



Fresh Rain

A Quarterly e-Journal of the Open Path / Sufi Way

FALL 2014

IN THIS ISSUE: Sufi Inayat Khan on Selflessness, reflections and poems by Pir Elias, Yona Chavanne, Puran Perez, Lois Farrington, Sakina Thomas, Lynn Raphael Reed, Jeanne Rana, and more...



Dear far-flung friends,

Welcome to our Fall issue of "Fresh Rain." The overall theme is "Walking the Path."

In the winter issue, we'll address the theme of "Heart," and in spring, "Encountering the 'Other'."

Please send submissions to freshrain@sufiway.org for our consideration. We welcome all offerings whether they meet the theme or not. We may decide to hold a piece for a later issue, or request edits. You may always review your writing before it goes public. We want to inspire, delight, and weigh the harder reflections of this never-ending eruption called Life.

With love,

Amrita

Editor, "Fresh Rain"



Contents

On Selflessness and the Path of Nothing p. 2
– Sufi Inayat-Khan

Walking the Path p. 2
– Yona Chavanne

Be Still and Know p. 3
– Pir Elias Amidon

Grounding the Path of Groundlessness p. 4
– Puran Lucas Perez

Walking the Path p. 6
– Lois Farrington

The Path of Aging p. 6
– Sakina Thomas

"The Open Path" p. 7
– Lynn Raphael Reed

"The Subjunctive" p. 7
– Jeanne Rana

"All Suffering" p. 7
– Angus Landman

"Abundance" p. 7
– Lynn Raphael Reed

Meeting Each Other p. 8
– Puran Lucas Perez
– Carol Barrow
– Klaus-Peter Esser

Calendar of Programs p. 9





Selflessness and the Path of Nothing – SUFI INAYAT KHAN

The moment the spirit of selflessness has begun to sparkle in the heart of man, he shows in his word and action nobility which nothing earthly—neither power nor riches—can give.

There are many ideas which intoxicate man, many feelings there are which act upon the soul as wine, but there is no stronger wine than the wine of selflessness. To become something is a limitation, whatever one may become. Even if a person were to be called the king of the world, he would still not be the emperor of the universe. It is the person who is no one, who is no one and yet all.

The Sufi, therefore, takes the path of being nothing instead of being something. It is this feeling of nothingness which turns the human heart into an empty cup into which the wine of immortality is poured. It is this state of bliss which every truth-seeking soul yearns to attain. It is easy to be a learned person, and it is not very difficult to be wise; it is within one's reach to become good, and it is not an impossible achievement to be pious or spiritual. But if there is an attainment which is greater and higher than all these things, it is to be nothing. It may seem frightening to many, the idea of becoming nothing, for human nature is such that it is eager to hold on to something, and to what man holds on most is his own person, his individuality. Once he has risen above this, he has climbed Mount Everest, he has arrived at the spot where earth ends and heaven begins.



Walking the Path

– YONA CHAVANNE

*Caminante no hay camino,
se hace camino al andar.*

– Antonio Machado

Walker, there is no path, the path unfolds as we are walking.

How to describe: "Walking the Path"?

A myriad of things come to mind, yet one prevails, an unfathomable sense of faith and gratitude, despite moments of doubt and perplexity. Maybe, just by being born, we are already on a path. Then it becomes the Path, our Path. Perhaps after having been initiated into a spiritual tradition, after a first impulse, a loving welcome into the Unknown, a blessing for times ahead, a subtle alliance is created, a sacred link to the spirit of guidance: the Friend, our lineage and that of other great souls, mystics, poets and musicians.

We long to walk on a Path with a Heart, but sometimes, the path seems flat and leading nowhere. Its way is uncertain. Or it suddenly becomes steep, unfamiliar, threatening. Surely, it leads somewhere, yet we don't know where. Who am I?

The Open Path is multifaceted, rich in paradoxes, never totally defined, nor clearly definable! One gets hints, glimpses.... While living the fullness of our daily life with innocence, sensitive to and alarmed by the world's turmoil, we discover that things are not the way we thought or were told they were; we learn to unlearn, to dismiss superstition, to access and eventually experience

a seamless, unified field of awareness, which we cannot touch or see, or even name, however certain of its existence we may be. How daring!

What does the Path require? I would say: courage, kindness, sincerity. The Path teaches us impermanence, independence and detachment. At the same time, it is a teacher of intimacy, a call to freedom and love. A call from the source of being, that source we can never grasp, forever elusive, yet absolutely present in its absence.

Opening to openness—yes, while remaining vigilant—witnessing, listening, embracing what comes. Cherishing the fresh moment anew (maybe joyful, maybe sad, maybe ecstatic, maybe empty), a moment passing by ... then disappearing.

O wonder! We learn to wonder and let go. When we are afraid of taking a wrong step, when we feel weak, fragmented, forgetful, we need pointers and reminders. We find allies. Ally, the subtle playful light. Ally, in solitude. Ally, the quiet night of prayer. Ally, trees reaching to the sky. Ally, the contemplative grace of a cat. Ally, the smile from an unknown passer-by....

Walking the Path happens to each of us in so many different ways. As well as living our life in the world, we pursue a search, a hope, a mystical quest, an ongoing inquiry into the sacredness and unity of Being. It is a journey to many places, inner and outer. We come to meet fellow travelers, and real friends. We hug, converse, laugh, dance, garden and sometimes even cry. We savour the beauty of silence after the vibrancy of the zikr circle. The melody slowly fades away and we remember the untraceable One, "closer to us than our jugular vein."



Be Still and Know

– PIR ELIAS AMIDON

Walking alone at night on a country road, no people or cars or houses around, just enough starlight to see your way, the only sound the sound of your shoes on the road and the swish of your clothes as you walk, you feel the stillness inside of things come close. You stop, standing still. Now there are no sounds, except the almost-never-heard hush of things being.

You sense the stillness on all sides and an identical stillness within you. It makes you uneasy, as if you are about to be extinguished. You try to think, to establish yourself against the stillness, but the voice of your thoughts sounds thin, metallic. You feel an irrepressible need to be distracted, to change the stillness and its overwhelming of you. You walk home, thinking about plans for tomorrow.

But in the quiet of your room you realize what happened: you got scared. You got scared of opening into the stillness, of allowing it to be. It was a close call. You see how throughout your life you have invited one distraction after another to prevent just this from happening. Now you feel disappointed in yourself. So instead of turning on your computer or reading a book or getting something to eat, you sit down and invite the stillness back.

A phrase comes to you that you heard once from Psalm 46: *“Be still, and know.”* Be still. Be still.

You arrange your body as you have learned to do. You sit in a comfortable, alert position, with your back vertical so you don't slump or drift off. You let your body be motionless, quiet. The motionlessness of your body is a helpful friend; you know it is temporary, and in fact it is not really motionless—little shifts and sensations keep appearing—but the relative stillness of your body reduces your identification with it—with the sense you are your body's ambitions and memories and likes and dislikes.

You have heard that learning to sit still, to settle like this, is called by Tibetan lamas “the first motionlessness.” A quiet body at ease relaxes the persistence of thoughts. Once the first motionlessness has been learned, they say, then it doesn't matter if the body is motionless or moving, for then the ground of stillness is always available. But for now you need this helpful friend, and you sit still.

Now you invite “the second motionlessness.” This is the still, empty openness “behind” each of your senses, the openness in which your senses arise. You relax into that openness. To say it is unmoving is an indication of its nature but not really accurate. It is not the opposite of motion, or of the visible, or of sound. This motionlessness is not definable—it is not a sensation. Nevertheless it has an almost kinesthetic effect on you as if it is vanishing you, as if the existing one you thought you were, the receiver, the photographic plate that records your experience, this one becomes transparent. You begin to feel the same threat of vanishment you felt on the road, but now you relax and let it be.

“The third motionlessness” comes now, unbidden. It is the stillness of presence itself—the stillness of the pure clarity that is always here, behind and within everything. It is what allows everything to show up. It is empty too, not made out of anything, yet it is awesome and radiant in its presence. It is, without being an it.

You remember now how the phrase from Psalm 46 continues: *“Be still, and know I am God.”*

“God”—this old, strange word that sounds like a judge and yet still resonates beyond that—could it mean—could it have first meant—this empty Presence without form appearing as all form? You realize you are trying to figure it out and you stop. *Be still, and know I am God.* The knowing is not thinking. It is presence being present to presence.

You find yourself wavering here—one moment at ease in the clarity, and in the next thinking about it. You hear the words again: *Be still.* Do nothing. Let be. Don't fill anything in. No need to figure anything out. Relax.

A sense of peacefulness opens in you, vast and without dimension. This is what Sufis call *sakina*—vast peaceful tranquility without dimension—and suddenly you are smiling, your eyes are filling with tears—a joy—could it be called that?—a joyousness like praise and thankfulness together, love pouring forth from nowhere, the whole show showing up—mountains, sky, stars, bodies—from nothing, from stillness, comes joy.

“In remembering the Real, all hearts find joyous peace.”
– Qur'an 13:28



Grounding the Path of Groundlessness

– PURAN PEREZ

The pursuit of spiritual development is a bit like water trying to get wet. It's not that the expansion of the heart and the deepening of wisdom are not possible, it's that there is no viable way to pursue these *directly*. At least none that I know of. What we *can* pursue directly is *human* development—becoming a fully functioning, beneficial presence in the world.

Lest we think of this as a glorified self-improvement program, there is a key distinction to be made. Most become-a-better-person teachings posit an enhanced self who is both director and goal of this project. This “better self” is seen as a desirable refinement of the ordinary self, usually based on higher reasoning and more literate emotions. This may be a welcome upgrade of one's personhood, but it is not the transformation suggested here.

On the path of *human* development there is not a self who directs a program of personal renewal; there is a surrender to the implicate guidance of the living moment; a shifting of attention from outcomes (what the self wants) to dynamics (what is happening here, now). On this path, the intellect and the emotions are not refined but effaced. Not that we stop thinking and feeling, but these are no longer experienced as separate faculties. The core of knowing is a unified field of awareness, an ever-fresh clarity of perception, and a subtlety of understanding and expression.

For example, the level of our functioning as a human *being* (verb) is tied to our health. Thus we seek out the advice of experts on wellness. While these resources can be invaluable, they tend to entrain a duality in which the body is an object we must manage. But a unified field of being resolves body, mind and heart into a wholeness. Because the state of that singular existence is always self-evident, the information we need to stay healthy is always present. It is there in how our *beingness* is affected by what we do, say, eat, think, allow, resist, etc., etc. Of course the personal biosphere is a highly complex system so we must sometimes call on the advice of skilled professionals. Rather than guidance followed blindly, their assistance can be integrated into the pre-existing lucidity of this system.

The practicalities of walking this path are as simple as they are challenging. We approach problem solving less through “logical” definitions and judgements and more through a “full-bodied” sense of what authentically comes next—that which emerges in alignment with the truth of what *this* is and what it's yearning to become. Decision making arises more out of a real-time assimilation of *present* information than out of what has worked before or what validates our beliefs, or what we think will get us what we want. The piloting of this process is not centered in the intellect nor in the intuition, nor in some amalgam of the two. It arises in the field where this focal point of awareness joins irretrievably with the ocean of consciousness it exemplified. Then we may become, more than a beneficial presence in the world, a living benediction of the world.



Walking the Path

– LOIS FARRINGTON

For me, the desire to be with the natural world is overpowering. I want to be with, without fighting for or guarding against, without regretting the past or speculating the future or transcending the present.

Can there can be a place of living deeply without boundaries or walls? Maybe when we dig in, boundaries are dissolved, like it or not. It does seem that nature abhors a wall. Funny thing, I can't separate the natural world from my neighbor or economic systems or war,

not even in my own back yard, and yet there is a way to intimately and entirely be with. It comes with the price of opening myself, dissolving my sense of self, and allowing the fullness of place and moment. What arises from that, I don't know.

On this frozen morning, several Mourning Doves visit my pond. They are shy, easily startled creatures, but these pairs are familiar with this place and routinely come here for rest and replenishment. They settle into soft depressions in the mulch and, facing south, gather in the warmth of the low winter sun. Nearby, a Downy Woodpecker taps out the heartbeat of the earth, and swelling leaf buds hold the promise of another day. I will listen to the song of this wondrous world and to the multitude of teachers it offers.



The Path of Aging

– SAKINA THOMAS

Yes, this aging thing is very odd. Sometimes, I think death is imminent, just around the corner, sometimes I think that I am not going to age at all and that in ten years I will be just the same ... so bouncing from one to the other and sometimes feeling guilty when I enjoy having my time to myself. Strange indeed!

In fact, am I going to stop living and breathing? Obviously yes, but something inside me still refuses to acknowledge this. My grandsons aged six and four were staying with me and the older one asked me how old I was. Sixty-four was too much for him.

Sometimes it is too much for me too! I want to see them grow up, I want them to remember me and then I think that if I live ten years more, that will be enough. I can't ask for more than that, can I? Anyway, it all has a way of cutting things down to the essential. Each moment is precious, mustn't waste it, but I do....



The Open Path

Inside all that is human
is a great emptiness, an awesome void.

Not the dark and dank vacuum of existential crisis
or the wet and labile mysteries of grief;
these are just the antechambers.

No, beyond, inside, in the inner place—
an emptiness that explodes;
a cacophony of falling stars.

Two doorways beckon, into our aerial otherness.
The mossy womb where breath germinates,
gestates, breaks through;
and the spiralling heart—a raucous tambour
that finally stills.

Life. Death.
An aching wound and blistering healing.
Let it come.
Now.



Open me, Beloved,
And let me flow.

– LYNN RAPHAEL REED June 2013



The Subjunctive

Act as if
 you are healed and whole

 as if— the air over the city were clean

 as if— you had already published your
Collected Poems to wild acclaim

act as if
 you aren't afraid of pain

 as if— you have moved beyond duality
and all suffering

act as if
 the sun rises just for your joy

 the moon's path across the water leads you
home

live without fear

 as if there were no tomorrow
(there isn't)

and yesterday were dust
(it is)

– JEANNE RANA © 2008



All Suffering

All suffering
 Is the imagined
 Beginning and end
 Of You.
 The realization and practice
 Of Your Constancy,
 The pilgrim's progress
 The meditative prayer,
 Soften and dissolve the edge
 Of what appears to be so,
 Leaving only
 A certain unfathomable
 Silently dwelling
 Delighted
 Being.

– ANGUS LANDMAN



Abundance

Put yourself in the way of it.
 Let it stumble
 you.
 Let it rub you
 out.

Let it scour you smoother than
 oak,
 husks
 floating,

till the moment your heart
 breaks
 unutterably
 open...

and then imagine.

Imagine
 that vast abundance rushing through every atom—

flames fiercer than infatuation,
 water purer than illusion,
 wind softer than a dream—

flowing and flowing and flowing,

chiming us endlessly
 like
 the first
 flickering
 stars.

– LYNN RAPHAEL REED April 2014

Meeting Each Other

With each issue of Fresh Rain we will include a few short biographical sketches and photos of Sufi Way initiates. Since many of us are scattered in different places on the globe, this is one way we can introduce ourselves to each other—along with speaking together on teleconferences or, if we're lucky, meeting each other at a program or retreat. If you would like to introduce yourself like this, send a photo and a 200-word (or less) bio written in the first person to: freshrain@sufiway.org



Puran Lucas Perez

Puran joined Fazal Inayat-Khan as a member of the first 'Khankah' in the early 70's. Over most of the next decade he lived, traveled and worked closely with Fazal as his (some would

say, radical) teachings took shape and as the community morphed through many and marvelous iterations.

For the last 30 years, Puran has facilitated workshops and programs, including theatrical productions in Europe and North America. Now his medium of choice for sharing Sufism is performance—"channeling" Sufi poets to the accompaniment of his own *sarod* music.

His work as a senior teacher of the Sufi Way centers on creativity as a framework for personal and spiritual development. He is currently developing, together with Carol Barrow and others, an online space called "The Tavern" for sharing this approach. He is a father, grandfather, cinephile and social activist based in The Cloud but living in southern Ontario.

More at www.puranperez.com.



Carol Barrow

I live in Colorado with my sweet husband, Michael, and our dogs, Dharma and Rumi. I am a massage therapist, but in 2006 shoulder injuries caused me to reduce my practice, and I now limit my work to a few sessions a month.

When not tending to dogs, our home, or our vegetable gardens, I enjoy writing, talking about "nothing" with Open Path graduate friends, helping to support the Sufi Way in any way I can, and working with Murshid Puran Lucas in creating The Tavern—an Internet site where people can come together to share the heart-opening Awe of creativity.

I happened upon the Sufi Way in the Utah desert in 2004 while participating in my first wilderness quest. There, I met Pir Elias, Murshida Rabia, and a few other Sufis. At the time, I knew nothing about Sufism, and I wasn't looking for any new teachings, but I fell in big "L" Love out in that desert sand. Every day, my heart sings with gratitude for the opening that has come with the help of Pir Elias, the Open Path, and all of you in this community. Thank you!



Klaus-Peter Esser

I was born in Germany's post-war 1950. My parents dived into increasing the family's wealth by working hard and also catching up on their "lost" young days.

Like father and grandfather, I studied economics and became a manager. At age 42, even though I had been successful, I felt increasing frustration at the dominance of money over people. One sleepless night, I had the clarity to start my own coaching business. For the first time, I experienced that there had been something other than "I" that had led me to fundamentally change. It came to me; I didn't think it. It was like "somebody" switching on the light. Who was this somebody?

At 64, I look back to a beautiful family, grandchildren and a loving relationship. I continue to assist people in creating respectful relations where conflicts can be expressed openly in a nonviolent environment.

My wife and I joined the Open Path in 2011, and I received initiation in 2013. Now I understand this "somebody" that had "lightened my room" so many years ago was something far more than me.

What will happen next? I don't know, but I look forward to an ever open path.

Calendar of Programs



Wilderness Quest

Canyonlands, Utah, United States
Elias Amidon and Elizabeth Rabia Roberts
September 19-28, 2014



Open Path Intensive Retreat

Nada Hermitage, Crestone, Colorado, United States
Elias Amidon
October 2–6, 2014



Living with Dying

Residential Workshop in Germany
Irène Kaigetsu Bakker Sensei
October 16–19, 2014



Toward the One

The Hague, Netherlands
Omar and Suzanne Inayat Khan
October 31–November 1, 2014



Doing the Beautiful

London, United Kingdom
Elias Amidon
November 15–16, 2014



Doing the Beautiful

Bergen, Holland
Elias Amidon
November 20, 2014



Doing the Beautiful

Bristol, United Kingdom
Elias Amidon
November 22, 2014



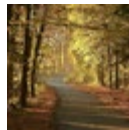
Pilgrimage to Konya

Encounter with the Living Sufism of Turkey
Kunderke and Karim Noverraz
December 6–19, 2014



Living Sufism

Year-Long Teleconference
Nine Senior Teachers of the Sufi Way
First and Third Sundays of each month



2015 9-Month Open Path Trainings

England, Germany, and the United States