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Daya and Sharda: Love, Class, Race, and Gender in One Interracial Union

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts  
in Asian American Studies

by

Fareen Tasfia Ali

2023



## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Daya and Sharda: Love, Class, Race, and Gender in One Interracial Union

by

Fareen Tasfia Ali

Master of Arts in Asian American Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Valerie Matsumoto, Chair

In the 1910s, an Indian prince and a white American socialite made history by falling in love, and eventually eloping and marrying each other. The romantic relationship of Inayat Khan, an elite and famous musician from Baroda in India, and Ora Ray Baker, an upper-class woman born in New Mexico in America, is a unique case in the context of early-20<sup>th</sup>-century race relations. They not only challenged racial barriers through their courtship and marriage, but also spearheaded the religious Sufi Movement in the West.

This thesis explores how race, class, gender roles, and spirituality played important parts in constructing Inayat and Ora's story. Race affected them by determining how Inayat was received in the United States and presenting an obstacle, as they faced disapproval and danger in pursuing their interracial relationship. Class influenced the demographics of the Sufi movement, as well as allowing Inayat and Ora to cross paths in the first place, due to their both having elite social status. Examining their relationship in the context of the gender roles of the era, Inayat and Ora appear progressive in some ways, breaking certain conventions, while adhering to other traditions, including Ora's responsibility for doing the domestic labor for their family and Inayat's relatives. The couple's spiritual beliefs formed the heart of their movement that made a mark in Europe and the United States. Overall, examining Ora's and Inayat's interracial and international romance, which lasted until his death in 1927, reveals truths about the environment of the time and place.

The thesis of Fareen Tasfia Ali is approved.

Victor Bascara

Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns

Valerie J. Matsumoto, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2023

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## Timeline of Events

1882: Inayat Khan born to Khatidja Bibi (mother) and Rahmat Khan (father) in Baroda, Gujarat, India on July 5.

1888: Ora Ray Baker born to Aletta Margaret Hiatt (mother) and Eurastus Warren Baker (father) on May 8 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

1910: Inayat, already twice widowed, comes to the United States as a musician on tour with relatives.

1910: Inayat and Ora first meet in San Francisco. At her brother's suggestion, Ora starts taking music lessons from Inayat.

Between 1910 and 1913: Letters between Ora and Inayat, and she escapes from her family.

1913: Ora boards a ship for Europe on February 28.

1913: Ora and Inayat marry in London on March 20.

Later 1913?: Looking for Ora, police inquire about an American girl in Paris.

Later 1913?: After Inayat's receiving an invitation to perform in Russia, he and Ora go there.

1914: Noor Inayat Khan is born on January 1 in Russia.

Later 1914: Inayat and his family leave Russia, because of revolution, and reach Paris.

Later 1914: Inayat goes to Geneva. (\*letter suggests June-ish).

1914: World War I begins in July.

Later 1914: Khan family moves to London.

1915: Inayat and his brothers work for Richard Wagner & Co.

1916: Inayat and his brothers work for the London Opera House.

1916: Vilayat Inayat Khan is born on June 19.

1917: Hidayat Inayat Khan is born on August 6.

1918: In London, Inayat establishes the Sufi Order in the West

1919: Khairunisa (Claire) Inayat Khan is born on June 3.

Late 1920: The family goes to live near Paris, moving from house to house.

1922: Family moves to Fazal Manzil (bought in 1921 by wealthy supporter, Murshida Fazal Mai).

1923: Inayat travels to the United States, visits San Francisco, and visits Murshida Rabia Martin there; sends letters to Ora (April).

1923: Inayat establishes the Sufi Movement in Geneva.

Late 1925: Inayat makes third trip to the United States.

1926: Inayat meets with Henry Ford.

1926: Inayat sets sail for India on August 28 and arrives in Karachi on October 17.

1927: Inayat dies in India on February 5.

1927: Ora and their children travel to India around October to December.

Circa 1939: Hidayat marries Leni.

1939: World War II begins in Europe.

1940: Family flees from France to England. Noor's SOE training may have begun at this time.

1944: Noor, a British agent in France, is captured and killed by the Nazis in Dachau on September 13.

1945: World War II ends.

1949: Ora dies in Paris on May 2; Claire is with her.

1950s: Claire and Vilayat visit their uncle Pierre and his wife in the United States.

## Introduction

“Love has a will and a will has a way; so there is much hope for us. May the iron bonds of love keep our hearts always together and I am sure that our bodies shall unite sooner or later.”<sup>1</sup>

These words were written by Ora Ray Baker, a white American woman, to her Indian lover, Inayat Khan, in one of more than fifty letters she sent to him in the early years of the 1910s. Ora Ray, a delicate-looking beauty in her early twenties, made the decision to leave the United States and pursue a marriage with Inayat in Europe soon after writing this letter. What followed was a journey Ora made as secretly as possible, starting with the discreet purchase of a ticket for a passage from Philadelphia to Europe, a transaction made in New York. On the 28th of February 1913, Ora took control of her life when boarding the ship bound for Europe, obscuring her appearance as much as possible by donning a black suit and hiding all her hair underneath a hat. Once she had arrived on the ship, Ora kept to her cabin as much as possible to avoid being detected or recognized. But why all the secrecy? Ora specifically told Inayat in the last letter before her departure from America to be “well guarded” as she did not want to “endanger” his life. Indeed, Ora was warning him of her half-brother Pierre Bernard, a supposed expert on Sanskrit and yoga, who had threatened to kill Inayat the minute he found out about the romantic relationship between Inayat and his sister. Despite Pierre’s threat, Ora wedded Inayat in England, beginning a marriage that lasted fourteen years until Inayat’s death in 1927. Over the course of

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<sup>1</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four: The Memoirs of Claire Ray Harper (Khairunisa Inayat Khan) with poems, stories, and letters from the Inayat Khan Family*. (New Lebanon, New York: Omega Publications, 2011). Letter from Ora Ray Baker to Inayat Khan, pg. 35. This book, compiled by David Ray Harper, includes Claire’s recollections and letters between Ora and Inayat, as well as poems written by Ora Ray Baker, and pictures of the family. Also included is David Ray Harper’s commentary, as well as information from other primary and secondary sources, and a section on Noor Inayat Khan primarily written by Tara Dundas-Harper, who is Claire’s granddaughter.

the marriage, they had four children, spearheaded a movement that brought an Eastern religion to the West, and maintained the romance of their initial courtship through love letters and poetry.

As the focus of my thesis, Ora and Inayat's unusual relationship offers a lens through which to examine the complex interplay of race relations, class hierarchy, gender roles, and religious spirituality in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their relationship and religious movement were also affected by Orientalism, which I define in this thesis as the culturally ingrained thought process that constructs South Asia, particularly South Asia under British rule, as a fascinating "other" to the United States and European countries. Ultimately, this line of thought serves to construct the white Westerner as a full human being and the South Asian as a caricature that the Westerner may learn about and be inspired by without sacrificing his own wholeness. It also asserts the United States and the dominant imperial countries of Europe as active, successful world powers, with South Asia being the passive, colonized area in this scenario, and thus, builds itself upon a colonized history.

My definition for "Orientalism" has been inspired by Edward Said's definition but fitted for this paper with my own contributions.<sup>2</sup> The presence of Orientalism shadowed Inayat's and Ora's lives throughout Inayat's career in the United States and Europe, through the backlash the couple faced when they began their relationship, and through the spreading of their spiritual movement, referred to in this thesis as the Sufi Movement.

## **Race**

Ora and Inayat's first meetings and courtship developed during the 1910s, when U.S. anti-miscegenation laws differed by state and region. It was permissible for a white person to marry an Asian in many states on the East Coast, but not in California, which was precisely where Ora and Inayat first met, in San Francisco.

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<sup>2</sup> Said, Edward. *Orientalism*, 5th ed. (Penguin Books, 2003).

South Asian Indians were not a particularly populous demographic in California by the time Inayat arrived in the United States, but they weren't rare or unheard of either, with the exact statistics unclear.<sup>3</sup> There was a significant population of South Asian laborers, particularly Punjabis, who settled in California in the late 19th and early 20th century.<sup>4</sup> While these communities were forming, public attitudes about South Asians on the West Coast were taking shape as well. In 1907, a white mob in Bellingham, Washington, drove an entire group of Indian immigrants from the city through threats and violence.<sup>5</sup> Two years later, a government official in California stated that Indians were "regarded as the least desirable...of all the eastern Asiatic races..." and that the "assimilative quality of the East Indians appear to be the lowest of those of any race in the West."<sup>6</sup> In 1910, the *San Francisco Call* published a political cartoon titled, "A New Problem for Uncle Sam," that showed an annoyed, reluctant Uncle Sam figure trying to hand back a racist caricature of an Indian man to the British in India.<sup>7</sup>

Although South Asians may not have been welcomed as individuals and human beings, the American public was fascinated by Western, Orientalist fantasies that constructed South Asia as an exotic "other" to the United States. As exemplified by Ora's half-brother Pierre being a promoter and teacher of Sanskrit and yoga, there was an interest in and demand for South Asian culture, clothing, religion, and performance throughout the United States and Europe. On the East Coast and in the South, middle-class Americans would purchase handicrafts from Bengali

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<sup>3</sup> Exact numbers unclear.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard, Karen. *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi Mexican Americans*. (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1992), pg. 29-33.

<sup>5</sup> Shah, Nayan. *Stranger Intimacy: Contrasting Race, Sexuality, and the Law*. 1st edition. (University of California Press, 2012) Pgs. 25-30

<sup>6</sup> Leonard, Karen. *Making Ethnic Choices*, pg. 24.

<sup>7</sup> "A New Problem for Uncle Sam." *San Francisco Call*. 1910.

chikondars in the hopes of elevating their class status through appearance.<sup>8</sup> And in the American circus, fantasized stereotypes of South Asians abounded.<sup>9</sup>

A striking example of how sensationalized desire for South Asia and the Orient clashed with the actual treatment of and discrimination against South Asians was the case of five Indian women who arrived to perform a dance in Augustin Daly's play *Zanina*, on a New York stage in 1881. Before the actual performance, the Nautch dancers were advertised as alluring and exotic, but after the performance, they were ridiculed and mocked for key reasons such as not showing as much skin as the audience had expected. They were compared to white performers in brownface such as Maggie Harold, who was lauded as a more satisfying representation of an East Indian woman.<sup>10</sup>

These Orientalist ideas formed the backdrop for Inayat Khan's arrival in the United States of America in 1910. Inayat came with several male relatives to perform Indian music, an endeavor that was boosted greatly by the fact that Ruth St. Denis, a famous European American dancer, included them as part of her tour when she was in her Indian phase. From the beginning of Inayat's time in the West, the direct relationship between white perceptions of India and how Indians were actually treated is evident.

## **Class**

However, the fact that Inayat was an upper-class man, and more importantly, a prince, helped solidify his position in the United States and Europe, making possible his meeting with Ora, and facilitating the reach of his spiritual movement. Unlike most of the Indian immigrants to the United States in this period, Inayat came to America due to feeling a calling to spread a

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<sup>8</sup> Bald, Vivek. *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America*. (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2013), pg. 19.

<sup>9</sup> Davis, Janet. (1993) "Spectacles of South Asia at the American Circus, 1890-1940", *Visual Anthropology*, 6:2, 121-138, DOI: 10.1080/08949468.1993.9966611

<sup>10</sup> Srinivasan, Priya. "The Nautch women dancers of the 1880s: Corporeality, US Orientalism, and anti-Asian immigration laws." *Women and Performance: a journal of feminist theory*. 19:1. 3-22. (2009).

spiritual message and perform music. Working-class Indians came to do labor, seeking a way to make money without the interference of British colonialism, or to escape harsh conditions on the ships they worked on. If they were performers, they were likely to have been recruited, like the Nautch dancers who were brought to New York by a white theater manager, Augustin Daly. By contrast, Inayat made an independent choice to come to the United States as a musician.

As in Inayat's case, class status played an important role for Ora. Although not royalty, Ora's family possessed enough wealth to fund Ora's constant traveling in her younger years with her father; this travel included her having many wardrobes and expensive gifts. In short, having an elite position in the social and economic hierarchy was one of the factors that made it possible for Inayat and Ora to meet in the first place, at the Ramakrishna Ashram building in San Francisco, and it also helped Ora make her escape to Europe, prepared by her extensive experience of travel and able to buy a ticket for herself.

Class status continued to play a large role throughout the course of Inayat and Ora's marriage and lives with regard to the Sufi Movement they led. The members of the Sufi Movement tended to be wealthy people who had the time to attend Inayat's lectures and the school the Sufi Movement offered. Their class status brought Inayat and Ora into contact with royalty, socialites, and famous thinkers and artists, such as composer Claude Debussy, dancer Mata Hari, writers Rabindranath Tagore and Khalil Gibran, and industrialist Henry Ford.

## **Gender**

Along with class status, gender roles also played an important part in Inayat and Ora's courtship, in their marriage, and the Sufi movement. For the purpose of this paper, gender is defined as maleness and femaleness, and the discussion of gender roles throughout extends to

behaviors that both complied with and rebelled against patriarchal standards of Ora's and Inayat's societies.

Ora was often described as delicate, despite all the strength she seemed to show over the course of her life. She was also treated possessively by Pierre, especially when it came to the question of her relationship with Inayat, a reflection of the image of the pure white woman who needed to be protected by the white man from dangerous men of color. Ora challenged this image by taking her life into her own hands, and deciding to communicate with Inayat in secret, despite Pierre's threats; her determined spirit was obvious in the letters she wrote. Ora's ultimate act of rebellion was leaving America by herself to pursue what she wanted for herself.

However, there were instances when the couple enacted traditional gender roles, most likely due to internalizing the expectations of the period. Ora traveled with Inayat at the beginning of their time together in Europe, but eventually ended up staying at home with their children while Inayat traveled by himself to spread the Sufi Movement's message. Additionally, the bulk and expectation of the housework fell on women's shoulders. Even though Inayat had three male relatives with him, it seemed to be expected that Ora would help take care of them, a duty that would take a toll on her, according to Ora and Inayat's youngest daughter. And whenever Ora did not do housework, it was usually because the duties had been handed off to a female disciple of the movement instead, such as Raden Ayou Jodjana.

Nevertheless, through the Sufi Movement and the spirituality in Inayat and Ora's life together, women were revered in ways that corresponded to certain cultural ideas of womanhood. The notion of motherhood was of great importance, as Inayat insisted, instructing to his children to always love and respect Ora; he claimed that a person's prayers went unheard by God if they did not consider their mother and that the most sacred responsibility of a human being was

towards her. The “mother” was also a seemingly metaphorical representation of status within the Sufi Movement itself, as Inayat referred to his very first disciple, Ada Martin (whose name was later changed to Rabia by Inayat himself), in the West as “Mother.” It is noteworthy that women seemed to form the majority of the Inayat Khan Sufi movement and held many high positions. Murshida Rabia Martin became, according to Inayat, responsible for carrying the Sufi Message in America. Other notable female leaders were Murshida Fazal Mai, Kismet Stam, and Raden Ayou Jodjana, along with some important women who were referred to by the honorific title “Sheikha.”

The fact that women, particularly white upper-class women, were attracted to Inayat’s movement can offer insights into Inayat and Ora, the scope of the Sufi Movement, the social position of women in America and Europe, and the intersections of class and race with regards to gender. Questions arise with regards to women’s gravitation towards the Sufi Movement. Was it because they were offered a role that felt more empowering than the roles they were offered in their everyday lives? Did it mostly stem from genuine belief in the movement? Did Orientalist perspectives of India and Islam as fascinating and different have a strong part in it? Did it provide a satisfying combination of tradition and change with regard to women’s place? Or was it a mixture of all these reasons?

Inayat himself seemed to believe strongly in women’s spirituality, providing one explanation for why women attained such high positions within the Sufi Movement. All things considered, the significance of women in the Sufi Movement is truly remarkable for the society it took place in, and it is perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the environment Inayat and Ora found themselves in.

### **Religion/Spirituality**

Inayat's movement was based in the larger Islamic sect of Sufism, often referred to as "mystical Islam", and in the more specific variation of Sufism known as Chishti Sufism. Chishti Sufism originated in India, tracing back to the Sufi saint Hazrat Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti. The main belief and goal of Chishti Sufism is the Unity of Allah/God.

The principles of Chishti Sufism include a strong love for Allah/God, a love that incorporates emotions and an understanding of the cosmos, rather than either optimism for attaining Heaven or a fear of ending up in Hell. The Chishti Sufi faith also relinquishes the material world and possessions, as they are considered in opposition to faith in Allah/God. Accompanying this notion is the concept of "futih," which are voluntary offerings given to the Chishtis for their livelihood, offerings that they themselves do not ask for as charity. Other significant components of the faith include pursuing peace, steering clear of any interactions with the state, and aiming to create a society that is free from discrimination. Motivations such as revenge are associated with animals rather than humans in the Chishti worldview.

An interesting feature of Chishti Sufism is that an official conversion to Islam is not demanded of those who are starting out in the practices of the Chishti faith. Converting to Islam is believed to be something that happens after one goes through emotional change.<sup>11</sup>

All these facets of the Chishti Sufi faith are evident in Inayat and Ora's behavior and practices, with Inayat's own unique handling of certain principles. Inayat held a rather negative view of materialism; he, Ora, and their family lived on gifts from wealthy donors, with the most striking example being the mansion in France that was given to them by the widowed disciple Fazal Mai. Peace and harmony certainly formed a strong basis of the Sufi Movement, and anything even remotely resembling violence does not seem to appear in Inayat's teachings.

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<sup>11</sup>"What is Chishti Sufism", Dar-UI-Iman, <http://chishti.org/ideology.htm>

The special status of music in the Sufi Movement came from its importance in Inayat's family, tracing back to his grandfather Maula Baksh, a famous Chishti Sufi musician who secured the title of prince due to how much he was respected. It was from that title of prince that Inayat's family came to be considered royalty. Thus, music went hand in hand with Inayat's teachings and spreading of the Chishti Sufi faith, as well as his social status and family history.

Perhaps the most unique interpretation of Chishti principles is Inayat and Ora's incorporation of elements from other religions into their practices. The pair celebrated Christmas with their family, and Inayat included figures such as the Buddha and Krishna into his letters when speaking of great men to look up to. Figures revered in both Islam and Christianity and/or Judaism, such as Jesus Christ and Moses, were referred to by Inayat using their English names rather than Arabic ones.

Yet the opposite also happened, where white followers of the Sufi Movement, who were either from a Christian or Jewish background, adopted changes to fit a more Indian Muslim mold. Ora, for example, referred to God as "Allah" in her poems, took on the name Pirani Ameena Begum, and wore saris from time to time. As mentioned previously, Inayat changed Ada Martin's name to Rabia Martin, and she observed some Islamic principles Inayat taught her in their letters, such as dhikr, or remembrance of Allah/God. Other followers' names also make the change obvious, such as those of Fazal Mai, previously known as Petronella Egeling, and Sharifa Goodenough, who used to be named Lucy.

In sum, the aspects of race, Orientalism, gender, and class all contributed to the expansion of the Sufi Movement. Crucial monetary and cultural support came from wealthy patrons who were attracted by Inayat's charisma and by the intrigue of a faith that came from India and the East. Women's participation and labor propelled the movement forward.

Certainly, the appeal of the beliefs and values of the Chishti Sufi order drew followers and formed the basis of the beginning Sufi Movement in the West. But it is the intersection of race, class, and gender, along with overarching Orientalism at work, that formed the larger picture of how the Sufi Movement developed. And it is the combination of all these factors that forms a lens for interpreting Ora and Inayat's marriage, and the different ways in which it was both groundbreaking and conventional for the time and place.

### **Methodology**

My methodology included examining several primary and secondary sources to piece together the history of Inayat's and Ora's relationship. The main book I used was a combination of both primary and secondary sources, called *We Rubies Four: The Memoirs of Claire Ray Harper (Khairunisa Inayat Khan)*, published in 2011. The book, compiled by Inayat and Ora's grandson David Ray Harper, includes sections written by his daughter Tara Dundas-Harper, as well as letters, poems, photographs, and memoirs of Inayat Khan and Ora Ray Baker's family. A large portion of this collection, from which I take a great deal of evidence, is the memoir sections written by Khairunisa Inayat Khan, the youngest daughter and child of Inayat and Ora, whom I will refer to as Claire throughout. Aside from Claire's accounts, some of the most useful sources from the same book were the letters exchanged by Inayat and Ora, poems written by both Inayat and Ora, but primarily by Ora, and photographs and drawings of the family. David Ray-Harper's collection also contains information retrieved from secondary sources, including biographies of Inayat Khan and his older daughter Noor Inayat Khan, as well as books written by Inayat and Pierre.

In addition to the documents in Harper's book, I examined letters exchanged between Inayat and his followers, books written by his followers, and some of Inayat's own work as

primary sources. Inayat's autobiography, made available to the public by Richard Shelquist, was a group effort. Although the book presented Inayat's narrated experiences, it should be noted that several women --Regina Miriam Bloch, Hanifa Sheaf, Sophia Green, Khatidja Young, Sakina Furnee, Kismet Stam, and Murshida Sharifa Goodenough--did a great deal of the work in taking dictation from Inayat, writing it down on paper and compiling it, with Inayat gathering the references and some of the pictures.

I analyze the historical information made available through these sources through the lens of the different topics mentioned throughout the introduction. I have used and built upon the ideas and related historical information from the following sources: Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Nayan Shah's *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West*, Karen Lystra's *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth Century America*, "Sexuality and Politics in the Early Twentieth-Century International Women's Movement" by Leila J. Rupp, Vivek Bald's *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America*, *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi Mexican Americans* by Karen Leonard, "The Nautch women dancers of the 1880's: Corporeality, US Orientalism, and anti-Asian immigration laws" by Priya Srinivasan, *Bengali Settlement in Britain* by Faruque Ahmed, "Making Home in Britain" from the British Library website under their South Asians in Britain section, and *Spectacles of South Asia at the American circus, 1890-1940* by Janet Davis.

For religious information, the content of the Chishti Order's website, [chishti.org](http://chishti.org), was particularly useful.

## **Overview**

Family accounts present Inayat and Ora's lives as a fairytale romance. In general, Inayat Khan's life has been romanticized by the Sufi Movement. At first glance, the story comes off as

flowery and perhaps even legendary. What I aim to do, through my research and analysis, is show the other factors that affected the lives of these two historical figures and their love story: hard work and domestic labor provided by Ora and other women, the harsh reality of race playing an important part in determining one's life and circumstances in early 20th century America, the ever present shadow of Orientalism, and the fact that societal class division was a significant component in Ora and Inayat meeting, and in the success of their movement. Paying attention to these factors hidden behind the fairytale makes Ora's and Inayat's stories more compelling, showing how their unique love story came to be in the landscape of the West in the 1910s and 1920s.

## Backgrounds

### **Inayat Khan**

Inayat Khan, a spiritual leader, prince, and talented musician, was born on July 5, 1882, to his mother Khatidja Bibi and his father, Rahman Khan. With his home in the city of Baroda located in Gujarat, Inayat was the grandson of the renowned musician and prince Maula Baksh through his mother's side. Rahman Khan was also a musician and came from a family distinguished by a tradition of having a mystic in every generation.

The importance of spirituality is also emphasized through Khatidja Bibi, who claimed to have dreams of Prophet Muhammad and Jesus Christ (known as Prophet Isa by Muslims) while pregnant with Inayat.<sup>12</sup>

As Inayat and his family reported, this significance of dreams would continue throughout his life, with important dreams occurring at different stages, such as Inayat dreaming of his father being ill while he was away traveling. The importance of dreams would also come up with Inayat and Ora's first meeting, when Ora recounted a dream to him that brought them closer together.

Musical education was a key aspect of young Inayat's life; he learned a great deal from Maula Baksh, his role model. According to Inayat, Maula Baksh's care and guidance of him was like the shade of a large tree to a little plant. Inayat appreciated learning Indian music, especially the deeper meaning Indian music held for him, which he experienced while traveling to Nepal as a youth and hearing the classical singers of India: "Inayat learned not only the best execution of classical singing, but how music sweetened the personality, and how harmonious the thought, speech and action of a musician becomes, emitting the atmosphere of music...He learned more

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<sup>12</sup> It is unclear as to how Inayat knew about these dreams, since in his autobiography it says that his mother only revealed these dreams to his grandmother in the "Khadija Bibi" chapter.

than ever to regard music as sacred.”<sup>13</sup>. Because Inayat was also a religious Muslim, one challenge that arose was the fact that many Muslims, including Inayat himself, at the time believed that music had been forbidden by Prophet Muhammad.<sup>14</sup> Inayat made peace with this belief by concluding that the music that was forbidden by Islam was music that encouraged frivolity, and not music that moved the soul as he had experienced, which he called “the best part of music that rises in its perfect development.”<sup>15</sup>

This viewpoint of Inayat, concerning differences between “frivolous” music and sacred music would continue as he grew older, becoming especially evident when he traveled to Bombay, where it was hard for him to see music treated simply as entertainment. It was his goal to restore the music of India to the greatness it had once had. Inayat was able to express some of his views on music to the Nizam of Hyderabad, with whom he developed a close friendship and for whom he personally performed, being so loyal to the Nizam that he did not accept invitations to perform from other nobles at the time. The Nizam reciprocated by bestowing upon Inayat the title of “Tansen”<sup>16</sup>, and gifted him an emerald ring, one of many honors Inayat received over the course of his life in India in reward for his music. Inayat explained to the Nizam that “I am sent

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<sup>13</sup> Khan, Inayat, with the assistance of Regina Miriam Bloch, Khatidja Young, Hanifa Sheaf, Sophia Green, Sharifa Goodenough, Kismet Stam, and Sakina Furnee, with regards to dictation and compiling. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Youth-Music chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography\\_10.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography_10.htm) . Autobiography made accessible by Richard Shelquist through Wahiduddin’s Web.

<sup>14</sup> The forbidding of music traces to a hadith, or reported saying of Prophet Muhammad, that criticized those who allowed music. However, it should be noted that many hadith are not historically reliable according to historian Dr. Joshua Little, that there is also a hadith that is pro-music, and that the Qu’ran does not explicitly forbid music anywhere.

<sup>15</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Youth-Music chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography\\_10.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography_10.htm)

<sup>16</sup> “Tansen” refers to a member of Mughal emperor Akbar’s court, one of the “nine jewels”. Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Youth-Music chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography\\_10.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography_10.htm)

here by God. What I have brought you is not only music merely meant to entertain, but the appeal of harmony which unites souls in God.”<sup>17</sup>

Although music was important to Inayat, what he treasured most was spirituality, with the "Sufi feeling" being the "main joy in his life."<sup>18</sup> And it was through spirituality that one of the most important relationships in Inayat's life emerged, which was the one between him and his Murshid, Sayyed Muhammad Abu Hashim Madani. It was Madani who said to Inayat that "...there is one tie which is the closest of all and that is the relation between Murshid and mureed, which is a friendship that never ends, for it is in the path of God and Truth and is eternal." Madani influenced Inayat greatly, and it is evident from his way of living that Inayat may have been inspired by Madani as a role model. In his autobiography, Inayat wrote: "The Murshid was an ascetic within, but a man of the world without. He had a large family, sons and daughters, and a home where love and culture reigned and which was always hospitably thrown open to all comers."<sup>19</sup> Madani, or at least his teachings, would also come to play an important role when Inayat and Ora's relationship developed, despite him being long deceased by then.<sup>20</sup>

What is particularly remarkable about both Inayat's musical and spiritual endeavors is the fact that both eventually inclined him to reach for the West. Inayat showed much interest in Western music, reminiscent of his uncle Alauddin Khan.<sup>21</sup> Alauddin had studied music in the West, inspiring Inayat to learn European theory on music and the violin.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Youth-Music chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography\\_10.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography_10.htm)

<sup>18</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Youth-Sufi chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography\\_10.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography_10.htm)

<sup>19</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Youth-Music chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography\\_10.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography_10.htm)

<sup>20</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 30-31.

<sup>21</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Youth-Sufi chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography\\_10.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography_10.htm)

As for his approach to spirituality, from a young age, Inayat had shown openness towards other religions besides his own and to those who practiced those religions. Inayat showed appreciation for Hindu figures and chastised his friends for arguing with a Christian missionary. When questioned by the son of the Brahman Guru Manek Prabhu, Inayat responded, “Muslim or Hindu are only outward distinctions, the Truth is one, God is one, life is one.”<sup>23</sup>

Another interesting aspect is Inayat’s view of and relationship with women during his early life before he met Ora. Perhaps the one relationship that may have surpassed the one between him and his Murshid, was the one with his mother. Inayat was particularly close to Khaditja Bibi, and after her death in 1902<sup>24</sup> he concluded that “with all love and kindness the father cannot fill the place of the mother, and that true love, unlimited, self-sacrificing and above all passion, is the mother’s love which cannot be compared with any other; and that the mother’s love is a divine blessing, and if there be any sign of God’s mercy and compassion, it is truly in the love of the mother.”<sup>25</sup>

In addition to his view of his mother, Inayat seemed aware of some of the misogynistic practices of his society from a young age, being determined to help Muslim girls receive a musical education. He wrote a textbook for them in Hindustani, titled *Balasangitmala*, and his desire was for the book to be presented to Muslim authorities, but he was too young at the time to do so. <sup>26</sup>These experiences combined with the fact that Inayat was named after his aunt at her insistence make evident how the stage was set for so many women to join and play important

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<sup>23</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Youth-Sufi chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography\\_10.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography_10.htm)

<sup>24</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Family Tree, Pg. 260-261.

<sup>25</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Youth-Sufi chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography\\_11.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography_11.htm)

<sup>26</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Youth-Music chapter. [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography\\_10.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Biography_10.htm)

roles in the Sufi Movement, and offer insight into Inayat's courtship and marriage with a courageous woman like Ora.

## **Ora Ray Baker**

The adventure of traveling was not just limited to Inayat's side of this story. Traveling was also very much a part of Ora's life, as was delving into spirituality and musical history within her family.

Ora Ray Baker was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on the other side of the globe, far from Inayat's residence in Baroda in Gujarat.

Ora's mother, Alletta Margaret Hiatt, came from a titled family that traced its lineage to Switzerland and went by the name of Kemp, while her father, Eurastus Warren Baker, was both a newspaper editor and a lawyer. Alletta was Baker's second wife; his first spouse had been a distant cousin named Catherine Givens, and their son was Pierre Bernard.

Ora's status as an adored upper-class American woman and her close relationship with her father Eurastus gave her access to travel in the early 20th century. Like Inayat, Ora toured the country with her father, even performing daring feats such as climbing the Statue of Liberty with him, going so far as to stand atop the statue's head. Eurastus encouraged Ora's affinity for traveling in other ways as well, as he purchased 25 traveling trunks for her, each trunk packed with a full wardrobe and accessories.

Ora traveled not only with her father, but also with her half-brother Pierre as well. One of their journeys across the United States eventually led to her meeting with Inayat. Her regular destinations while she was living under Pierre's care were Kansas City (perhaps to visit her grandmother), Seattle, and San Francisco.

Pierre, for reasons not stated in *We Rubies Four*, seemed to have had some sort of falling out with his and Ora's father. Not only did Pierre refuse to maintain connections with Eurastus, but he also took on his stepfather's surname, changing from Baker to Bernard, as well as changing his original first name Peter to the more French-sounding Pierre. He tried to replicate this change in Ora's name as well, referring to her as "Ora Marcelle Bernard" when she lived under his roof.<sup>27</sup>

Ora's traveling, accessible to her because of socioeconomic status, made her and her family stand out against the American landscape of the 1900s. But it was not only travel that distinguished her family—their spiritual practices also marked a departure from the mainstream. According to family legend, Mary Baker Eddy, the American woman who founded the Christian Science Movement, was a cousin of Ora's mother Alletta.<sup>28</sup> In addition to Eddy, there was the case of Pierre, who had reportedly traveled to both Kashmir and Bengal in India.

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<sup>27</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's accounts included, pg. 5-9.

<sup>28</sup> It is unclear as to whether or not Mary Baker Eddy was actually related to Ora. If she was, it's possible that Ora visited her (*We Rubies Four*, pg. 30) and some of her spiritual views were influenced by having Eddy in the family and meeting her.

## The Meeting

“As she looked at the dark stranger, she imagined a thousand lotus petals shining in his eyes.”

--Ora Ray Baker's first impression of Inayat Khan, as recounted by their daughter Claire<sup>29</sup>

Ora, then 22 years old, saw Inayat for the first time at a concert in San Francisco in 1910. Inayat, age 28, was performing Indian music at the Ramakrishna Ashram building along with his brother Maheboob Khan, and his cousin, Mohammed Ali. The trio, on a one-and-a-half-year tour through the United States, were billed as The Royal Musicians of Hindustan. Later, another brother, Musharaff, as well as a Hindu tabla player named Ramaswami, joined the musical group.<sup>30</sup> The Royal Musicians of Hindustan fit the West's exotic Orientalist image of South Asia in the early 20th century.

Some of these fantastical notions were shaped for an American audience by performers such as Ruth St. Denis, an influential white American dancer who created dances that brought to mind several Eastern countries, including India. St. Denis traveled with The Royal Musicians of Hindustan on tour. St. Denis was not the only white female performer satisfying Orientalist fantasies of India; others, such as the previously mentioned Maggie Harold, played parts impersonating Indian women.<sup>31</sup>

What is important to note about the Western, and particularly American, perception of India at the time, is that Indian culture and aesthetics, as envisioned and dictated by Americans, were more appreciated than actual Indian people. In short, the caricature of the Indian was more

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<sup>29</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 30, pg. 28-29.

<sup>31</sup> Srinivasan, Priya. "The Nautch women dancers of the 1880s: Corporeality, US Orientalism, and anti-Asian immigration laws", from an article in *The Gazette* published on Sunday, January 30, 1881, pg. 14.

appreciated than the Indian as a full, multilayered human being. In this section I will examine Inayat's experience in the United States, and Ora and Inayat's romantic relationship, eventually resulting in their elopement and marriage, and the ways Orientalism, race, gender, and class affected it, as well as the religious spirituality that was present throughout.

The Royal Musicians of Hindustan attracted public attention, generated by their association with Ruth St. Denis. Before teaming up with her and Ramaswami (who had already established himself as a performer in the United States), Inayat and his family members had a difficult time due to the fact that they were dark-skinned, and in American society one's place and treatment in the hierarchy depended on one's race. Because of performers like St. Denis and because they were welcomed into spaces such as the Sanskrit College in New York, founded by Ora's half-brother Pierre Bernard, the Royal Musicians of Hindustan were able to establish themselves in the United States.<sup>32</sup> Even though Inayat and his family came from a long rich history of Indian royalty, spirituality, and traditional music, they needed a white Orientalist performer's help to boost their chances of recognition in America. Today, St. Denis's performances and Bernard's founding of the Sanskrit College might be considered "brownface" and cultural appropriation, but in the early 20th century, they provided significant gateways for Indian artists to gain access to the American public and imagination.

Even though it may not have been acknowledged as "brown face" in the 1910s, the feelings of inadequacy this triggered in Inayat and his fellow musicians were very real, as he wrote in his autobiography that "...our music became merely an entertainment. This was an amusement to them, and therefore painful for us. Also it was not satisfactory to combine real with imitation."<sup>33</sup> "Imitation" here refers to St. Denis's representation of India, and thus reveals

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<sup>32</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 28-30

<sup>33</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, America 1910-1912 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_1.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_1.htm)

the harsh mental strain that Orientalist cultural constructions caused those who were actually from the so-called “Orient.”

Amid the turmoil of the American cultural landscape and its treatment of South Asians, Inayat Khan’s first meeting with Ora Ray Baker was the biggest blessing he experienced on the tour, as he commented: “If I can recall any great achievement in America, it was to have found the soul that was destined to be my life’s partner.”<sup>34</sup> On the night of their meeting, the Royal Musicians of Hindustan not only performed music, but Inayat was also the featured speaker of the event, in addition to playing his vina, a traditional Indian stringed instrument.

Inayat, then 28 years old, looked the part as well, with his darker complexion, bejeweled turban, and beard. On tour, he did not only play the vina, but also communicated the Sufi Message to his musical audience, having gained multiple mureeds, or disciples, the most prominent one being Mrs. Ada Martin/Rabia Martin, officially transforming him into a murshid, a teacher.

Ora was a regular visitor to San Francisco. After the concert had concluded, she was formally introduced to Inayat, a meeting that she described to Claire in a very romantic way. Claire states, “Mother told me she danced on air while being introduced to Inayat...the grace of love was being celebrated at the pseudo-Indian buffet while, unnoticed to most, a tiny flag of happiness beckoned to the young couple from the future!” Adding to Ora’s lovestruck reaction was Pierre’s suggestion that Inayat teach Ora how to play the vina, which led to a series of lessons in the following weeks. During these few weeks Ora and Inayat found themselves becoming closer and falling in love, not only through the process of learning Indian music and getting to know each other, but also through developing a spiritual closeness. As their grandson

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<sup>34</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan, America 1910-1912* chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_1.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_1.htm)

David Harper noted, Ora Ray told Inayat of a vision she had had a few days before meeting him, describing an “elderly gentleman who had appeared to her.”<sup>35</sup> According to Harper, “Inayat immediately confirmed that she had been visited by his murshid, a sign of destiny.”<sup>36</sup>

Class, race, and spirituality converged in shaping the meeting of Ora and Inayat, in addition to the strong love they seemed to feel for each other, even at first sight. Inayat had the chance to play music and speak because of his belonging to an upper-class, royal family in India that was well-versed in music, through the Gayanshala Music Academy, and also had importance within the Chishti Sufi community. Ora’s half-brother, Pierre, founded a Sanskrit College in New York, and Ora had the money to traveling often, from childhood. Although Inayat’s being Indian held some disadvantages in Western society, it was also the reason Inayat was welcomed by the Sanskrit College and why he was appointed to teach Ora to play an instrument that was primarily played in India. It was also the wealthy who seemed to be particularly attracted to Inayat’s performances and speeches, a trend that would be consistent throughout his and Ora’s lives.

It is clear that, from the start, spirituality was a common ground that Inayat and Ora bonded over, through the anecdote about the dream Ora had of an older Indian man before meeting Inayat. This anecdote suggests the topics Ora and Inayat might have discussed during the lessons he gave her and the nature of their conversations on subjects that seemed to relate to destiny, faith, and the supernatural. Although Pierre headed the Sanskrit College, it is not wholly clear what the religious background of Ora’s family was, nor was it apparent what her own personal association and practice with religion was while growing up. Regardless, Ora inwardly seemed to be spiritual even before meeting Inayat, due to the claiming of a vision and a dream,

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<sup>35</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 30.

<sup>36</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 35.

something that may have been inspired by her brother's work and her travels, or may have come from other experiences, such as her determinedly overcoming illness out of her own will.<sup>37</sup>

## **The Relationship Continues and Pierre Finds Out**

“Dear heart, I do not want to endanger your life, you must always be well guarded from the day I leave here and when I arrive on the other side, you must not see me...for I am sure my brothers will have detectives trying to find me.”<sup>38</sup>

This was the last message Ora sent to Inayat before her escape to Europe to join him. While the tone is loving and tender, it conveys a very serious warning for Inayat in an effort, as Ora said, to protect his life from Pierre and other unnamed family members who seemed to support him. But how had it come to this point?

By the time Inayat had arrived in America, some states had anti-miscegenation laws that prohibited whites and nonwhites from marrying. While California had such laws too, they did not specify “Hindus” as one of the groups with which marriage was prohibited. However, lawmakers assumed that the prohibition on “Mongolians” marrying whites included South Asians as well.<sup>39</sup> Thus, an official marriage between Ora and Inayat would not have been acceptable where they originally met, legally. But there were other barriers to their love besides racist laws.

When Ora and Inayat had been introduced to each other in (most likely) 1910, Pierre had been the one to suggest that Ora could take vina lessons from Inayat. The arrangement allowed the pair to get to know each other more deeply over the next few weeks and confirm that it was indeed love they felt. It seemed that Pierre suspected so, for David Harper mentions that Pierre

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<sup>37</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's accounts and David's narration and commentary, pg. 7, 8-9, 30-31.

<sup>38</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Letter from Ora to Inayat, dated to February 1913, pg. 36.

<sup>39</sup> Shah, Nayan. *Stranger Intimacy*, pg. 162.

forbade contact between the two. Regardless of Pierre's efforts, Ora's and Inayat's strong feelings for each other persisted, as they kept close contact through letters and the telephone, and met secretly whenever possible, before Inayat and his brothers departed for Europe.<sup>40</sup>

But this relationship could not be kept secret forever. Ora recounted in a long letter to Inayat, lovingly referred to as "Daya", exactly how Pierre found out about their courtship, starting when Pierre invited Ora to tell him whether she was in love with anyone:

"I thought the only thing to do was to tell him that I love you and want to marry you, and so I did after about nine hours constant talk, or until I thought, after all he told me, that he really had sympathy for me... Well, he changed immediately, and said that your blood would never mix with his and oh my Daya, I cannot tell you what all happened but he said you could not live, and when those words were spoken, I felt myself going backward in a faint, but I held to consciousness as best I could, thinking he might go over and kill you... and so that night... I would not go to bed..."<sup>41</sup>

Verbal death threats were not the only way in which Pierre showed his violent disapproval of Ora and Inayat's relationship. Ora mentions in the letter that Pierre had "sent for several people" upon hearing the news and that "the whole house was in an uproar." In addition to this, Pierre destroyed the clothes that Ora had worn when seeing Inayat and Ora mentions without detail other things that Pierre did. Ora concluded her letter with the words "...love and a thousand kisses from the saddest girl in the world."<sup>42</sup>

## **Ora's Escape**

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<sup>40</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 30-31.

<sup>41</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, letter from Ora to Inayat, date probably sometime in 1910 or 1911, pg. 31-32.

<sup>42</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, letter from Ora to Inayat, date probably sometime in 1910 or 1911, pg. 32. It is unclear who these "several people" were, whether they were her parents or relatives or others. It is implied later that her father joined in, but was not as relentless as Pierre in forbidding Inayat and Ora's relationship.

A period of silence from Inayat ensued, perhaps because Pierre interfered with Inayat's letters, causing Ora's nights to be "starved of sleep", according to her daughter Claire. Claire said that "The echo of love's call could be heard in the dark blue sky. The silence and the separation made her ill."<sup>43</sup> But illness did not ever seem to be a significant enough obstacle to stop Ora when she had made up her mind about something, and so she wrote another letter to her Daya, raising the issue of his silence.<sup>44</sup>

Additionally, Pierre was able to gain information about Inayat, as Ora recounted in her 43<sup>rd</sup> letter to Inayat, saying, "...my brother even knew your address at the last place where you were in N.Y. he even knew of the short illness you had there for a few days, how he knew, I do not know, some one certainly told him."<sup>45</sup> Ora's mention of "someone" giving Pierre information, both in this and previous letters, indicates that Pierre was not alone in his mission to prevent Ora and Inayat from being together. Ora also mentioned to Inayat that "Baba could easily locate you" when discussing where in Europe she should stay after her escape. Ora may have been referring to her father by the word "Baba," a common term for father amongst Indian and Muslim cultures. It is unclear who was assisting Pierre. Ora might have been referring to her family, as suggested by her usage of the phrase "my folks" in a letter to Inayat, but one can only speculate on the identity of Pierre's supporters.

Ora discussed with Inayat her thoughts about what story could be relayed to her family after she escaped. She went over several possibilities, saying "...it will not do for one to write my folks that I have committed suicide for they may receive the letter before I could board the steamer so I think it best to just disappear taking my grip with a few things in it as is natural in

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<sup>43</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 32.

<sup>44</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, letter from Ora to Inayat, date probably sometime in 1912, pg. 33

<sup>45</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray, *We Rubies Four*, 43<sup>rd</sup> letter from Ora to Inayat, date most likely December 1912, pg. 34.

traveling and leaving my trunk at the station. They will locate my trunk and may perhaps think I have been killed by some man or that I may have been stolen in some way or other and for some purpose as you oft read of some crimes.”<sup>46</sup> Whether Ora was using humor to make light of the situation or whether she truly did not care if her family thought she might have been murdered or committed suicide is not clear. If the latter, her thinking may have possibly been encouraged by the difficult, abusive time Pierre and possibly other family members had put her through after her relationship with Inayat had been found out.

Ora’s thoughtful planning reveals her cleverness, determination, and “youthful zest.”<sup>47</sup> Characteristic of their relationship, passion also infused the letters Ora wrote to Inayat, as in a love poem she sent in her 54th letter:

“Far away is my Daya,  
My heart, my soul, my life, my all,  
Sad the day the parting came,  
Where is my love, where is he now.  
Just to see his face again,  
His voice to hear, his lips to kiss,  
I would die a thousand deaths,  
Where is Daya, where is he now?”<sup>48</sup>

Ora did not have to die a thousand deaths to join her Daya, but she did have to be very discreet on the night of February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1913, when she boarded the ship that would take her from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Antwerp, Belgium. As Ora mentioned to Inayat, she had purchased

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<sup>46</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray, *We Rubies Four*, 43d letter from Ora to Inayat, date most likely December 1912, pg. 34.

<sup>47</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray, *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 34.

<sup>48</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray, *We Rubies Four*, Ora Ray’s 54th letter to Inayat, pg. 34.

the ticket for the passage in New York. The night Ora made her escape had been a typical outing for a wealthy white American woman, a “country club theater evening,” as Claire called it. Ora wore a beautiful dress along with a cape that hid a bag. Whilst on her way to the docks and the ship that would take her to Europe, Ora changed from her gown into a suit, tied up her hair, and hid it under a hat so that it was no longer visible. She carried only a small case that held a silver toilette set.<sup>49</sup> What happened to the gown she had been wearing or whether she had enough changes of clothes to last the journey is not included in Claire’s account.

Ora successfully transformed herself and slipped away to the ship that would take Sharda<sup>50</sup> to her Daya. Once on board, she secluded herself in her private cabin, staying there for the entire journey and having an attendant bring her meals to her room.<sup>51</sup> Not a strand of hair was out of place when she had boarded, and not a single clue given that might cause her to be noticed or suspected by anyone. Ora carefully carried out her plan, showing her determination to rejoin the prince she considered her soulmate.

Ora conveyed the need for carefulness to Inayat as well. She implored him to be on guard when she departed from America, in case Pierre had hired detectives to find her, saying, “Dear heart, I do not want to endanger your life...you must always be well guarded from the day I leave here, and when I arrive on the other side, you must not see me...”

The harsh reality of Pierre’s wrath haunted the lovers in the beginning stages of their relationship, but Ora, on the ship alone, dreamt hopefully of a new life. Claire recounted, “As the ship slowly moved on into the distance, she opened her porthole; darkness fell, lighting her view with a show of stars--even the full moon appeared bright and happy. Above the ship, like

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<sup>49</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray, *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 35.

<sup>50</sup> Sharda, meaning “goddess,” was Inayat’s nickname for Ora throughout their relationship. His other nickname for her was Calleja Mari, the meaning unknown in this context. Ora’s nickname for Inayat was “Daya”, meaning “compassion” in Sanskrit. Inayat was also called “Thea”, is a Greek name meaning “gift of God.” David Ray Harper, pg. 399.

<sup>51</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray, *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s accounts, pg. 35-36.

seagulls, cherubs followed the voyage, holding hands and announcing the reunion of two hearts.”<sup>52</sup>

In Antwerp, Belgium, Sharda reunited with her Daya. To ensure safety, they had avoided England’s ports when the ship reached Europe. From Belgium, the couple quietly made their way to London, where they married on the 20th of March, 1913. Even though Ora registered herself at marriage as “Ora Ray Baker, otherwise Ora Bernard”, including both the names her father and Pierre gave her, she became known by the name Ameena Begum from then on, with Ameena being her Sufi name, and Begum, referring to “lady”, being her title. Not long after the marriage was officially registered, Ora and Inayat enjoyed a traditional Indian Muslim wedding that had been organized by Inayat’s cousin, Mohammed Ali.<sup>53</sup> Afterwards, Ora and Inayat spent the first few months of their marriage alternating between London and Paris.

In contrast to the United States, England did not seem to have laws against interracial marriages. In fact, it was already a well-established trend since the 1800s for Indian men of various class backgrounds to marry white women while in England, with a few Indian men doing so as early as the seventeenth century. One educated Bengali Indian man, Rajandrachandra Chandra, even married a white woman from an aristocratic family in the late 1850s. Men from working-class backgrounds, such as lascar men, often married women of a similar class status.<sup>54</sup> However, just because it was allowed did not mean it was always socially accepted.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray, *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 36.

<sup>53</sup> Since they were not in Inayat’s home, Ali made do with what he had and what was acceptable in European society regarding Indian Muslim wedding practices. Unfortunately, there is not much information available on what exactly these wedding practices were and what constituted acceptable versus unacceptable in Harper’s book.

<sup>54</sup> Ahmed, Faruque. *Bengali Settlement in Britain* (Dhaka, The University Press Limited, 2020). pg. 8, 14, 80-81 in the Kindle e-book.

<sup>55</sup> Nasta, Susheila; Stadtler, Dr. Florian; Visram, Rozina. “Making Home in Britain”, South Asians in Britain, British Library, <https://www.bl.uk/asians-in-britain/articles/making-home-in-britain>

The danger of Pierre killing Inayat and taking Ora back to America shadowed the start of their marriage and life together in Europe. While they were in Paris, the police knocked on the couple's door, looking for a runaway American woman. Luckily, the police could not take Ora, as she was a legal adult at her current age of 25 and was officially married to Inayat. After this incident, Pierre's and Ora's family's active stalking of Ora and Inayat seemed to end. Although Pierre's hatred for Inayat and violent disapproval of Ora's marriage lasted well past Inayat's death, no other incidents masterminded by Pierre plagued Ora and Inayat during their marriage.<sup>56</sup>

### **Orientalism in the US**

Pierre's apparent attachment to Indian culture but intense hatred for Inayat—his willingness to let Inayat become Ora's music teacher yet not her suitor or husband—may appear contradictory at first, but reflects the larger American society at the time. This case brings to mind the public reaction in 1881 to dancer girls from India, mentioned in the introduction. At first, the advertisements of the dancers had fascinated white audiences, but once they saw the actual performance, white audiences were disappointed and angry that the girls had not fit their eroticized vision of what Indian dancers should be like, one reason being that the dancers had not revealed enough of their bodies, per an article in *The Gazette*.<sup>57</sup> By contrast, Indians who performed the roles expected of them, such as the West Bengali chikondars (peddlers) from Hooghly who donned turbans and sold exotic handicrafts along the East Coast and in the South were better appreciated by the newspapers. Unlike the dancers, the male chikondars were able to play up to what the US public expected of them, such as through the wearing of turbans, and fulfill the image they had in the white American imagination. On a related note, Maggie Harold, a white woman who performed in brownface, received more acclaim than the Indian dancer girls

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<sup>56</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 36.

<sup>57</sup> Srinivasan, Priya. "The Nautch women dancers of the 1880s: Corporeality, US Orientalism, and anti-Asian immigration laws", pg. 14

of 1881, due to showing more of her body. However, although the chikondars were welcomed by white customers, this appreciation did not extend to acceptance of their residing in white neighborhoods.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Pierre's appreciation for Inayat was limited by boundaries of race.

In the case of Inayat, an Indian man, and Ora, a white woman, their romantic relationship disrupted the white heterosexual patriarchy that defined both gender and race relations in the United States. Ora, though strong and self-aware in nature, embodied in some ways the ideal white woman whose chastity and "femininity" were to be protected: ladylike, conventionally beautiful, and delicate, at least in appearance. Instead of Ora's father, Pierre played a patriarchal role in her life, even before Inayat came into the picture, as exemplified by his changing Ora's name. One can speculate from this action that Pierre had a significant level of control over her. Ora's pursuit of a forbidden romance posed a serious threat to Pierre's authority, no matter how quiet her rebellion. Not only was an Indian man crossing strict racial and cultural boundaries, acting in a way that was only deemed a right of white men, but a white woman also asserted her own agency rather than being the passive victim of an opportunistic Indian man. Two versions of the "Other" interacted intimately, defying the authority of Pierre, a white American man. In this situation, the Other readily existed and functioned independent of him.

The anxiety white American men felt towards Indian men was documented in popular media and official reports. In August of 1910, a labor magazine called *The White Man* declared that "Both Mohammedans and Hindus are notoriously addicted to unspeakable vices that take hold of degenerate and decadent peoples."<sup>59</sup> Later, the 1920 Report of the California State Board of Control called the Indian "...the most undesirable immigrant in the state", with a "lack of of personal cleanliness", "low morals", and "blind adherence to theories....repugnant to American

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<sup>58</sup> Bald, Vivek. *Bengali Harlem*, pg. 59.

<sup>59</sup>Shah, Nayan. *Stranger Intimacy*, Pg. 43.

principles.”<sup>60</sup> This sentiment echoed a political cartoon that appeared in *The San Francisco Call* in 1910, depicting Indians as unwanted and incompetent.<sup>61</sup> This animosity went beyond magazine articles and illustrations, with acts of violence committed against Indian men by white men, as evidenced by the Bellingham Riots of 1907.

The coexistence of both fetishization and outright hatred of Indian people, as well as the attitudes ranging from exoticization to scorn presented the terms of American society’s conditional acceptance of Indian people at the time: either appear the way the white patriarchal imagination expected, or risk violence. This acceptance could also be revoked at any time, even if one played by the rules, a similarity that Indians shared with other marginalized communities in the United States, with the end goal being the preservation of a society where the white man’s power remained paramount and constantly reinforced.

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<sup>60</sup> Leonard, Karen. *Making Ethnic Choices*, pg. 24.

<sup>61</sup> *San Francisco Call*. 1910.

## Inayat and Ora's Marriage

### Before World War I

Inayat's work as a musician and spiritual leader involved travel, and this continued after marriage. Mr. Strangways, an acquaintance who received information about Indian music from Inayat for a book he was writing, told Inayat of the French people's greater appreciation for art in comparison to the English. Thus, Inayat went to perform in France, and then later, Russia.<sup>62</sup> At first, Ora accompanied her husband, his brothers, and his cousin on their travels.<sup>63</sup>

In the 1910s, Inayat's music was gaining attention in Europe, and he became a noted figure in the musical landscape of the West. As Claire said, "In the West, Indian music was little known at the time and, therefore, much sought after. Murshid's musical genius and his brothers' accompaniment met with great success. Inayat met such famous divas of the day as Mata Hari, as well as Emma Nevada, and her daughter Mignon Nevada... The composers Debussy and Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin were among those famed personalities that Inayat frequented."<sup>64</sup> In France, Inayat had also met dancer and choreographer Isadora Duncan, whom he found to be sincere in her art.<sup>65</sup>

According to Claire, Inayat's renown quickly spread from France to Russia, thanks to the support of a Russian socialite, "Princess Bartinov,"<sup>66</sup> who encouraged him "to join in Moscow's innumerable seasonal festivals, and to meet great Russian musicians, poets, and artists. Through the princess, Inayat's brilliance reached the attention of Count Sergei L'vovich Tolstoy, a talented

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<sup>62</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, England 1912-1913, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_2.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_2.htm) ;

France 1913 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_3.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_3.htm)

<sup>63</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 37.

<sup>64</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 37.

<sup>65</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, France 1913 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_3.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_3.htm)

<sup>66</sup> Although a "Princess Bartinov" is mentioned in *We Rubies Four*, it is unclear who she was; perhaps the name was misspelled.

musician and composer and son of the famed Leo Tolstoy.”<sup>67</sup> Additionally, “The curve of Inayat’s musical genius reached its zenith...Inayat received so much recognition that, one day, the three horse drawn carriage he was riding in was unhitched and pulled by eager students and music lovers to the overcrowded concert hall.”<sup>68</sup>

Inayat’s enormous musical success in France and Russia was not the only blessing the couple enjoyed, for their first child and daughter, Noor-un-nisa, who would grow up to become a famous war heroine, was born on New Year’s Day in 1914 in Moscow. The name Noor-un-nisa meant “light among women”; as Claire mentioned, “Her arrival was bathed in light which, to her parents, shone brighter than bright.” Following an Indian tradition, Noor was also given a second name by her parents: Babuli, which translated to “father’s daughter.”<sup>69</sup>

Inayat felt a spiritual connection with Russia. In his biography he mentioned, “I saw in the people of Russia religion, devotion, the idealistic temperament”, in contrast to the “modern man” spirit he observed in France and other Western countries, where a belief in God was not at the forefront, but a hunger for Truth remained in people who did not want to see anyone else as superior to them.”<sup>70</sup>

Throughout his life, Inayat seemed to be attentive to women and the roles they played in society. In Russia, Inayat attended a religious meeting with many monks and priests, noting that only one woman was present--a woman who knew English and thus could translate in order for Inayat and the priests to understand each other. Inayat’s observation of this detail, along with the

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<sup>67</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray, *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 37.

<sup>68</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 37.

<sup>69</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 37-38.

<sup>70</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Russia 1913-1914 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_4.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_4.htm) ; France 1913 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_3.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_3.htm)

female acquaintances he kept on making attest to Inayat's positive view of women despite the cultural environment he grew up in and the attitudes he encountered later in the West.<sup>71</sup>

Overall, Inayat achieved success in France and Russia, in terms of both his Sufi spiritual work and his music. A book he wrote on Sufism<sup>72</sup> was being translated into both French and Russian. As he mentioned to Rabia, he gave both a performance and lecture at the Conservatory of Music in Moscow.<sup>73</sup>

However, all of it would be interrupted by growing unrest in Russia. From economic hardship and oppression that rural Russians and other common people suffered from to Russia's decreasing status as a world power to their lack of readiness of participating in a World War spelled political turmoil for the country.<sup>74</sup> Spending considerable time among the wealthy, privileged elite gave Inayat "an opportunity to study all the different classes of Russia, all the wealthy classes, and it showed me how the dream of life had absorbed so many of them, and where it would lead Russia in the end. It was as though God wanted to show me, before disaster came upon Russia, how even nations are led to destruction when they of their own will choose that path."<sup>75</sup>

Amidst the political upheaval and the turmoil it caused to art, music, and "the luxury of good living," Inayat and Ora's family fled from Russia, surrounded by their friends and admirers,

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<sup>71</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Russia 1913-1914 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_4.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_4.htm)

<sup>72</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin, dated July 27, 1913. From the collection "Yours in the Infinite" *transcribed handwritten letters from Pir-O-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan to Murshida Rabia Ada Martin, 1911 to 1926 and "Sunrise in the West" by Murshid Wali Ali Meyer. (Foreword by Pir Shabda Kahn).* <https://ruhaniat.org/ROG-Public/classes/cultivating-resilience/rabia-martin-letters-1.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin, dated October 24, 1913. Inayat does not specify if it is his book on Sufism that was published in English and Russian in this letter, but based on the previous letter from July 27, I am going with the assumption that it was that book.

<sup>74</sup> "Russian Empire". *Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Russian-Empire>

<sup>75</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Russia 1913-1914 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_4.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_4.htm)

but not before one last legendary incident, recounted by Claire<sup>76</sup>: “On the way, a group of angry rebels had blocked the free passage, and the horses were brought to a halt. At that very moment, Inayat threw open the carriage hood, and stood lofty, his cloak flapping about him, his black hat towering tall upon his head. In Inayat’s arms lay baby Noor, whom he now lifted with both hands high above his shoulders, presenting this little treasure to the screaming crowds. In the deep blue of the night, there came a sudden hush...for a gesture of this kind happens but once. The mob drew back and watched the carriage slip into the future...only to meet with war--for this was to be their next destination in the West.”<sup>77</sup> Such a story demonstrates the romanticism that was often present in the accounts from within Inayat’s family and his mureeds, keeping Inayat and his family shrouded in a mystical air.

Although Inayat had a family now, his travels continued. After fleeing from Russia, Inayat and Ora settled in Paris and London. Inayat and his brothers continued to gain musical acclaim in Paris, through their cultural performance at the International Music Congress held there in 1914.<sup>78</sup> Soon after, Inayat traveled to Geneva, Switzerland, due to feeling a “sudden call” to go there, according to David Harper.<sup>79</sup> In Switzerland, as his presence as a wandering mystic attracted attention, Inayat began planning a proper structure for the greater Sufi Movement he envisioned.

Ora, who always openly and abundantly expressed her love in her letters, wrote to Inayat during his first visit to Switzerland, saying:

“My Love,

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<sup>76</sup> Claire often gives accounts of events before her birth. For some of them, it is obvious how she knew, such as her mother telling her about the meeting with Inayat. It is more unclear on how she knew about things like this event.

<sup>77</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 38.

<sup>78</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 38; Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, France 1914 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_5.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_5.htm)

<sup>79</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 38.

I am wondering how you are today and if you intend coming home. My precious, how I miss you, words cannot tell you. I know you must be suffering much, being alone and no one to help you and so much walking to do. I hope you will never go away alone again my love. Do write me a letter every day, I am always longing for your letters...I see nothing but clouds when you are away..."

On a practical note, Ora also reminded Inayat to take care of his belongings and to remember to pick up any clothes he put up for washing in the laundry before leaving Switzerland. She ended by entreating Inayat to write to her about how he was faring. He responded with a short telegram: "Quite well. Murshid."<sup>80</sup>

Although Inayat and Ora certainly bucked some gender-role conventions of the day, with Inayat having a particularly positive attitude towards women's leadership capability, and Ora taking control of her own life by escaping her brother, telegrams such as this one show that they also accepted patriarchal notions of women's responsibility for cleaning and managing a household.

As for Inayat's short, blunt reply, it is not entirely clear why he responded like that. It may have been due to the cost of the telegram or a word limit, for Inayat still wrote loving letters to Ora later on.

## **During World War I**

After Inayat returned from his visit to Geneva, sometime in 1914, the family left France due to the approach of World War I and settled together in London from 1914 to 1918, during the war years.<sup>81</sup> It appears that Inayat and Ora and the rest of their family first lived at 100D Addison

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<sup>80</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 38-39.

<sup>81</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, France 1914 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_5.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_5.htm)

Road in Kensington, at least until late 1915 or early 1916, judging from the addresses on the letters Inayat wrote to Rabia. Their address then changed to 86 Ladbroke Road.<sup>82</sup>

During their time in London and through the war years, Ora appeared to adopt more of her husband's culture. She wore both a veil and a sari when she went outside, but for a time still observed "purdah". *Purdah* refers to the seclusion from public society that some upper-class Muslim and Hindu women practiced in India<sup>83</sup>, and in Ora's case, meant not going outside, according to Raden Ayou Jodjana, a young woman who helped out greatly in Inayat and Ora's family home.<sup>84</sup>

Raden Ayou Jodjana, a Dutch musician born under the name Elisabeth Pop<sup>85</sup>, was one of Inayat's disciples, calling him her Guru, and was referred to by Claire as a "blessing from above for the little family." Claire claimed that Raden helped run Inayat and Ora's household from "morning till night" due to "sheer affection."<sup>86</sup> Raden's own words from her memoirs give a glimpse of Inayat and Ora and life in their household:

"Inayat Khan was the head of a family group stranded in London when the First World War broke out, without any means of a livelihood...In Ladbroke Road no one ever came to the top floor where the family wished its privacy to be respected. Inayat lived in the front room with his wife and child. The three 'boys' (\*referring to Inayat's brothers and cousin) stayed in the backroom with a view on the garden. I had to clean the rooms, took out the child, as the Begum

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<sup>82</sup> Claire's account seemed to say the opposite, that they lived at Ladbroke Road first, and then moved to Addison Road. However, since Claire was not born until 1919, I went with Inayat's account instead, since that seemed more reliable.

<sup>83</sup> Merriam-Webster. "Purdah". <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/purdah>

<sup>84</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Raden Ayou Jodjana's account, from a section attributed to Raden's "memoirs" pg. 45.

<sup>85</sup> Cohen, Matthew Isaac. "Chapter 10: Indonesian Performing Arts in the Netherlands, 1913-1944." In *Recollecting Resonances: Indonesian-Dutch Musical Encounters*, edited by Bart Barendregt and Els Bogaerts, 231-58. Brill, 2014. pg. 248.

[https://brill.com/downloadpdf/book/edcoll/9789004258594/B9789004258594\\_011.pdf](https://brill.com/downloadpdf/book/edcoll/9789004258594/B9789004258594_011.pdf).

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctt1w76trp.13>.

Elisabeth Pop ended up marrying a Javanese dancer, Raden Mas Jodjana.

<sup>86</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, 44.

no longer went out into the world...The ‘boys’ never entered the front room. I was the only person to serve Inayat and his wife in their room.”<sup>87</sup>

Raden’s use of “boys” to refer to grown men in her recollection, as well as her use of quotation marks, may suggest the infantilization of men that is often used in a patriarchal subtext to excuse immature behavior in adulthood. Considering that Inayat’s male relatives never entered “the front room,” it is clear Raden performed a great deal of household labor, as the only one serving the couple and providing care for Noor.

During this period, the Sufi Movement seemed to garner some success, with “a very small scale publishing society”, “review”, “home”, and “lecture place” being formed soon after Inayat and Ora arrived in London. However, Inayat mentions encountering negligence from people himself when comforting Rabia about it.<sup>88</sup> Claire’s accounts also indicate difficulties in spreading the Message.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, a number of mureeds joined the movement overall, other people showed interest, and Inayat began to include on his letters to Rabia the heading “International Sufi Order,” starting with the letter from February 8.<sup>90</sup> A fully designed official letterhead with the words “Sufi Order: Brotherhood of Purity” appeared on Inayat’s letter to Rabia dated October 20, 1915.<sup>91</sup> However, it should be noted that this uniquely designed heading was not present on the next letter Inayat wrote to Rabia, although the initial simple heading reappeared soon after. Conveniently, the official letterhead design disappeared with the change in location from Kensington and Addison Road to Ladbroke Road<sup>92</sup>, although the simpler heading did not seem to be affected much by this.<sup>93</sup> Although books and pamphlets were being written

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<sup>87</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Raden’s memoirs, pg. 45.

<sup>88</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin dated to February 8, 1915.

<sup>89</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 47.

<sup>90</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin dated to February 8, 1915.

<sup>91</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin dated to October 20, 1915.

<sup>92</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin, dated to February 9, 1916. (Postmarked to February 11, 1916.)

<sup>93</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin, postmarked February 12, 1917.

and published for the Movement and word was spreading beyond London through the people Inayat taught, not all of his objectives were achieved, such as his Message reaching the king of England.<sup>94</sup> Also the family experienced poverty compared to the lifestyle to which Inayat had been accustomed as a nobleman, and Ora had grown up with as an affluent socialite.<sup>95</sup>

While Raden performed household labor for Inayat's family, Lucy M. Goodenough (Murshida Sharifa), another prominent woman in the Sufi Movement, seemed to have the position of managing Inayat's papers, letters, and records.<sup>96</sup> Later, Miss Goodenough was appointed a Khalifa, and then Murshida, a role that had once only belonged to Rabia and Inayat.<sup>97</sup> Inayat stated that Miss Goodenough guarded the records of his spoken words so that they were free from all corruption, and that she "stood as a foundation stone for the building of the Order."<sup>98</sup> He described Miss Goodenough as having a personality that made her seem hard to get along with and caused people not to like her, but Inayat saw her as having "many pearl-like qualities hidden under a hard shell."<sup>99</sup> What seems remarkable is Inayat's willingness to look past the behavior of a woman who didn't seem to be outwardly complacent or amiable, and instead to recognize her finer qualities.

Inayat's relationships with his female mureeds appear to reflect both societal public intermingling of men and women, as well as his own views of elevating women and treating them more fairly. His praise and encouragement of Lucy M. Goodenough also seem to go hand in hand with his continuing friendship with Rabia. Since Inayat mentions his wife in his letters to

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<sup>94</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*. England 1914-1920 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_6.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_6.htm)

<sup>95</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's accounts, pg. 46-49.

<sup>96</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin dated to a Wednesday in 1917.

<sup>97</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, England 1914-1920 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_6.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_6.htm)

<sup>98</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, England 1914-1920 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_6.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_6.htm)

<sup>99</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, England 1914-1920 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_6.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_6.htm)

Rabia<sup>100</sup>, and praises Rabia's husband<sup>101</sup>, it is evident that the relationship between them was platonic, something that may not come as a surprise both from Inayat's view of women throughout his life as well as the increasing heterosociality in the West in the early 1900s. Public interaction of men and women increased, including in organizational efforts, according to historian Leila J. Rupp<sup>102</sup>, and this trend was very much present in the Sufi Movement. Even though women were expected to do the care-work in Inayat's household at this time, it is noteworthy that he also openly encouraged women who were wives and mothers to excel as religious leaders. This is most apparent in his letters to Rabia: he provided comforting words when she was trying to find success for her section of the Sufi Movement in California, and he told her he had hung up her picture at the *Khankah*, a term denoting a place where Sufis might live, worship, and conduct other activities,<sup>103</sup> in London as a sign of honor.<sup>104</sup>

Although patriarchal standards did influence the workings of some aspects of Inayat and Ora's life, particularly evident through Ora's and Raden's work, as well as Inayat's male relatives being referred to as "boys" and being exempted from the labor expected of women, it is also clear that positions of authority within the Sufi Movement were not gendered; gender did not dictate what part women played, even for women who were wives and/or mothers.<sup>105</sup> Women in positions like Rabia's--the elevated position of Murshida--or other leadership positions like that of Miss Goodenough, were praised by Inayat for their work. Other women who held high

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<sup>100</sup> Letters from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin dated October 20, 1915; August 20, 1917; December 27, 1920, and more.

<sup>101</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin dated November 21, 1917; July 16, 1923, and more.

<sup>102</sup> Rupp, Leila J. "Sexuality and Politics in the Early Twentieth-Century International Women's Movement". *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*. Volume 2. (Oxford University Press, 2016). 393-404. Pg. 401-402.

<sup>103</sup> "Khanqah", wikishia, <https://en.wikishia.net/view/Khanqah>

<sup>104</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin, dated December 28, 1917.

<sup>105</sup> It should be noted that one exception to this was Vilayat succeeding Inayat as leader of the Sufi Movement, even though Noor was older than him. However, it's possible it didn't go to Noor for reasons other than gender.

positions in the movement during his time in England included Mary Williams, a sub-editor for the *Sufi Magazine*. Another was Khalifa Nargis [Jessie Eliza Dowland (1866-1953)<sup>106</sup>] who took charge of the Sufi Order when there was disagreement and tension between the members and ended up being of so much importance that Inayat said he recognized “in her the hand of God,” and placed the Order under her leadership when he left England. Miss Sophia Saintsbury-Green, like Miss Goodenough, became a khalifa and then a Murshida, and was the first person to help Inayat found the “Church of All” in England, in addition to editing the *Sufism* magazine and writing works of her own.<sup>107</sup>

Ora, of course, remained the most important person in Inayat’s life--he placed enormous significance on her role as the mother of their children. Although Inayat’s reverence for motherhood can be observed throughout his life from when he was a child, Ora’s arduous labor in giving birth to and raising their children perhaps added to his views. According to Claire, her and her siblings’ births had all required either many stitches or Caesarians, and although Claire’s birth on June 3, 1919, was a joyous occasion, especially for her oldest sister Noor, there was also the reality that Ora was “frail and undernourished” and Inayat “drained and thoroughly depleted.”<sup>108</sup>

## **In France**

It is suggested in Inayat’s autobiography that it was the rising suspicion in England towards anything that showed “Eastern” things in a positive light that was responsible for both the relocation to Switzerland and the tension within the Sufi Movement at the time.<sup>109</sup> Soon after

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<sup>106</sup>“Nargis Jessie Dowland”, Suluk Press: Classic and Contemporary Books on Sufism, <https://sulukpress.com/author/nargis-jessie-dowland/>

<sup>107</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, England 1914-1920 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_6.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_6.htm)

<sup>108</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 50.

<sup>109</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Personal Account chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_16.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_16.htm)

this trip to Switzerland in 1920, Inayat moved to France with his family later that same year. They first lived at le Tremblay-sur-Mauldre twenty miles outside of Paris and then moved to a “dilapidated” house at Wissous.<sup>110</sup> Eventually they settled in Suresnes at a mansion called “Fazal Manzil”, meaning the “House of Blessings”, purchased in 1921 by one of their supporters. The supporter, a Dutch woman Inayat had met while traveling to Holland, was originally named Mevrouw Egeling and later given the name Fazal Mai, meaning “Grace of God,” by Inayat when she had been initiated into his group.<sup>111</sup>

The Sufi Movement, with the efforts of the mureeds, continued to grow across Europe. In addition to traveling to Holland during the early 1920s while Ora and their children stayed at home in France, Inayat also traveled to Belgium with his brothers. Inayat’s Message and Movement flourished, not due to his and his family’s efforts alone, but also with Raden’s continuous help as well. Claire recalled that Raden organized many of Inayat’s meetings in Holland, something that was “quite a challenge for her to do.”

Although Inayat was considerably more successful now, receiving positive reviews and being referred to as “Professor Inayat Khan” by his admirers, the family still faced difficulties. The first world war was over, and things were better, but that didn’t mean that Inayat and Ora now lived luxuriously. Inayat was “constantly low on funds”, a “contrast to his home in India”, where his family hadn’t ever had to worry about money, living in the Maula Baksh House, according to Claire. Nevertheless, Inayat was always happy to be reunited with Ora and the children whenever he came back to France during this time.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account that was referencing something that Vilayat said, pg. 51.

<sup>111</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s accounts, pg. 52-53.

<sup>112</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 51-52.

Because Claire was a young child by the time the family moved into Fazal Manzil, she was able to provide a clearer, more detailed picture of Inayat and Ora's family life with their children through her own memories of growing up. The beautiful, three-story home was not fully furnished nor decorated when the family first moved in, but more was added to it over time, such as fancy bedroom sets for Inayat and Ora, and Noor and Claire in their "girls' room." Claire happily recalled the "big surprise" and new comfort of "a bedroom set in mahogany, a lovely, dark red, shiny wood...For a long time Noor and I were hypnotized by this luxury. The lush mattress was such a contrast to the old metal cots with their thin horsehair mattresses, which we had hitherto been accustomed to. On weekends, I had a hard time waking up, and Noor would sing a song from some opera. Her voice was so sweet, clear and high that I would pretend to be sleeping just so that she would continue singing."

While their circumstances had improved, the family faced challenges that were both normal and unique. As in many families, the children experienced frequent sickness when they were young, often with "an upset stomach", and once in Claire's case, scarlet fever, requiring Ora's care on these occasions. Perhaps due to the gender roles of the time and patriarchal standards, much of the domestic work, including the allocation of household funds, fell upon both Ora's and Murshida Fazal Mai's shoulders. Requests for items such as clothing were calculated and budgeted by Murshida Fazal Mai, while the running of the household primarily fell to Ora.

The household for which Ora had responsibility was an extended one. As Claire stated: "When our mother married our father, she didn't realize or expect that she would be responsible for taking care of his three relatives as well." Inayat's two brothers and male cousin "felt no need to help her in any way but would spend hours talking together about old times in India, and

they'd sing the songs that they were used to singing over there. They would discuss religion, as well as the Sufi Message and the ideals they aspired to at that time. They had no clue as to organizational or household needs." Given her own upper-class family status, as well as frail health, Ora was unprepared for her domestic role, as Claire recalled: "Mother was especially delicate and did not have a background of housekeeping or subservience. It must have been somewhat horrifying to her to be faced with this situation."<sup>113</sup>

Perhaps Ora's position, from being seen as a delicate socialite, to taking matters into her own hands as she left for Inayat's love, to being a full-time housewife and mother illustrate the multiple lines that existed with regard to gender and race in the 1910s and 1920s. Separate spheres between men and women were becoming a thing of the Victorian past, with much more public interaction between men and women. Suffrage and women's feminist activism were on the rise, not just in the West but in South Asia as well. Yet a belief in the inherent difference between men and women persisted, as Leila J. Rupp has stated, "Almost all participants in the major international women's organizations accepted--or did not raise public objections to--an ideology of fundamental difference between men and women."<sup>114</sup> With such views prevalent even within feminist circles, it is not surprising that, even though Ora and Inayat's story illustrated her deviance from the role of the passive white woman in escaping her brother's clutches, they still maintained certain "traditional" roles and duties within their household.

The pressure of caring for Inayat's brothers and cousin was alleviated a little for Ora when Maheboob Khan married a young Frenchwoman named Shadi, the daughter of Ekbal Dawlat van Goens, a well-to-do widow who supported the Sufi Message of Inayat Khan and was a good friend to Ora. As a dowry for Shadi, Ekbal provided the young couple with a house that

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<sup>113</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 53-56.

<sup>114</sup> Rupp, Leila J. "Sexuality and Politics in the Early Twentieth-Century International Women's Movement", pg. 398.

was located on the same street as Fazal Manzil. In the wintertime, Maheboob and Shadi would travel to the Netherlands with Ekbal, who owned two houses side-by-side there.<sup>115</sup> It should be noted that Islamic custom dictates that a dowry be given to the wife by the husband rather than the other way around<sup>116</sup>, although some South Asian cultural customs differed. It appears that Inayat's other brother and cousin would accompany them to live in Holland, with Ekbal's approval. According to Claire, Maheboob's mother-in-law was "always laughing, most pleasant, and very happy" and "she enjoyed the company of the uncles" due to their being "entertaining" as well as the "new" experience of being exposed to different languages and "Oriental music."<sup>117</sup>

It is important to note that the pressure on Ora to care for Inayat's side of the family and their home only seemed to be lessened when there were more women to share the work, whether Raden or Ekbal and Shadi. This seems to confirm that some of Ora's labor during the marriage was gendered, despite the ways in which Inayat, his family, and his movement were progressive towards women of the time and place.

Ora, Inayat, and their four children developed close bonds that are reflected in family letters and the memoir. Little Noor wrote two letters in 1922, one for her mother's birthday and one for her father's birthday. To Ora she sent "love from the fore [sic] children," and wishes for "right guidance form [sic] above" (a phrase also used by her father), "long life" and "happenesse." To Inayat she mentioned a vase that they had given him, saying "...we hope you will keep it always in your room in remembrance of your four naughty children..."<sup>118</sup>

Claire vividly recalled a joyful family Christmas celebration, in which she described how at the "stroke of midnight", she and her three siblings went to the doorway of the Oriental Room

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<sup>115</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 56-57.

<sup>116</sup> The Holy Qu'ran, Surah Baqarah and Surah An-Nisa.

<sup>117</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 57.

<sup>118</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, letters from Noor to Ora and Inayat, pg. 57-58.

of Fazal Manzil, where Ora waited to greet them. Claire said that “she wore a fine, light blue silver-bordered sari, and her complexion glowed rosy; she was simply radiant.” Once inside, the children saw Inayat, dressed in “an apricot-colored gown” next to “a large, blue-green Christmas tree, which “was aglow with flickering lights and crowned with an equally bright star that nearly touched the high stucco ceiling.” The tree decorations included “a multitude of tiny candles” and “fairies, deer, baskets, bells, and cherubs with exquisitely painted faces, as well as numerous other figurines in pastel shades and trimmed with silver and gold.”

Claire and her siblings were awestruck: “Had Heaven descended upon Earth to offer us this gift? Were we learning the first letters of the meaning of sacredness? Not only did the candles’ light emit radiance within and about the entire tree, but it emanated joy. We remained speechless. This Christmas was one of the few where our Amma and Abba were together. In the spirit of Love, Harmony, and Beauty, they had presented us children four with a wondrous surprise, announcing that Baby Jesus was born in a Manger. We were delighted that something good was happening, and we also wondered whether Santa Claus had perhaps filled our stockings that hung on the mantelpiece.”<sup>119</sup>

Claire’s account is a reminder of the universality that Inayat and Ora aimed for in their religious movement despite the movement’s Islamic origins, especially considering that it seems they told their children the Christian version of the story of Jesus’s birth rather than the Islamic version.<sup>120</sup> Ora’s decision to wear a sari on Christmas highlights the combining of cultures within their family and within the greater religious movement, and is reminiscent of many mureeds taking names that sounded more “Eastern”, including Ora herself with the name Ameena Begum.

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<sup>119</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 58.

<sup>120</sup> In Surah 19 of the Qu’ran, it is specified that Mary was with God and the Angel Gabriel when giving birth to Jesus, with no specific man mentioned as being present at the birth.

The customs of the celebration, including Santa Claus, may also have been reminiscent of Ora's childhood in the United States.

### **Inayat's and Ora's Poems During His Travels**

Claire's mention that this was one of the few Christmas celebrations where both Inayat and Ora were present indicates the nature of the family household during their time in France, as Inayat was often gone and traveling from 1922 onward, something that was "painful" to Ora. During his absences, Inayat strove to let Ora know of his love, writing a poem for her in 1922:

"At all my busy hours in life,  
Everything I do,  
You are my only consolation,  
And I think of you.  
My work keeps me away from home  
But I leave my heart,  
At home, to be ever with you,  
Our souls can never part.  
Happiness be with our little ones,  
Right guidance from above,  
I wish good luck in this house,  
And my deepest love.  
Prosperity and success,  
Long life and good health,  
May be yours always Sharda  
My treasure, my wealth.

With a world of love

Mari Calleja on your birthday

from your own

1922”<sup>121</sup>

Inayat and Ora frequently exchanged letters while he traveled, and a letter in February 1923 featured another poem he dedicated to her:

“Be not anxious my Sharda,  
On his service I must go,  
Though parting is hard to bear,  
But it’s God who meant it so,  
I’ll carry you in my heart,  
Where ever in the world I roam.  
His protection is over us,  
Rest in peace soon I will come.”<sup>122</sup>

In a 1924 letter, Inayat confided to Ora the pressures of his spiritual work, writing:

“My Mari Calleja,  
It is most difficult to bear the responsibility as I do and to pay due attention to everybody at all sides and yet keep ones balance. I am getting quite tired of this world.

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<sup>121</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, poem in a letter from Inayat to Ora, in 1922, pg. 61.

<sup>122</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, poem in letter from Inayat to Ora in 1923, pg. 62.

With all the love there is,  
(Inayat).”<sup>123</sup>

Poems were an important medium of communication between Inayat and Ora. In a poem dedicated to Ora on her birthday, Inayat wrote:

“A heart full of love,  
A soul full of life.  
I dedicate to Sharda,  
My soul and my wife.”<sup>124</sup>

In response to his 1922 poem, Ora wrote:

“Day by day and night by night,  
Every thing I see,  
I feel Thy presence in it  
And I think of Thee.

In every thing I may do,  
Thy love guideth me,  
When Thy gentle voice I hear,  
I’m in ecstasy.

While the Holy Deity

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<sup>123</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, letter from Inayat to Ora in 1924, pg. 62-63.

<sup>124</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, poem in a letter from Inayat to Ora in 1922, pg. 227

Watcheth over all,  
Eagerly I wait to hear  
Thy whispering call.”<sup>125</sup>

Such poems confirmed that the initial passion found in Ora’s letters to Inayat at the start of their relationship had continued in their marriage. Lines such as “While the Holy Deity watcheth over all” also confirm that the spirituality that imbued the Movement and Inayat’s and Ora’s work was present in all aspects of their lives, including the intimate, private space of their love letters.

## **Inayat Returns to the United States**

In March 1923, Inayat journeyed to America once more<sup>126</sup>, a trip he had discussed extensively with Murshida Rabia Martin through their letters. Rabia’s address was the Sufi Order School of Philosophy and Metaphysics at 153 Kearny Street in San Francisco.<sup>127</sup> This long-awaited trip would be an eventful one reminiscent of his first visit to the United States, with Inayat again experiencing both prejudice and admiration, seeing Rabia again and observing her struggles, and writing love letters to Ora in the midst of it all.

Once he had arrived in America, Inayat again confronted some of the racism that he had observed and faced during his first fateful trip when he had met Ora. Inayat was detained at Ellis Island, due to the quota of Indians being reached during the month of his arrival. Because one of his mureeds, a woman named Mrs. Marya Cushing, was able to answer security questions properly, Inayat was able to leave detention. It is interesting to note that, despite the institutional racism he had faced, many Americans were, according to Inayat, upset by the treatment he had

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<sup>125</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, poem from Ora to Inayat written most likely in 1922, pg. 228.

<sup>126</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, America 1923 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_13.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_13.htm)

<sup>127</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 63.

faced and were anticipating his arrival. Despite Inayat being mentioned in multiple newspapers<sup>128</sup>, including an article that reported his meeting with Henry Ford<sup>129</sup>, neither Inayat or Ora expressed any fear about his encountering Ora's brother or family. One might speculate that this was because Inayat's status might offer him some protection, or perhaps because Inayat made sure to avoid Pierre, but no clear reason emerges in any family accounts. Adding to this is the fact that Inayat had considered bringing Ora and their children along to America in a letter to Rabia dated December 27, 1920, writing: "...Begum (my wife) would very much like to go to the States...and from New York she would go to Kansas City to her mother...It will be difficult for me to leave my wife and children for the reason that she is from America and she must see her people."<sup>130</sup>

Despite Ora's desire to go to America and his own wish to bring her with him, Inayat ended up venturing to America alone, possibly because finances were a concern, as brought up in the same 1920 letter. Even though it was the norm for Inayat to travel alone much of the time while leaving Ora and the children at home, the letter suggests that, in his mind, America was a different case due to Ora being American and her mother living there. Once again, it is unclear what discussions or thoughts Ora and Inayat had about Pierre and her father, considering only her mother was mentioned in the letter. It might be that the suggestion of her mother implies that she was not among the family members that had supported Pierre and/or that Inayat's own appreciation of the mother in the family may have played a part.

During his stay in the United States, Inayat's letters to Ora spoke of both his feelings about the Sufi Movement in America, as well as his concern for Ora's fluctuating health.

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<sup>128</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, America 1923 chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_13.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_13.htm)

<sup>129</sup> "A Magnate and a Mystic Meet." *The Detroit News*, February 7, 1926. [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Reference\\_92.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Reference_92.htm) Made accessible by Richard Shelquist.

<sup>130</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin dated to December 27, 1920.

With regards to the Sufi Movement in America, Inayat's observations showed his alertness for both racism and misogyny. He noticed that Rabia didn't seem to be very popular, which he thought could potentially be attributed either to "race prejudice" or "a spirit of jealousy and rivalry."<sup>131</sup> Perhaps Inayat was referring to Rabia's Jewish background<sup>132</sup> or her being a woman, suggesting that racism and sexism might have generated animosity towards Rabia's leadership in San Francisco. In his biography, Inayat similarly reflected on how the male members of his movement tended to treat female members as inferiors: "Among some of my man-collaborators I saw a spirit of slight contempt toward 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." Inayat marveled, "If it was not for some women as my collaborators in the Cause, the Sufi Movement would never have been formed. How easily man forgets the place of woman in all walks of life. It is his self that covers his eyes from recognizing the importance of woman's collaboration in every work."<sup>133</sup>

Inayat wrote of the general progress achieved in America as well as his general view of its importance with regards to the Message. In another letter, written five days later on the 21st of April, Inayat told Ora, "The progress of the Message here is not made in a sensational way and I am glad about it for this slow process may keep it alive and give it continuity. Now I have learned many American words and phrases and when I come home with my added accomplishment you will all be so surprised to see the change. I feel America was the place for

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<sup>131</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, letter from Inayat to Ora dated to April 16, 1923, pg. 63.

<sup>132</sup> Kahn, Shabda. "Foreword", "Yours in the Infinite", Letter Collection for Inayat Khan's letters to Rabia Martin, pg. 1, <https://ruhaniat.org/RoG-Public/classes/cultivating-resilience/rabia-martin-letters-1.pdf>

<sup>133</sup> *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Switzerland 1922 chapter. [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_12.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_12.htm)

work, not France: don't tell Budhi (Fazal Mai), she won't like it. You don't like it too. But I love America perhaps because I love you."<sup>134</sup> Whether Ora's not liking the prospect of America being a better place for Inayat's work was because of a wariness she might have still possessed regarding Pierre or because she preferred Europe to the United States is uncertain.

Inayat's outright expression of love for Ora in the final line of the quote is not the only time his care for his wife can be observed. In three of these letters, he voiced his concern for Ora's health. On April 16<sup>th</sup>, he wrote, "I hope you follow the medical advice every (day) without fail and breathing." Five days later, he expressed relief that she had help with the domestic work: "My soul, I am so glad now that you have a cook and a nurse for the children. I hope you will take the needed rest and the treatment which I sent in that prescription. Mari, I am so anxious about your health and you cannot help me better than taking good care of your self." However, he continued to worry, as he wrote on April 28<sup>th</sup>: "I received your letter, my soul, and was afraid you will use that nurse for pressing clothes or doing some thing other than helping you relieve you of your work that keeps you on your feet. I am realizing now every day that if we had a hundred servants to help, still you would work just the same, for work is your disease. It is most unfortunate that you ignore my advice and neglect your health...It is my devotion for you which make me so uncomfortable and anxious for your state of health..."<sup>135</sup> Perhaps Inayat's discomfort and anxiety may have been eased by the fact that he was with Ora and their children every summer for the school program that they had established in France.

### **The Summer School Program in Suresnes**

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<sup>134</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, letter from Inayat to Ora dated to April 21, 1923, pg. 63.

<sup>135</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, letter from Inayat to Ora dated to April 28, 1923, pg. 63-64.

In Suresnes, France, between 1922-1926,<sup>136</sup> Inayat, Ora, and other members of the Sufi movement began a summer school program for mureeds--followers of Inayat's Sufi movement--that started on the 5th of July and ended on the 13th of September each year. The 5th of July was an important day due to being Inayat's birthday, referred to as "Viladat Day" by Claire, and the 13th of September, called "Hejirat Day," marked the date that Inayat and his brothers left India for the West<sup>137</sup>, with the word "Hejirat" meaning "emigration" in Arabic.<sup>138</sup> Regarding its location, Inayat said: "Suresnes will be another Meccah"<sup>139</sup>, highlighting the importance of both the summer school and Suresnes, since Inayat drew a parallel to one of the most holy cities in the Islamic religion.

The mureeds who attended the summer school came from many European countries: England, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Some mureeds also hailed from North and South America. Many participants arrived prior to the start date of the summer school so that they could situate themselves in new living quarters for the duration of the program. One of these lodgings, known as the "Mureed House," was located next to Fazal Manzai's home and, as Claire called it, "a type of hotel for the Mureeds." The Mureed House was owned by some members of the Sufi Movement and had its own staff to help the guests. Even some of the mureeds who already owned summer homes in Suresnes also stayed in the Mureed House.<sup>140</sup> The range of lodging options for such mureeds is a reminder of their wealth and the fact that many of those drawn to Inayat's movement were members of high society. Others stayed with their friends or rented a place elsewhere.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin, dated August 15, 1922.

<sup>137</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 77.

<sup>138</sup>[https://wahiduddin.net/cgi-bin/texis/webinator/search\\_rjs/main.html?query=hijrat&pr=mv2\\_public&prox=page&rorder=250&rprox=1000&rdfreq=100&rwfreq=750&rlead=0&rdepth=0&sufs=2&order=r&cq=](https://wahiduddin.net/cgi-bin/texis/webinator/search_rjs/main.html?query=hijrat&pr=mv2_public&prox=page&rorder=250&rprox=1000&rdfreq=100&rwfreq=750&rlead=0&rdepth=0&sufs=2&order=r&cq=)

<sup>139</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 25.

<sup>140</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 77.

<sup>141</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 77.

From Claire's perspective, the Summer School ensured Inayat's stay in Suresnes with his family. When Summer School ended each year, Inayat would leave to spread his message during the fall and winter, usually returning to his family in late spring. Claire recounted: "At the end of each Summer School... This was a sad time for us because our Father would then travel, departing immediately to journey to numerous countries the whole winter long. During those trips, he would stay with various Sufi adepts at their homes, or they would put him up at hotels if necessary. He would give lectures that the Sufis had arranged for him..."<sup>142</sup>

Inayat also acknowledged the time he spent away from his family. In his biography, he stated that "A life such as mine, which was wholly devoted to the Cause, and which was more and more involved in the ever growing activities of the Sufi Movement, naturally kept me back from that thought and attention which was due to my home and family."<sup>143</sup>

The mureeds not only arranged lectures for him, but also presided over many of the administrative and organizational components of the movement. It was Claire's opinion that Inayat wasn't fond of the administrative aspect of his work, and she observed the problems that administration and organizing brought, saying that "...there was often a heavy atmosphere in the house..."<sup>144</sup>

Adding to this heavy atmosphere was Claire's impression as a child that life in general was hard for her mother and father. She mentioned that Inayat would only occasionally laugh and was serious most of the time. Ora "was always in the background, doing whatever she had to do... She not only had to take care of the four children... but she also wanted to sew all the clothing our father wore."<sup>145</sup> Claire noted that Ora did not have a sewing machine and had not

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<sup>142</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 80.

<sup>143</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid*, Personal Account chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_16.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_16.htm)

<sup>144</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 79.

<sup>145</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 80.

been taught to sew, perhaps due to her upper-class background, yet somehow managed to sew clothing for Inayat after the children had gone to sleep and she had completed her other chores. Considering that by this time they had a few servants, as evidenced by Inayat's reference to a nurse and a cook in a 1923 letter, as well as Claire saying Ora "wanted to" do this task<sup>146</sup>, one can speculate that Ora did it out of love rather than necessity.

Inayat himself acknowledged the tremendous amount of domestic labor Ora had performed throughout her married life. Inayat wrote that "If I had not been helped by her, my life, laden with a heavy responsibility, would have never enabled me to devote myself entirely to the Order as I have. It is by this continual sacrifice that she has shown her devotion to the Cause."<sup>147</sup>

Inayat's account suggests that Ora performed these duties out of love, but due to Claire's previous statement that Ora was not aware that she would be expected to take care of Inayat's family when married, it seems that traditional gender roles also played a part in the sacrifice Ora made. Claire acknowledged that such tasks took a toll on her mother. However, considering the fact that Murshida Rabia Martin had a husband and performed her duties to the Movement, the division of tasks with Inayat being a religious Sufi leader and Ora being his stay-at-home wife rearing their children may not have entirely to do with gender, although it somewhat conforms to the expectations of the time. Challenging some gender norms while still abiding by others was not a new phenomenon in Western cultures, going back to the Victorian era. As historian Karen Lystra explained, "The...man or woman...might sometimes be content with his or her role in one context and dissatisfied in another: sex-role terms had some elasticity in response to the needs of time, place, and condition."<sup>148</sup> Indeed, this statement could be applied to Ora, who had

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<sup>146</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 80.

<sup>147</sup> Khan, Inayat. *Biography of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan*, Personal Account chapter, [https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography\\_16.htm](https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/bio/Autobiography_16.htm)

<sup>148</sup> Lystra, Karen. *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Oxford University Press, 1989). pg. 155.

defied gender roles by traveling to Europe by herself to be with Inayat and seized her own independence, but also, apparently willingly, took on domestic labor for her family while Inayat traveled. Ora's Still, the pressure that Ora had faced to tend to Inayat's relatives—a duty that she hadn't seemed to anticipate—should be kept in mind, although there seems to be no doubt that Inayat and Ora's love was sincere and passionate throughout their lives. For the Summer School, Inayat and Ora both had to work hard to maintain it.

The summer school that Inayat and Ora ran had a specific schedule. According to Claire, “The meetings started early in the morning and continued until very late at night. In the evening there was zikr, repetition of sacred words and names; or sometimes concerts were held with various people singing with piano accompaniment, and sometimes the vina could be heard... Sometimes there were parties, a bit like garden parties, where people would dress up and socialize... Sometimes there seemed to be some very serious meetings, or occasionally dinners, around nine o'clock.” On Sundays, an event called “Universal Worship” was held during the afternoon: both the title and the scheduling of the activity on Sunday add to the universality of Inayat and Ora's movement, and the inclusion of religions for which they strived. On Thursdays, a healing service known as “Khatum”, arranged by Claire's uncles, was held after dinnertime, with halva prepared by Ora for dessert. The halva indicates that Ora's labor for the movement did not just include caring for the children while Inayat was away, but also cooking food for events at the Summer School. Claire did not attend Summer School sessions until the later years of the School. When Summer School came to an end each year, a gathering would be held to say farewell, with a photographer attending to take pictures. This ceremony included tea parties, where people could relax with sweets.

The impact of the summer school was mixed, although the majority of mureeds came away from it feeling inspired. Many looked up to Inayat as their leader, but Claire noted that there were also a few students “who thought they knew just as much or more than him.” She connected this observation with one of Inayat’s poems, in which he wrote, “Some did say that I knew nothing; some did say I knew all.”<sup>149</sup>

### **Inayat’s Journey to India and His Death**

In 1926, after the Sufi summer school program ended as usual, Inayat prepared to leave Suresnes again, but this time for a place he had not visited in years: India. As Claire put it, “Murshid and his Begum walked down the Sufi Garden path to Fazal Manzil. Under a starless sky, in deep sorrow, Murshid left his beloved wife and his Rubies Four this side of the world, to return to his motherland. Once arrived, there was no saying how he must have felt to kiss the soil of his beloved India.”<sup>150</sup> The deep sorrow likely referred to Inayat leaving his family yet again, but Inayat, devoted as ever to the Cause, as well as missing his home country, left on the journey. En route to India, in either late August or early September of 1926, Inayat sent a chatty letter from Venice to Ora: “Good bye my soul. With all love...”<sup>151</sup>

In India, Inayat continued his work as a Sufi leader, accompanied by a woman mureed who went by the name Kismet Stam. This is another example of Inayat’s close platonic relationships with his female followers, as well as the increased intermingling of men and women during this era. Kismet Dorothea Stam recounted many of her experiences and Inayat’s sayings in a book of her own, titled *Rays*. Categorized as a meditation book by the publisher, this book offers a glimpse into Inayat’s final days, as well as stories from his childhood, his personal

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<sup>149</sup>Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 77-80.

<sup>150</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 81-82.

<sup>151</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, the last letter from Inayat to Ora included in *We Rubies Four*, dated to most likely September 1926, pg. 82.

reflections, and accounts of things that happened at Suresnes. According to Stam, the last place Inayat lived was Tilak Lodge, located on Daya Lane in Delhi.<sup>152</sup>

Inayat's last trip in India, as described by Kismet, showed his continuing influence and work at being a Sufi leader, helping and engaging with people in both spiritual and social terms. According to Kismet, both Hindu and Muslim families settled near Inayat's residence soon after he moved there, possibly to be closer to him.<sup>153</sup> She noted that Inayat believed in spiritual protection when confronted with the prospect of robbers<sup>154</sup>, that he helped a bored boy from a lower caste who did not have anything to play with<sup>155</sup>, that he encouraged his servant's prayers before his duties to Inayat<sup>156</sup>, and that he helped people by providing medicine, clothing, and food.<sup>157</sup> Kismet recorded some of Inayat's observations on India, including, "In India, one finds the best and the worst."<sup>158</sup> and "if I have to take up the work for India, I should have to leave everything, everything."<sup>159</sup> Perhaps Inayat thought that such an effort would require him to leave Ora and his family behind.

He also commented on the sites that he visited, presumably with Kismet, openly wishing that he "could take one of these beautiful Mosques to the land in Suresnes"<sup>160</sup>, and observing that Emperor Humayun's tomb at sunset hours is "like a throne on the earth"<sup>161</sup>, and that the little birds at Tenfields' Garden were "like living jewels."<sup>162</sup> The friendship with Kismet indicates the

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<sup>152</sup>Stam, Kismet Dorothea. *Rays*, The Hague: East-West Publications Fonds B.V., 1927 (written), pg. 143.

<sup>153</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 78.

<sup>154</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 80.

<sup>155</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 81.

<sup>156</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 82.

<sup>157</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 83.

<sup>158</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 86.

<sup>159</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 115.

<sup>160</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 103

<sup>161</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 104.

<sup>162</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 118.

respectful comfort that appears to have been present in Inayat's platonic relationships with women.

Kismet also noted Inayat's speeches in India, providing a sense of what his speeches may have been like in general. Inayat had written to Rabia that he had been invited to the Aligarh Moslem University to speak and that other arrangements had already been made for him to speak in Delhi<sup>163</sup>. Kismet detailed in her account that Inayat spoke at the University of Delhi first, on the 15th and 16th of December, 1926, and then later at the Christian College of Lucknow on the 22nd of December. Kismet included one line about Murshid preaching about the Sufi Message; the rest of her account talks about issues that Inayat brought up that are connected to the Sufi Message, but also somewhat political. Inayat criticized the existence of the Untouchable class in India's caste system, calling for an end to it, and mentioned the beggars that were spread throughout India. He discussed religious intolerance between Muslims and Hindus, referring to instances such as segregating water for the two religious groups. His last point was a chastisement of Indian people for letting women do hard construction work and heavy lifting. Describing the response of his audience of scholars, Inayat said, "They did not like to hear it, but they all saw that it is true."<sup>164</sup>

Inayat's chivalrous chastisement with regard to how Indian women had to lift heavy things might reflect gender roles that were still preserved, beliefs about femininity that Inayat held, and Ora's own supposed "delicate" health. Although Inayat did experience periods of poverty, both he and Ora came from upper-class families, enjoyed comfort and wealth during their lives, and attracted many followers from high society. This may have also contributed to his

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<sup>163</sup> Letter from Inayat Khan to Rabia Martin, dated November 7, 1926.

<sup>164</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 113-114.

chastisement, of coming from a place where middle-class and upper-class women could afford not to do hard labor, even though they still performed domestic labor, as in Ora's case.

In India, Inayat Khan would eventually become ill and pass away. Kismet wrote that Inayat didn't show any outward signs of illness towards his last breath<sup>165</sup>, which he took on the 5th of February 1927, at 8:20 AM.<sup>166</sup> She claimed that a large thunderstorm came over the area after his death and compared it to earthquakes that occurred after the departure of Buddha and Jesus Christ, this section being her last entry in her book.<sup>167</sup> Interestingly, Kismet did not mention Ora and Inayat's domestic family in the India section, although she mentioned his parents.<sup>168</sup> However, this omission may have been due to practicality and the fact that Kismet's book was focused on Inayat and his work.

In the first week of February 1927, Stam sent Ora a telegram that Inayat was very sick.<sup>169</sup> A letter to Inayat from his uncle A.M. Pathan<sup>170</sup>, dated November 17, 1926, revealed that he had been ill since the fall, with the letter speaking of the current treatment Inayat was undergoing.<sup>171</sup>

Ora and Claire only learned more details about Inayat's sickness from Kismet Stam after she returned from India and could meet with them. Stam described the doctors Inayat visited, the medicines he received, and the way he was behaving, such as being in a "trance" when listening to a group of Qawali singers, which made it unclear to her whether he was meditating or if his body was giving out.<sup>172</sup> According to Stam, Inayat had also been given the wrong medicine for his condition and Inayat himself was aware of this. Additionally, Claire mentioned speculation

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<sup>165</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 142.

<sup>166</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 143.

<sup>167</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 144.

<sup>168</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 13.

<sup>169</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 82.

<sup>170</sup> Earlier in *We Rubies Four* on pg. 22, Alauddin Khan is referred to as Dr. Pathan, so this may have been him.

<sup>171</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 84.

<sup>172</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 82-83.

that Inayat may have been poisoned in India, or given poison instead of proper medicine.

However, she conceded that there was no way to know for sure.<sup>173</sup>

Ora received a heartbreaking telegram<sup>174</sup> from Kismet informing her that Inayat had passed away on February 5, 1927<sup>175</sup>, news that Claire called “the greatest sorrow on Earth.”<sup>176</sup> She recalled her mother saying, “ Had I gone with him, he would not have died, but I could not have left the children.”<sup>177</sup> What this statement means is not entirely clear; however, it may indicate that Ora wanted to travel with Inayat, but felt constrained by her domestic duties.

Ora had already not been eating or sleeping due to worry over Inayat’s being ill, and his death escalated her behavior. She experienced a nervous breakdown that was serious enough to lead a doctor to advise her to stay in bed for a few months.<sup>178</sup> Because of Ora’s inconsolable grief, Noor began to take over care of her siblings, leading them to see her as their “little mother.”<sup>179</sup>

However, Claire recalled her mother’s resilience as well as her frail condition: “Nonetheless, she did leave her bed. As a young girl, she had contracted typhoid fever, and the doctor said she survived only because she had such a strong will. Her escape from America confirms her tremendous courage and her strong will. This inborn trait of hers was still present under the weight of her overwhelming sorrow. For our sake, she tried her best to overcome her grief.”<sup>180</sup>

In 1927 or 1928, Ora, her children, and Inayat’s brothers and cousin went to Delhi, India to visit Inayat’s grave. Claire’s account of the trip conveys her excitement as an eight-year-old

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<sup>173</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 83-84.

<sup>174</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 82.

<sup>175</sup> Stam, Kismet. *Rays*, pg. 143.

<sup>176</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 82.

<sup>177</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 85.

<sup>178</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 83.

<sup>179</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 82.

<sup>180</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire’s account, pg. 83.

encountering a faraway place, as well as her witnessing her mother's grief. Claire recalled playing with her older brothers on the ship, the delicious food she ate, and the festivities meant for adults that she spied on. Yet she also sensed a dark undercurrent: "Perhaps that's why we were such naughty children, because we felt there was something wrong, something broke in our lives, in our family. The happiness we knew as children had gone for some reason. We didn't talk about it with each other; we just got wilder."<sup>181</sup> When little Claire visited her father's dargah<sup>182</sup> and grave, she wondered, "Why did my father have to die, and why so far away? Why did he have to go to India anyway? But nobody heard me; I didn't expect answers."<sup>183</sup>

Claire recounted how Ora's crying at her husband's grave was "too much for the human heart to bear."<sup>184</sup> Her mother's melancholy persisted throughout the trip, from the time they were on the ship, to their touring of famous Indian sites, to when they finally visited the Maula Baksh House in Baroda. It was there that Ora claimed to have heard Inayat singing outside, calling her children over when she did, and then later saw him before he vanished.<sup>185</sup>

Despite Ora's sorrow and the fact that Noor had to console her while on the trip, Claire remembered her mother tending her when Claire became ill. "I wasn't aware of what became of the rest of the family," Claire wrote, "I only remember that my mother took care of me and had me lie down."<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 86-88.

<sup>182</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, "Shrine at the tomb of a revered Sufi" pg. 401.

<sup>183</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 89.

<sup>184</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 89.

<sup>185</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 90-93.

<sup>186</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 92.

## Ora and the Children After Inayat's Death

Every year on the day of Inayat's death, a commemorative event was held in the Oriental Room of Fazal Manzai. Ora decorated a picture of Inayat with a wreath of yellow roses, something that had taken her "hours to make" since "roses have their thorns," according to Claire. Once the procession began for Visalat Day, as it was known, Ora's children would greet the arriving mureeds, who would walk into the perfumed room barefoot, carrying their own bouquets that they used to give their respects. Ora's grief would especially be felt on this day. Claire recalled that Ora would usually be too sad to come downstairs and would keep on crying.

Aside from Visalat Day, Claire remarked that "our mother spent many years in a state of depression, often keeping to her bed" and that "sometimes she would hardly eat for days." Her malnutrition became so severe from time to time that Claire and her siblings, led by Noor, would threaten Ora with not eating themselves. Nevertheless, Ora kept on working through it all, making clothes for her family, including a lovely white silk dress for Claire, and washing them at home, since she could not afford to take them to a laundry.

At first, after Inayat's death, Fazal Mai provided economic support, but after she died in 1939, there were questions about where money would come from. According to Claire, Ora was proud and wanted some financial independence. Even so, she asked for economic support from her uncle, George W. Baker, a wealthy lawyer and rancher who lived in New Mexico and was happy to help them. He continued giving them financial support until World War Two. Additionally, Kismet Dorothea Stam would later provide tuition fees for the children's musical education. It is difficult to gauge the state of the family's finances, but what is known for certain is that it was unstable.

Troubles arose in the Sufi Movement after Inayat's passing. Conflict emerged over who would hold leadership positions in the Movement, with Ora being alone to fight to maintain the movement, and some of the mureeds were unkind to her. Claire later found out that, before his death, the Sufi Movement had successfully pressured Inayat to give up the rights to the books he had written--books that the Sufi Movement now owned as a result.

Vilayat, the eldest son, at age fifteen began vigorously studying everything related to the Sufi Movement. Before Inayat left for India, he appointed Vilayat, then age ten, to be head of the Confraternity of the Message. Vilayat would eventually become Inayat's successor in terms of the spiritual movement, but there were clashes in his teenage years, including one instance where his uncle Musharraf tied him to a tree and beat him with a stick over a disagreement about the Sufi message, until the neighbors intervened.<sup>187</sup> In addition to Vilayat's important role as the eventual Murshid of the movement, he also served as a pilot for the British army during World War Two and participated in D-Day.<sup>188</sup>

Noor, the eldest child and sister who, according to Claire, set an "unattainable example,"<sup>189</sup> would become a hero for Britain during World War Two. The author of both songs and books, including an adaptation of *Jataka Tales*, and having a degree in Child Psychology from the University of Paris<sup>190</sup>, Noor became one of the most wanted spies on Nazi Germany's list, hiding her secret work from her family in her letters to them after she went to France as an agent of the Special Operations Executive. Interestingly, her secret identity was "Nora Baker," similar to her mother's name Ora Ray Baker. Eventually she was betrayed, caught, tortured, and

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<sup>187</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's accounts, pg. 97-101.

<sup>188</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, pg. 143-144.

<sup>189</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 119.

<sup>190</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, including Claire's account, pg. 117-118.

executed by the Gestapo at the Dachau camp.<sup>191</sup> Claire and Vilayat tried to keep the news of Noor's demise from Ora.<sup>192</sup>

Hidayat, who in his childhood had formed a strong bond with Claire, while Vilayat had teamed up with Noor, became a musical composer and conductor. He studied at the Ecole Normal de Musique in Paris starting in 1932 and went on to work at the Lycee Musical de Dieulefit as a professor of music. After that he joined an orchestra as a violinist in Haarlem, Holland.<sup>193</sup> He married a Dutch woman named Leni (later called Iman).<sup>194</sup>

Claire, along with Noor, started by working as a Red Cross nurse during World War Two.<sup>195</sup> After Ora's death in 1949, Claire moved to the United States, where she had a son<sup>196</sup>, David Harper<sup>197</sup> who wrote *We Rubies Four*.

Soon after David's second birthday, Claire and Vilayat decided to visit their uncle Pierre, Ora's half-brother who had objected so violently to Ora's relationship with Inayat many years ago. Pierre's sentiments had apparently not changed, as he received them coldly, as compared to his wife, Blanche de Vries, who was kinder to her niece and nephew. Claire described the meeting with Pierre: "Sitting at his desk, he opened a drawer and showed us a gun. 'If I had found him, I was going to kill your father with this gun!' he bragged."<sup>198</sup>

Decades had passed since Ora had revealed to Pierre that she was in love with Inayat. There was no evidence that Ora had ever seen Pierre again after running away to Europe. Despite the passage of time, Pierre still refused to accept Ora and Inayat's relationship. He also did not at

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<sup>191</sup> Dundas-Harper, Tara; Harper, Claire Ray; Harper, David Ray. "The Secret Agent", *We Rubies Four*, pg. 152-184.

<sup>192</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 148.

<sup>193</sup> "Biography", the music of Hidayat Inayat-Khan, <https://www.hidayat-inayat-khan.com/Bio/index.html>

<sup>194</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 123

<sup>195</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 124-126

<sup>196</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 193.

<sup>197</sup> David Ray Harper's exact birthdate is unknown.

<sup>198</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 195.

all seem to feel regretful about the way he had behaved or the racism he had displayed, showing how long white men's imagined defense of and control over their women from racial "others" can last. As historian Nayan Shah notes, "Their honor [white men] in defending white women...became a communal and racial property that trumped...physical violence."<sup>199</sup> Pierre's patriarchal claim to Ora was more important than Ora's autonomy and Inayat's life, even well into Pierre's later years, even when meeting the children of Ora and Inayat.

Ora Ray Baker passed away on May 2, 1949, in Paris, France.<sup>200</sup> Claire, who was greatly affected by her mother's death, wrote, "Ora Ray, Pirani Ameena Begum Inayat Khan, left this planet long before her time. Though her face was thin, she still wore the glow of youth. Perhaps Mother could not visualize herself under the ground in the neighborhood. She wished to be with her Thea in the skies and the stars."<sup>201</sup>

Inayat and Ora had been married for fourteen years and they had four children. Their love story had initially been a forbidden romance that resulted in elopement to Europe, where they married and worked incredibly hard to spread the Sufi Message. Despite the harsh realities that marked the trajectory of their lives, the initial love that drew them together appeared to last until both of their deaths. Examining Inayat's and Ora's relationship reveals how their upper-class status and the Orientalist perceptions of Inayat made their meeting possible; it also makes clear the obstacle of violent racism they faced in the United States, as well as the crucial labor Ora and other women performed to maintain both the Khan household and the Sufi Movement in the West.

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<sup>199</sup> Shah, Nayan. *Stranger Intimacy*, pg. 52.

<sup>200</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Family Tree, pg. 260.

<sup>201</sup> Harper, Claire Ray and Harper, David Ray. *We Rubies Four*, Claire's account, pg. 189.

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