

Shaikh-ul-Mashaik Maheboob khan

Shaikh-ul-Mashaik Mir Pyarumian Maheboob khan Yuskin caste (= Archsheikh Pyaromir Mahboub khan Yuzkan khassete) (Baroda State 6 VI 1887 – The Hague, Holland, 3-VII 1948) was the five-year younger brother of Hazrat Inayat khan, the poet-philosopher and scholarly musician and mystic, whose modern Indian Sufism (as developed in the West) was to become a major cultural and spiritual current in today's secular occident.



Maheboob, Musharaff en Inayat with their father Rahmat khan

As was natural in the patriarchal society of their time, in his early days “Pyaru” was submissive unquestioningly to his brilliant brother as a father figure, lineage chieftain and Sufi Saint. Thus upon first appeal he followed Hazrat Inayat khan on his “Grand tour of the West” (1910), planned for 2 – 3 years but become indefinite, at the stoic sacrifice of his recent Sabirabiy marriage, the presumptive heirloom for their landed family's wealth and the security and his promising prospects in their native Baroda. The fond memories of hometown and joint-familylife he retained throughout his lifetime.

But then, however, almost from the outset of their occidental venture and ever-increasingly so, Pyaru

Maheboob became what Hazrat Inayat described as his “wise man”, the confidant and trustee at his side. As well as main spokesman among Hazrat's three accompanying brothers Mohd. Ali khan and Musharaff khan in addition to Maheboob when he sought to elicit from them (as he would of no others) comments or criticism of his lectures and decisions.

Musical genius and mystical inwardness were shared by both Hazrat Inayat and Mir Maheboob khans. Hazrat, in addition to study, cultivation, composition and teaching, was prepared also to perform their classical Hindustani and Carnatic music (though at public rather than private venues in complement to his lectures). Maheboob, however, though judged to have a wholly exceptional beauty of voice by both Hazrat and later western specialists, through both cultivated reserve and inborn shyness forever remained reluctant to perform even in private. The same proved the case in later years. Having succeeded Hazrat in his professorate at the Baroda Gayanshala Academy of Music, a quarter of a century later, from 1927 to 1948, Maheboob once more succeeded, this time, as leader of the Sufi Movement formed around Hazrat's teachings for his adherents and students, and radiating from their French residence near Paris. As such again, at public gatherings in a formal capacity, he felt reluctant to cast his own verbal shadows upon Hazrat's radiant teachings.



Maheboob and Musharaff khan

By contrast, he loved reading his brother's lectures to the audiences assembled, annually from June to September, for the Sufi Summerschools, held in extensive grounds close to their French residence outside Paris. In personal interviews and private circles, Shaikh-ul-Mashaik Maheboob khan was a matchlessly evocative and inspiring authority on his brother's Sufi teachings in all their both social and subtle details, recreating their wisdom and wit in exceptional ways. His profound grasp of underlying philosophies and vast meditative experience enhanced all further clarification.

However, Maheboob khan's greatest abiding contribution to his brother's Indian Sufism in the West are his compositions for voice and piano accompaniment, of a large number of Indian melodies from their Barodan Gayanshala and Maulabakhshi repertoires, thus both preserving them and rendering them understandable to western audiences. Most valued of all, however, have been his personally created compositions to a number of Hazrat Inayat khan's English poems. In the mainly Sufi meetings where those were performed, they have been valued hugely. However, being adverse to commercialisation of a to him sacred art, only a few songs were published, and by others, during his lifetime. Even so the beauty of his musical lines, as also evinced in the introductions of many Indian songs, remains profoundly striking and by now are likely to become more generally known and enjoyed. Curiously, in the same way that Hazrat Inayat khan's discourses shifted ever more from music to Sufism due to the direction of interest of his early American pupil Mrs. Ada ('Rabia') Martin, so Maheboob khan, who was studying European harmony in Paris, then London, and experimenting with western musical forms and styles of his own, was dissuaded from doing so and urged rather to compose Indian music by their friend in Paris, the then famous pianist, Walter Rummel: "we have so much western music already!"



In 1924, Maheboob khan had remarried with Shadibiy, daughter of a mureed of the patrician Dutch Rijckloff van Goens family. This accounts for his regular shifts from The Hague to Paris and vice versa, as for his being caught up in Holland by World War II. The four brothers had first come to live in Paris in 1912, following the advice of the British expert on Indian music, mr. A.H. Fox Strangways. In his lectures Hazrat Inayat khan recounts that after having left India, he was never happier to play his Indian music than in France (where they returned in late 1920), regarded as having become permanent from 1922, when their large-scale three-monthly Sufi Summerschools began in earnest, lasting until 1939.

After the second world war, the Sufi Lecture Hall and its grounds were expropriated by a communist municipality. Small-scale gatherings continued at their residence, however after the turn of the century new initiatives have emerged to secure the continued role of Hazrat-Inayat khan's residence as both the historical and actual centre of international Sufi activities. This

French focus and cultural orientation and particularly its musical dimension, also accounts for the inclusion in the present framework of the chamber music of a member of the now extinct French branch of the van Goens family: Daniel van Goens, whose work has receded into the background for no good reason but for Rummel's "too much music already"!

The here quoted entry by the musicologist and pianist Frans van Ruth summarises Daniel van Goens's life and work very effectively.

For only in recent years his compositions have been re-introduced in Holland by Frans van Ruth and the cellist Doris Hochscheid.