmeri, who lived in the 12th century of our era and to which we are linked through Murshid Inayat Khan. This School practices music and harmony in all its aspects as a means of spiritual evolution.

(22) Sadhana - Sanscrit word used by Hazrat Inayat to mean "the way of accomplishment", be this in the inner or outer life. Here it is clearly about the inner life.

(23) Gayan - A collections of sayings, poems, prayers and invocations. Together with the Vadan and Nirtan, it forms basic reading for all the disciples of Murshid Inayat Khan.

(24) Antoinette Schamhart - Pupil and close friend of Murshida Sharifa, she did what she could to assist Murshida through her trials, notably during her unfortunately fruitless approaches to Shaikh-ul-Masheikh. She was the mother of Elise Schamhart, co-author of this Memorial.

(25) Samadhi - Feizi van der Scheer alludes to the solemn occasions where Murshid entered into a profound meditation, and where a few selected mureeds could come before him to receive a special blessing.

(26) Begum - Ora Ray Baker, wife of Hazrat Inayat Khan. She was always called "Begum".

(27) Collective Interview - Restricted group of mureeds to whom Murshid gave esoteric teaching.

(28) Vadan - With the Gayan and Nirtan, handbook of the disciples of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan.

(29) Rumi - Jelal-uddin Rumi. One of the great mystical poets of Sufism, whose principal work, the Masnawi-i-Manawi, written in Persian, is still considered today as a veritable Bible by a large majority of Sufis. He lived in the 13th century of our era.

(30) Sa'di - another great Persian Sufi poet. His body of work is great, the Bustan ("orchard") being the best known of his works. He lived till he was 100 in the 12th and 13th centuries of our era.

(31) Sirkar van Stolk (1894-1963) -One of the principal disciples of Murshid Inayat Khan. He was Murshid's secretary for a long time, and accompanied him on many of his travels. He also organised Summer Schools in Suresnes, assisted by Wazir van Essen. Sirkar was for many years National Representative for the Netherlands, and finally moved to South Africa, where, still

assisted by Wazir, he founded a Sufi movement which thrived and spread. He left, among other things, a collection of his souvenirs, "Memories of a Sufi sage, Hazrat Inayat Khan". He had the qualities of a good guide: experience, benevolence and the ideal of the Message. He counselled, helped and guided a great number of his Sufi friends in the path shown by Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan.

(32) Margaret Skinner - Owner of the house at 19 Rue Victor Diedrich which she let to Murshida Sharifa until she refused to renew the lease, probably influenced by the campaign of disparagement against her. The result had a very unfavourable effect on the health of Murshida Sharifa.

(33) The apocryphal gospel of Thomas - Gospel excluded not without reason by the Catholic church: its enigmatic character could lead believers into confusion. One needs "ears to hear", that is listeners who, even without much experience of the mystical way, are aware of a certain number of facts, both internal and external.

(34) Najm-al-din-Koubra - (approx 1221 of our era). Great Sufi Master of Central Asia, who left important written work, making an important contribution to the knowledge of the path called "ishraki", the spiritual path based on the development of the inner light.

(35) Mureeds' House - A large house situated behind Fazal Manzil, Rue de l'Hippodrome, which accommodated mureeds, especially during the summer schools.

(36) Murshid Dussaq (Emilien Talewar) - Appointed Secretary General of the Sufi Movement in Geneva by Inayat Khan in 1922, then Khalif in 1924. He was also National Representative for Switzerland. He became a Murshid some years after this.

(37) Shanavaz van Spengler - disciple of Murshid Inayat Khan, to whom he was unfailingly loyal. He was generous but obstinate and with a caustic tongue, which caused several breaks with his friends, who, like he himself, suffered from this.

(38) The Smiling Forehead - collection of lectures of Hazrat Inayat Khan on various subjects.

(39) Vilayat Khan (1917-2004) - elder son of Hazrat Inayat Khan. He played an important role in spreading Sufism after the 1939-1945 war. He concentrated mainly on bringing different religions together, and on revivifying the Sufi Order. He worked mostly in France, the United States and Germany. In France, at Fazal Manzil, he started a Meditation School, and wrote several books on Sufism, in English and in German, notably "The light of truth", "Stufen einer Meditation", "Towards the One", and "Samadhi with open eyes". He trained numerous pupils.

(40) Christian Science - philosophical spiritualist movement founded in the United States towards the end of the 19th century by Mrs Baker Eddy. It denied illness and held that all could be healed by mental concentration on positive thoughts. Begum, wife of Murshid, was related to this family.

(41) Daftar, Durbari, Khankah - We don't know the meaning of "daftar". "Durbari" has the sense of an opportunity to meet with a certain purpose, and "Khankah" generally means the

residence of a master, where he receives and teaches his disciples. For Murshida Sharifa, external things could signify a related but rather different reality.

(42) The Inner Life - A basic work of Pir-o-Murshid which gives the almost essential rudiments for understanding the spiritual approach.

(43) - Vairaghi - the state of a person whose consciousness, having seen the unreality of the world, its ever moving and unreliable nature, has detached itself from the world.

(44) Wazifa - similar in Sufism to a mantram in Hinduism: repetition of a sacred word.

(45) Rasul - In the perspective of the teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan, this is a prophet who, known or unknown to the world, brings the Message of God for a whole epoch.

(46) Life's puzzling ways - phrase from the Invocation to the Pir, from the Vadan.

(47) Pir - In Sufism, an illuminated being capable of transmitting spiritual light to a disciple, and to counsel and guide him in his outer and inner life. The characteristics of a Pir are described in the invocation to the Pir in the Vadan.

(48) It was not good English - we give a typical example:

Here is a text which was taken down in shorthand and which was transmitted literally by Murshida Sharifa. It is taken from "The art of painting" - Suresnes 9 July 1924:

"The art of painting is as ancient as humanity. In all ages it has existed, not in the same form as it exists now".

This exact sentence appears in the first edition of the book "Yesterday, today and tomorrow", Chapter IV. It reappears in the following form in Volume X of the current edition: "Art:yesterday, today and tomorrow", Chapter VI, p180:

"The art of painting is an ancient as the human race. It has existed in all ages, though not in the same form as today."

This is clearly better English, but these are not the words Pir-o-Murshid spoke. We do not pronounce any judgment on the value or the legitimacy of the editing process. We are just saying that it is false to maintain that Murshida Sharifa "altered" Murshid's words. The truth is exactly the opposite.

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