



Fresh Rain

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

SPRING 2014

IN THIS ISSUE: Lineage Roots: Sufi Inayat Khan on the Message, Fazal Inayat-Khan on the Qalandar, a tribute to Sitara Brutnell, poetry, reflections, and more...



Welcome to the first issue of Fresh Rain!

Fresh Rain is a quarterly e-journal of the Open Path / Sufi Way. Here you'll find short essays, poetry, stories, aphorisms, and quotes from teachers, students, and other friends on this open path we share, along with a calendar of upcoming programs and activities, news of what's been happening, and biographical sketches of students of the Sufi Way.

We hope this will be a lively place where we meet, share, and grow together. Future issues will be edited by Amrita Skye Blaine; if you would like to submit writings for possible inclusion in *Fresh Rain*, please send them to freshrain@sufiway.org.

We begin this issue with an acknowledgement of our roots. **"Water the roots!"** Murshida Sitara told us — so in honor of the 10th anniversary of Murshida's passing, we begin with three iconic texts that give a sense of the depth of those roots: *Inayat Khan speaking about the Message*, *Fazal Inayat Khan on the Qalandar*, and *a tribute to Murshida Sitara by Mehera Bakker*.

And then comes a bouquet of poetry and reflections by Puran Lucas Perez, Jeanne Rana, Suzanne Inayat-Khan, Chris Covey, and Ian Scheffel; biographical sketches of Lynn Raphael Reed, Irfan Keshavjee, and Jurgen Beyer; and a prayer-poem by Pir Elias, *Homage to the One*.



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When Murshida Sitara thought we needed a little lift of reassurance, she would intone Inayat Khan's words: "My dears, the Message is like a fountain of water — it rises and falls, and makes its way by itself." She would have enjoyed this passage from a talk that Pir-o-Murshid gave in 1923:

The Message – SUFI INAYAT KHAN

What is the Message? Where does it come from? ...the answer is that the Message is like the rain and the rain falls where it is needed. ...There are so many names of the rivers and seas and streams, but they all contain water. And there are various names of religions but they all contain the truth,

spoken in different forms and different ways. ...often a person says, "If it is the same water, then I have no need of receiving a new Message, I already hold a certain faith or belief; is it not the same?" Certainly it is the same, and yet it is not quite the same. The water of last week which has been in the jug, compared with the fresh water, is different, and yet it is water. One does not reject the water of last week by drinking the fresh water. ...such is the law of the Divine Message. Numberless religions have been taught, various prophets and masters have come to awaken humanity. Those which we know are only a few, which we could count on our fingers. But where have the other religions gone? What about all the other teachers? It would be like asking, "Where is all the water that fell, when the rain has gone?" It has gone nowhere, it has gone to its own source, only to come afresh again with new life..."



The legend goes that one day Murshid Fazal was sitting with Sitara at her little dining table in her cottage, when he asked her to fetch a pen and paper. Then he told her, "Write what I say," and he began to speak. This is what she wrote down:

Qalandar – PIR-O-MURSHID FAZAL INAYAT-KHAN

Adam/man, Minerva/woman, a human being in the making, functioning in the world on the stage of life, playing the script of destiny with the delight of indifference and the carelessness of full satisfaction. A being knowing all there is to be known by it, yet ever discovering new depth of emotions; capable of expressing its deepest and truest inspirations, yet ever expanding its consciousness; sensitive enough to give and receive love in all its forms and levels of becoming.

A being who functions as a mother, a business man, a sailor, an artist, a thief, a nun, a ballerina, a detective, a lover, a spy, a masseuse, a musician, a farmer, a workman, a princess, a priest, a destroyer, a witch, a doctor, a poet, an eternal bride.

A being who inspires rather than conceals, a being who is vulnerable rather than defensive, a being who is warm and blushing, yet cool and calculating, an inventor rather than a maker of same things, a composer rather than a

conductor, a commando rather than an admiral, a general by calling rather than by career, a sculptor of feelings rather than a psychoanalyst, a scientist of the unknown, an oculist of insight.

A Qalandar demands respect, not through dignity but through courage, inspires love, not through idealization but through humaneness, uplifts mediocrity, not through perfectionism but through vibrancy. A human being who may be rejected, neither for shortcomings nor for inaccessibility but for the threat implied in her voice. A Qalandar unblocks love, unchains life, breaks the locks of feeling, empties the vesicles of fears and repression and anger and spills them over the world that they may irrigate the land in their descent to the purifying sea. She airs the rooms with the shocking fragrance of sincerity and ever disappears before the jelly of illusion sets and moves on to live his life again before the blood of his wounded heart coagulates. Her universality is disciplined, his freedom of love is singular; the response of her voice to every question is multi-tonal, the influence of his magnetism to every being is sometimes unbearable, often times contradictory, yet mostly forceful in its softness, or gentle in its penetration.

A Qalandar is simple as a child, wise as an old woman, courageous as a strong man, responding as a perfect woman, unfathomable as an old man. He belongs to the moment, she responds to every need. He speaks all languages, she performs all roles. They are one.



No one knew Murshida Sitara better than Mehera Bakker. The two of them were best friends as well as teacher-disciple. How they laughed together! Here is Mehera's tribute to her friend:

Pir-o-Murshida Sitara Brutnell

Someone asked Pir-o-Murshid Ali Khan (Inayat Khan's cousin and second successor) what the difference was between a Sheikh and a Khalif, since they both indicated the same 'rank' of initiation. Murshid Ali Khan answered, "A Sheikh speaks too much. A Khalif too little."

Murshida Sitara belonged to the latter. Her teaching was not through many words, but through example and through the gift of music.

Murshida Sitara lived and acted from the heart. Throughout her life, she became ever more sensitive to the needs of others. And her humour, lightness, wisdom, humility, openness, warmth, hospitality, and love will not soon be forgotten.

Once she visited us in Cyprus when she was in her early seventies. One afternoon we had tea with some ladies, who were in their forties and were worried about feeling old. Murshida Sitara responded that she had learned cross-country skiing in her sixties, and that when 68 years old she learned to stand on her head. The women couldn't believe it. So Murshida gave a demonstration and hoopla, there she was, standing beautifully straight upside down!

Her long life had not been easy — she had to make many sacrifices — but she came to a point where she could say,

"It is all for the best." That, for me, was a great teaching. When you lose all wealth in life and become poor, as she did, but act and live from a deep faith that there will be no shortage, that, too, was another great teaching.

At the age of 76 Murshida thought she would at last have more time for her music, but then the unexpected passing of Pir-o-Murshid Fazal Inayat-Khan suddenly brought her to a new phase of her life. She became a pillar of strength, and she purposefully steered all of us with great skill and wisdom through many difficult years, safe-guarding the Sufi Way and the legacy of Murshid Fazal.

One of the tasks Murshida Sitara took on was to nourish the roots of our order by emphasizing the teachings of Universal Sufism of Sufi Inayat Khan. Many mureeds didn't understand the importance of that view. They thought they were being made to look back at what they felt was past. But Murshida Sitara's motive was not historical curiosity. She knew that to dive into the ageless wisdom and inspiration of Sufi Inayat Khan's universal teaching can motivate, instruct, provoke, guide, and free the sincere mureed. She knew that going through this process in all humility and sincerity allows the light from this teaching to shine through, and a transmission to take place; the mureed enters a path of awakening.

Besides pointing to the deep wisdom of Sufi Inayat Khan, Murshida Sitara gave us a beautiful gift when leading us in musical meditations, which nowadays finds its inspiring continuation with Pir Elias. Who of us hasn't been touched by the grace, love and depth of the Zikr of the Heart or the Zikr of Gratitude? They have become classics in the musical meditations of the Sufi Way. What a beautiful legacy she left with us!

– Mèhèra Bakker



Calendar of Programs



The Last Great Passage

Nada Hermitage, Crestone, Colorado
 Elias Amidon and Elizabeth Rabia Roberts
April 3-10, 2014



Wilderness Quest

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



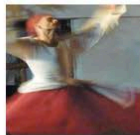
Open Path Intensive Retreat

Nada Hermitage, Crestone, Colorado
 Elias Amidon
October 2 - 16, 2014



Living with Dying

Residential Workshop in Germany
 Irène Kaigetsu Bakker Sensei
October 16-19, 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 U.S.

**Extracts from a Retreat
Journal: Nada 2012**

– SUZANNE INAYAT-KHAN



Beware of expectations ...
don't make up stories ...
don't be excited.

Be normal ...
But now I'm here, what if I don't...
get somewhere?

Stop! Stop thinking and sit.

Instead, I sit and think.

I try to think of my preferred strategy for thinking about nothing. I say try, because before I reach the end of the thought I wonder if I should move my chair, just a little, so that I get a clearer view across the valley. Meantime another thought cuts me off - perhaps if I have some water, because it's quite hot, then I can relax. Back to choosing a strategy. I wonder if my mind ever takes a breath. I wonder if I am insane. That makes me laugh. A stag walks past my window and drinks from my water bowl. It's about 3 feet from me, it has no interest in me whatsoever.

Rain softly falls. I lie in my bed and I can see the dark mountain behind and the stars. I listen to the rain, pattering, on the roof and the ground; I am subsumed.

The sky lightens before dawn. Mountains blacken against a grey sky. I become aware that I feel no border between me and silence. Noticing it doesn't change it because I am included in everything. There is no inside and outside. Clouds roll slowly down the mountain. The air is cold. A white cloud, thicker than mist, slowly travels across the land toward my cabin.

I read in The Book of Privy Council, "Empty your mind of everything except a naked intent for God." The stag wanders by, then stops at my window, makes eye contact, and moves on.

how to become nobody

– for Emily



we recognize each other
"Are you nobody too?"
sitting on a park bench
watching toddlers
climb the stairs to the slide

they are building
what we are tearing down
those selves
and we meet them
at the edges of our work
learning to talk
learning to be still

he likes to wear blue
and the little brown shoes with Velcro straps
he wants more books
more meatballs and noodles for lunch

I am giving up meatballs and noodles
paring and pruning
my identity
it gets too big this self
too much

he is gathering
my toy my orange balloon
my truck

I am dispersing
oh! perhaps not true---
just sorting and sifting shifting
learning to say
"I'm nobody
Who are you?"

the toddler and I chat
I have time to sit I've learned
how boring to be somebody

so lovely on the park bench
to watch yellow leaves
twirl toward the grass

in brown shoes the toddler
climbs the steps
goes WHEEEEE!!!
down the little slide

Lonesome Café

– IAN BILL SCHEFFEL



I sit at a round table near the door. When patrons enter or depart cold air rushes in, fast, on time, though it seems so ahead of schedule. I order a Reuben from a waitress who wears an orange sweater, her hair tied up - it flops out the other side of the rubber band like a horse's tail in wind. Her eyes are kind, anguished, responsive. She is talking through them, inadvertently but without inhibition. In order to lighten the impact of the Reuben I order vegetable soup instead of fries. There really is a cowboy wearing a firearm at one of the tables. He wears his revolver gunslinger style in a holster and belt studded with bullets, yet his clothes are handmade and Amish like. In unselfconscious innocence he eats with wife and baby and looks to be barely twenty-one. The other ranchers wear flannel and bluejeans. The handwriting of the waitress who talks with her eyes is affectionate, her "Thank You" on the bill written in looping circles, the A, O, U and even the K and N hugging big bunches of air. The ranching men are lean, wiry, high cheek-boned, taciturn and in the next turn grinning. The Reuben plus soup costs \$7.95 and the coffee a dollar and a quarter. The male waiter has a protruding belly and calls me "friend" when he asks if I want more coffee. Each table is loaded up with plenty of basic supplies: salt, pepper, sugar, napkins and Sweet 'n Low. Everyone here – about sixteen people – is speaking at the same decibel bandwidth, low enough, almost hushed, so that the refrigerator hum carries across from the kitchen and the cold gusts of winter air that enter with the patrons can also be heard. The sidearm on the cowboy looks as safe as his baby's rattle. The coffee cups here are all mismatched; mine has a trio of ducks on it. I walk slowly up to the cash register, eavesdropping with my peripheral vision on the customers I saw previously only from a distance. The overhead fans spin. It's winter. I pay my bill and also purchase of bottle of homemade hot sauce branded "4th Street Inferno." I walk out the door, already wondering, anticipating, when I'll make it here again.

All That We Love

– PURAN LUCAS PEREZ



Strip away our fancy words, drop the labels
loose the artful constructs we've built.
Then ask yourself, "Where's the path?"

For me, the answer comes back instantly
and fresh as rain on a morning in May:
Stay connected, ardently, actively
connected to all that you love.

To the so deep inside of us each other
that there's no longer real skin between us;
to the friends coming and going in our movies
bearing gifts and lugging sorrows;
to the buskers at the farmers' market
brightening our Saturday mornings;
stay connected, positively practically
connected to all that you love.

To the art and music ennobling my soul;
to the ideals of justice stirring my protest;
to the hope for compassion I light each day;
to my vision of personal fulfillment and
my wild dreams of happiness now;
stay connected, consciously, creatively
connected to all that I love.

Trust that if you burn with yearning,
are completely and hopelessly smitten,
there is both guidance and power there.

Stay connected, every ticking moment,
to all that you love and long for.

Diving Into Work

– CHRIS COVEY



For most of my adult life I believed I was an academic, scholarly person who had no business wasting his valuable time and energy on manual labor. But five years ago I found myself personally responsible for completing a long series of construction projects to finish our home. At first I resisted mightily. I dragged my feet. I withheld my energy and goodwill. I resented the burden of it for pulling me away from my precious books and quiet time. I looked for ways to escape my predicament, and do what I thought I really wanted to do instead. I drove my wife to the brink of collapse with my self-indulgent misery. It couldn't go on like this.

Then something changed. I began to hear the words "just do what needs doing." My habitual mind reacted to this like old gentry towards land reform. The status quo was threatened and habitual mind didn't like it. But cracks began to show in my reality tunnel; light spilled through and illuminated the debris that had accumulated within and around me. Simple clarity emerged: the only way out was through.

So I took a different tack. I pretended to like what I had to do. This helped me forget about not liking it. With my dislike out of the way, I was surprised to find myself enjoying even the most difficult labor. And as I opened further to the needs of each moment, I discovered new energy and beauty in the learning opportunities life was offering me. Emanating from these tests was a caring presence tending to my wellbeing, a greater goodness that allowed me space to respond in kind. Welcoming the challenges wholly turned me inside out.

Now, work is no longer the tasks I have to get done so I can do what I like. Everything I do is the expression of myself in the world. And by giving myself fully to my work, it responds in kind with unlimited possibilities.

Here Gone

– PURAN LUCAS PEREZ



I was tripping (on Owsley acid, I think) when it first happened — this kiss, this wink, this barely audible cosmic giggle. The room I was in became a movie set and clearly but invisibly, behind that — a shimmering, laughing emptiness.

Some years later, in the throes of fasting during a month-long silent isolation it came again, a breeze enveloping my ache, an embrace more tender than a mother's more assured than a fathers, saying, "Don't look for me, beloved, for just like you, I am not here."

Yet I've built a shrine which I keep holy so that I always remember the bewildering grace that overtakes me in the fleeting enfoldment of this feral, soul-eviscerating beauty without name, or cause, or purpose.

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



Irfan Keshavjee

I was born in Kenya in the early seventies, spent a decade dressed in flared trousers and shirts with huge collars, and had my first calling to an inner path in my teens when my mother gave me Reshad Feild's 'The Last Barrier' and Herman Hesse's 'Siddhartha'. I spent the next few decades exploring many different spiritual paths like Shiv Yog, Art of Living, and Vipassana, until 2013 when, quite by chance, I ended up finding my 'home' at the Open Path and was initiated into the Sufi Way by Pir-o-Murshid Elias Amidon in 2014.

Alongside these inner adventures, I spend my time finding ways to use enterprise to address the massive inequalities in Kenya. I recently started up a company called Karibu Homes that enables home ownership for low-income Kenyan families, and in 2000 I helped start a company called Honey Care Africa, a social enterprise that uses beekeeping to lift smallholder farmers out of poverty. I have an MBA from the University of Oxford, UK and an Engineering Degree from Queen's University in Canada, and live in Kenya with my wife, Farida, and kids Ayden and Iman who light up my life.



Lynn Raphael Reed

I first heard of the Sufi Way in the 1990s when I met Murshida Kunderke Kevlin and began exploring life through transpersonal psychotherapy and in 2013 was initiated into the Sufi Way by Pir-o-Murshid Elias Amidon.

For the past thirty years I have been an activist educator committed to social justice - working with young people, teachers and communities in areas of high deprivation, and facilitating arts-based inquiry for women. Since retiring in 2012 as Professor of Education and Social Change, I have enjoyed developing a more creative and contemplative life – a life of being rather than doing. This includes creating space for spiritual practice, meditation and QiGong, volunteering, spending time with friends and family including my wonderful husband, two sons and four grandchildren, and nourishing an awakening to the beauty in everyday life. I currently live in the city of Bristol in the west of England.

Following the Open Path and Sufi Way has felt like a homecoming - a finding of my mother tongue. Amongst many blessings I have been delighted to discover a poetic voice flowing, with the poetry arising unbidden from a place of deep tenderness, gratitude and joy.



Jurgen Beyer

I grew up in Bonn, Germany, after the end of World War II, experiencing how the country needed to build itself anew. My parents and their close friends gifted me with a lot of trust, love and freedom.

Eventually I began a career in the German Air Force, becoming a squadron leader in a fighter bomber wing, where I was confronted with the most extreme results of human thinking. Later, in Argentina I was part of a project helping to "civilise" the Argentinean military.

Following my adventures in the air force, I became a Human Resources manager in several international companies where I learned about the realities of economics, and the beauty of helping people find their way in life. Nowadays, after 25 years in consulting and training global players at the top level, I am happy to bring this experience into my coaching and team-building work.

During these busy years, I sometimes forgot that life is a lot more than professional success. This brought me to Elias and the Open Path/Sufi Way, where I can bring all the different realities together. This is why I am here. To take a stand so things can peacefully coexist.

Homage to the One

– PIR ELIAS

To this transparent light, clarity itself, omnipresent as space,
to This, the host of all that appears,
to This, the non-locatable, spontaneous here-and-now,
to This that is identical with the openness of all those who,
whether known or unknown, have recognized its simple presence;
to This, our vibrant home, never created
and so never able to cease,
to this unseen light, the most familiar presence of now,
indistinguishable from the bones in our face
and the tongue in our mouth,
indistinguishable from our most intimate thoughts and feelings,
yet beyond all limitation,
to this infinite kindness that allows everything to appear,
we bow down.



Caught here, believing we are something,
believing we are something that could be alone,
believing we are these frail, beautiful bodies,
we look for love from each other
when all the while we are made of love.



To which direction shall we bow,
to what sacred place, shrine or God,
if not to the bowing itself?



Bow down, we bow down,
the thunder perfect mind is our own!



What candle shall we light, on what altar,
to this that lights the candle,
and is the candle, and the light?