



# Fresh Rain

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

SUMMER 2022

**IN THIS ISSUE: Prose by Kiran Rana, Sabah Raphael Reed, Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, Murshid Sharif Peter Hawkins, Klaus-Peter Esser, and Binah Taylor; Poetry by Lysana Robinson, Jeanne Rana, Isha Francis, and Amrita Skye Blaine**



Dear Friends,

This Summer's theme is **Chilla**, a test or challenge we request from our guide or create for ourselves. We received prose contributions from Sabah Raphael Reed, Klaus-Peter Esser, Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, Sharif Peter Hawkins, and Kiran Rana. Poetry includes Jeanne Rana, Amrita Skye Blaine, Isha Francis, and Lysana Robinson. Enjoy their offerings. And special thanks to Mèhèra Bakker who provided the *chilla* Sufi Inayat Khan was given by his *Murshid*.

For Fall, let's consider **spiritual renewal**, a theme offered by Gabriel Leslie Mezei. How does renewal occur for you? Only in retreat? Daily meditation and practice? Walks in nature? How else?

Some of the beautiful photographs in this issue are by Mèhèra Bakker.

Thanks to all who offer their deep hearts for *Fresh Rain*. Please consider writing for future issues. Share yourself in this way with our larger community.

With love for each one of you,

Amrita  
editor, *Fresh Rain*: [freshrain@sufiway.org](mailto:freshrain@sufiway.org)



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## Chillas of the Sufi Way

by Kiran Rana

*Chillas* are an uncommon and valuable practice that we have available to us in the Sufi Way. In this short writing I want to share two perspectives on chilla. One is a little bit of history and definition; the other is about an important aspect of chilla that I've thought a lot about over the years and I want to share what I feel I have understood.

### History-ish

Murshid Fazal introduced us to the concept of chillas in Katwijk in Holland in 1979-80. He asked me to be the chilla coordinator; my tasks were to bring him envelopes from people who had written inside why they wanted a chilla. He wrote chillas on the envelopes which I then took back to the people who asked for them. I assisted them with questions and occasionally with resources, and I reviewed the reports they made of their chilla experiences. Occasionally I summarized these reports for Murshid. In 1982 I made a collection of his talks and styles of chillas and shared them with some senior people in the Sufi Way. But all these years I have had questions about this modality of practice and in this writing I want to share what I feel I have understood.

In India and maybe other places in West Asia and South Asia, the term "chilla" already existed in mystical practice and in the arts, especially music and dance. So, I asked myself, why did Murshid Fazal decide to use a possibly confusing term for a whole range of experiences and exercises?

Here, by way of answer, are some descriptions/definitions of chillas I gathered from Murshid and from my experience with them. Murshid's quotes are in italics.

Chilla is ...

- ... *some sort of task-experience-program you must fulfill which ought to help teach or bring you to something*
- ... *a discontinuity, an edge experience that can bring us to the border of the unknown in ourselves, in life, in possibility and effort.*
- ... a one-time task/adventure that may help a seeker in their search for awakening. Not usually a repetitive practice

And a favorite quote:

*"Actualize your own inner unrealized potential in this primary way by finding, touching from within your own inner core—the energy, the imagination, the urge to evolution, to develop, which everyone has in themselves."*



### Inductive psychology

This last quote takes me to the second aspect. It is what Murshid Fazal called Inductive Psychology and I feel it is a much less known or understood aspect of chilla. I have been told that in later years Murshid more clearly related chillas as solutions to identified problems, what he called a deductive approach. However, in the earlier stages he often emphasized the inductive aspect, which took me a while to understand.

Murshid's idea of induction was that, when put into a challenging or stressful situation, or when tasked with something emotionally/physically/psychically strenuous and exhausting, people often "induce" energy, ability, strength; they mobilize a much deeper level of action and resolve than they are "normally" or usually capable of. They reach resources in themselves that they don't know they have or have never called upon. Since I have seen this in action, I feel it's important to understand this aspect of chilla. I have seen people break through multiple levels of reserve, fear, timidity, inhibition, and inarticulateness. I have seen people do things that terrified them, yet once into the frightening situation they found somewhere in themselves a calm resolve. I have seen people give up, exhausted, convinced that they were failing at their task, to gradually realize or understand that they had in fact broken through.

I have also seen people who could not get beyond the constraints or barriers they were hoping to cross. Yet I feel something in their will was tempered or a deeper reckoning was activated as they went on with their lives.

In some ways, this chilla approach might link in with the ideas of Ordeal Therapy articulated in 1984 by the U.S. therapist Jay Haley. There is something here about not

knowing what we are capable of, maybe not *wanting* to know what we are capable of, of ignorance or defenses that we maintain out of fear, whether fear of the challenge or fear of how *much* we could do if we committedly, exhaustively tried. Yet we all have smaller experiences of induction every day, when that piece we can't bring ourselves to write emerges whole and perfect after the 3-hour trance we fall into once we settle in to do it. Or the all-nighter that envelopes us as we study something fascinating that we were sure we would never grasp. Or the gardening we were only prepared to do piecemeal that took over all our spare time with planting, weeding, watering, pruning, and one day blessed us with a beautiful spring-summer explosion of flowers. Or the tense relationship we struggle with till one day we turn to face the other and an understanding so clear it almost hurts begins to nurture both in a halo of appreciation and friendship.

So, I'll close with a couple more quotes from Murshid about this aspect of chilla.

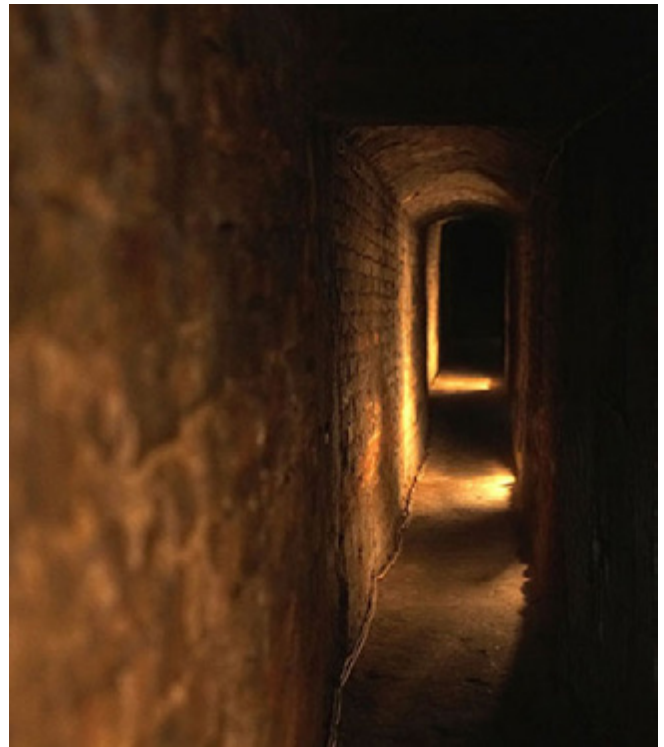
*[The] inductive process is how to allow to arise out of you in a constructive positive way that which is dormant and hidden in you. The experience itself may be negative but the results may be productive.*

*Basically, there is nothing wrong with people but there are a lot of experiences they have missed, blind spots. The inductive process is not to point these out but to help you find them, and to choose well-rounded completing experiences of what you have missed. The greatest threat to this is saying NO to the desires that arise.*

Chillas are indeed a useful tool for training, guidance and practice, and there are many levels at which they can operate. I have offered what I call *chilla activism* tasks in workshops with people I don't know well, simple street actions that offer focus and containment and which quickly channel the chilla-doer's energy. Many have found that even apparently simple chillas can open up in many directions. When it comes to deep inductive-activation chillas, however, I will say that this is a level of engagement that needs a guide with experience. I think these chillas can be very valuable, even transformative, but you have to prepare yourself to go deep, surrender much, even be shaken to your core. So it helps if your guide is someone you deeply trust and can offer a lot of latitude to.

I'll end with a few quotes on this aspect ...

- The guide suggests a task intuited from or inspired by a larger vision of the life capacity of the student.
- The relationship of the chilla to the goal-wish-desire is seldom simple or linear or logical; it may be paradoxical-lateral-random-oracular.



- *There are borders of the unknown in the self, in what we acknowledge ... where we can encounter something new or find a new possibility.... Encouraging or designing an experience of these border areas and what lies beyond them—all these are elements that can come into a chilla ....*

If you have any questions about chillas or any of this writing please email me at [kiransrana@gmail.com](mailto:kiransrana@gmail.com).

### Guidance on Undertaking Chilla

*Guidance on Undertaking Chilla* reflects contributions both written and conversational from facilitators of the Living Sufism series on *Adventures in Being Here* in 2018-19 (Isha Francis, Suzanne Inayat Khan, Kunderke Kevlin, Puran Perez, Kiran Rana, Binah Taylor, Umtul Valentin- Kiekens), then further developed as a resource for *Community Sohbet* in 2020 by Pir Elias and Sabah Raphael Reed. This guidance includes self-given and communally-created chilla. Click [here](#) to access the PDF file.

## Sacred Journaling

by Sabah Raphael Reed

For three decades I have drawn on the practices of sacred journaling to support a journey of awakening.

Journaling began for me after discovering Julia Cameron's book *The Artist's Way: a spiritual path to higher creativity* (first ed 1992). For many years I did her recommended "morning pages." This everyday practice is to show up at the page and without hesitation or censure write three sides of stream-of-consciousness writing. It is not for reading, even by oneself, or shown to anyone. It evades critique and undermines the rational logical mind. It allows what arises to simply be expressed and by getting it on the page it often elicits a feeling of release and spaciousness. The writing may be furious, the energy afterwards is frequently still.

Over the years this practice has developed into what I call sacred journaling. I began to realize that as much as "I" was acting out on the page, inside that unidirectional action a multidimensional response was emerging. The page was writing back. Or even, the space between the words was speaking.

I found that if I slowed down, if I was willing to sit with a blank canvas, if I was able to unfocus my inner "I"—even for short periods—then often times something surprising would emerge on the page. It makes me think of my dear friend Erica and her stone carving; the sense that inside the stone is something waiting to be found. Increasingly I've come to see surrender and humility like this in the creative process as a profound act of spiritual attunement.

### I and I

Let us examine the fabric of our will,  
its eloquent patterns,  
its expectations of form,  
its canopy of truths.

Let us tease out the threads,  
unravel the strands,  
unpick the weave.

Let us un-focus our inner eye,  
lose all perspective,  
smudge out the grain.

And in that place of sweet abandon,  
let This find us—

the ecstasy  
of I and I  
entwined.

How does this connect with *Chilla*? Often times when I am feeling the need to step out of the way and to reconnect to source, I turn to sacred journaling as a place of refuge. It becomes the container within which an energy of transformation may emerge. I sometimes set myself a specific intention—if there is something bothering me that

won't go away, or if I'm feeling a particular discomfort in my being—I will invite the journal's support. Other times I may just go to the journal naked of intent but consenting to what it brings. If I'm part of a retreat program, or participating in a creative enquiry group—the journal becomes the crucible within which whatever alchemy is being gifted may be revealed.

What appears isn't always in the form of words—sometimes it's images or "doodles" and often simple mandala forms. Having a good collection of crayons and other materials close to hand is helpful. Sometimes the journal sensitizes me to synchronicity in everyday life where images or thoughts or encounters aligned with the focus of the enquiry or chilla are noticed more vividly than before. And sometimes I like to scrapbook too, as I come across photos or images that resonate. But none of it is about busy-ness or journal as "product." It is all about the mystery of receiving insight and revealing interconnections.

Let me give a specific example. Towards the middle of 2021, I noticed increasing feelings of overwhelm. In part, this felt like a reaction to the wounds and fear circulating in the world. In part, it was recognition I was feeling exhausted by the multiple groups, activities and Zoom calls that I was contributing to. And I had a sense of clamor. Too many words. What I yearned for most of all was silence and solitude. What I longed for most was to hear the whisperings of Sophia.

This led me to commit within myself to a three-month retreat (from September Autumn equinox to December Winter Solstice) where I would step back from a number of commitments and spend more time in silence. I also began a new sacred journal dedicated to this journey. Just before the retreat began, out of a meditation in the Sophia Wisdom Circle I'm fortunate to be part of, four key phrases emerged.

Pay attention to that which is close to hand  
Scatter seeds without a plan  
Notice the pattern emerging  
Embrace what is

I realized that these were guidance to help lightly shape the Chilla of my retreat. The three months were also aligned with four full moons so I designated each moon period one of the key phrases in turn. And then ... I surrendered.

Sacred journaling became my daily friend. It helped to deepen the experience of the Chilla for me. It helped me to remain committed during times of doubt and times when the process felt mundane. And the journaling helped to hold and transmute feelings during times that were dark, conflicted and difficult, as well as crystallizing many moments of illumination. Most of all it became the means by which the Chilla was witnessed and held, in kindness and in love.

I hope this may inspire others to open the page and invite the alchemy in.

## A bit of Dying to Oneself

by Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

[A self-inquiry chilla, during the first Open Path training in 2003]

### 1) Motivation

At the core of my motivation is to be able to love more freely and to be free of any kind of obstacle and fixations. Although over the last few years I felt a bearable lightness of Being and inner joy arising, I also know there are fixations etc. to be dealt with still. And yes, to be able to dwell more and more into luminous space and Being of Self and Source and All.

My true and sincere intention during this *chilla*-journey is to cultivate being present to this very moment. I still find it a very challenging exercise to keep my attention in the now, to notice when I am thrown of balance, meaning an obstacle of fixation has been touched. Just to see that and notice and feel the root of it at the very moment it occurs, rather than reacting from an unconscious mind-fixated place.

But yes, sometimes it so happens that the trees are suddenly very clear and treelike, moving gently with the wind or Being in excellent stillness. It seems that a mist has been uplifted. Looking at a tree like that—it's like there is no tree, nor me, since there is no observer and object: there is a merging into oneness.

Sitting at a riverside, the water is moving endlessly to nowhere. It seems quite easy to be with it and listen to the rustling sound of the water, following with my eyes the sunlit bubbles, taken along by the current. For a moment or so, there are no thoughts, but then the stream of thoughts, hardly noticeable, takes over and runs along with the river current.

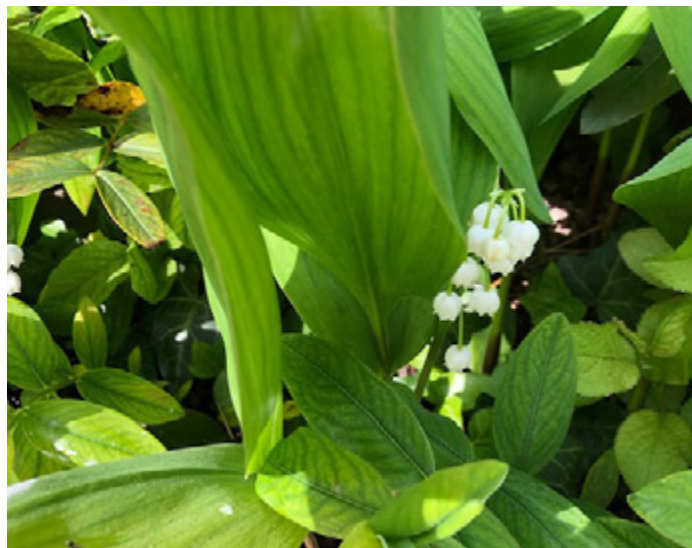
So the mind seems to be a tedious enemy sometimes. Before one can realize, it has pondered off and is making a story out of it, or is being busy with what is occurring next, rather than Being in the present.

It is the mind that is obstructing at times and feels bored. Noticing that brings an answer that this is a stage needed for bringing back a certain balance, having been overactive for so long.

### 2) Attitude

Basically I would like to believe I am sincere, in saying "the inner wakefulness" is clear and directed towards more wakefulness.

But there is the ego that does not like this at all, and is playing all kind of tricks and is misleading the way. In the example above, just as "me" is not there in observing the



tree and the river, feeling their essence, after a while the mind is still interpreting and making a story out of it. The mind can barely stop analyzing and interpreting. But the wakefulness is sincere and keeps gently making me aware of what's occurring.

At other times, the mind/ego is very proud when certain "achievements" have been made, and says to itself: well you are really getting the hang of it now! Stop! Stop this endless chain of vanity ... there is nothing to be proud of, because there is no me in that sense at all! Noticing irritation. The ego is nothing more than a puffed up sense of self, importance and pride. At the core of this there may be fear of death or loss of control, which is basically the same fear.

### 3) Longing

One or two years ago, I believe it would have been different, I might have thought of something like: a better self, a more joyful life, something "huge" as enlightenment not to be mentioned.

Pondering upon all that I felt, or better still, it occurred to me that nothing of these longings were there anymore, at least not at the front of my thoughts or feelings.

At the heart of hearts, it came to me that I was taking this path, not for myself but for other people: to be able to offer presence to others, when needed. This is not a desire which came from "me," it occurred and happened during the recent past, when it was possible with a heart-to-heart connection to offer support and healing, holding a balance between words spoken and silence. Experiencing deep Presence in the situation.

It occurs to me that this is the most precious thing that could be offered to people and dear ones and, henceforth, became the strongest motivation to battle any obstacle occurring in the future.

## Chillas

### Murshid Sharif Peter Hawkins

Mevlana Rumi asks us, why in the plenitude of God's universe have you chosen to fall asleep in such a small dark prison? We are all prisoners of our beliefs, assumptions, habitual ways of being and reacting, our culture and our mind-sets. Koans and *Chillas* are keys, generously offered to us, to attempt a break-out from our prisons, but the escape is rarely easy and requires total commitment.

A koan is a question that has no factual objective answer. Its essence is a paradox. Yet the person receiving it must use all their mental and emotional resources in trying to answer it. That is, until they exhaust their current mental thinking and emotional being so that a moment of "metanoia" comes by grace. A classic Zen Koan is "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" More modern varieties in spiritual mentoring might include: "What is worthwhile?" "What is love?"

A Chilla is like a Zen Koan in action. A task the seeker is given, by their spiritual guide, which they can accept or say no to. If they accept, they have to commit themselves fully to achieving the task, but it is a task that cannot be fully achieved without self-transformation. It is the journey, not the goal, that is transformative. I was once asked by my Spiritual teacher to arrange for my parents to invite him to tea, so they could discuss me, without me being there. I was horrified. I had never told my parents I had been in psychotherapy, let alone was meeting with a strange part-

Indian Sufi teacher. Their world was tidy, ordered, Protestant and suburban. Through their eyes he would seem wild and foreign and an unwanted intrusion. This meeting could never happen, particularly if I was not there to translate and control what happened in the vast chasm between their (my) two worlds! My parents would never agree. My mentor saw my frozen fear and gently said: "If you ask them from your heart they will say yes." His gentleness cut like a sword through all my defenses. I knew he was right; I had no way out, other than cowardice. It took several sleepless nights to find the courage to ask from my heart and allow these two worlds, both parts of me, to meet beyond my illusory control. This meeting led to a surprising transformation in my father and also our relationship.

The Chilla and the Koan lead you to a place beyond your current ways of being. But they are not ends in themselves. They are just aids to letting life more fully transform you.

A chilla is not created by the Murshid or spiritual mentor but arises spontaneously within the relationship between the seeker and the guide who gives them shape. Chillas can also show up spontaneously as a gift from al-Khadir, the evergreen Sufi guide, who can arrive in our lives unbidden in our dreams or visions. Here is a chilla, I recently received as I was waking from my dreams early in the morning.

*"Pray with no words and no thoughts, but with your whole being."*

What more can I say.

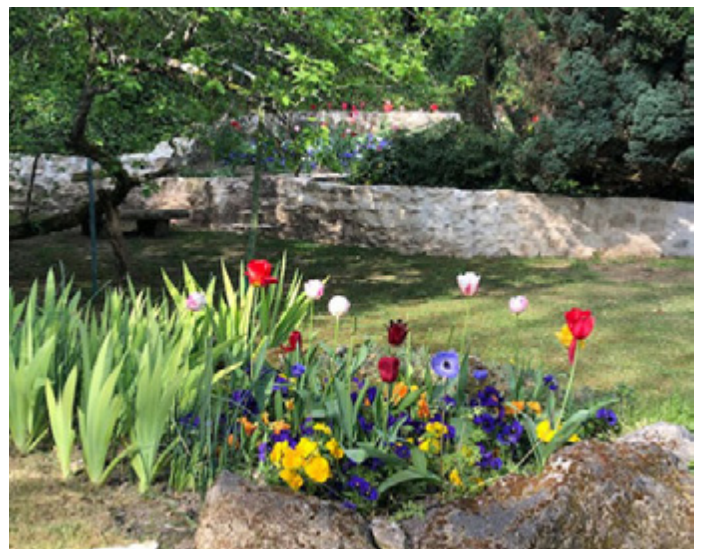
## Build an Altar

### by Klaus-Peter Esser

During the Sufi Summer gathering in Katwijk (2015) I was given the *chilla* by Kiran Rana to "build an altar for the world." My first thought: what should the altar look like and the second one was, where to build it? I struggled especially with this second question: shall I build it somewhere in a hidden place out in the dunes or right in the middle of the center, where everybody could see it? Somehow I knew I should build it in a public place but I felt a kind of shame expressing my love for Mother Earth so publicly. What if it was not good enough? I went to bed with these question: Who is ashamed, who wants to impress other people by doing something special?

During the night I met a good old friend of mine, the one who always wanted to be better than others, never risking mediocrity. I knew it was time to (again) say goodbye to this well-trained pattern. So the other morning it was clear that I would build it right at the frequently used pathway between the Universel center and the restaurant. People walked by,

stopped and smiled. During each walk to the restaurant, I stopped and prayed for a moment at "my" altar. No shame, no judgments, just naturally sharing my love for the planet with others. What a teaching!



## Deepening through Chillas

by Binah Taylor

What are they, what do they mean? When I asked fellow Sufis to explain a *chilla*, I was told they were inductive, intuitive tasks to bring about change. Challenging with transformative possibilities, said another. All agreed they were usually intense. Chillas were a bit hush hush, with “chillees” not talking openly about what they experienced (although inevitably information would leak about so and so doing this or that).

It was in the mid-80s, during Murshid Fazal's visit to California to set up the Sufi Counselling Group, when I first asked for a chilla. Having been drawn into the chillas of others while living at Four Winds, I was aware of their power and effectiveness. I felt ready to work on my unresolved childhood trauma around identity and wanted it to begin with a chilla. This initiated a shift in my relationship with Murshid, bringing me closer to him and more relaxed in his presence. During this period, my trust in him grew, and our work together felt creative and increasingly collaborative.

*March 1990: “First, write about the splitting in your life and what integration means, imagining too your future in ten years. Then, you are to find a fallen tree in the grounds at Four Winds and dig out a big enough hole so you can root yourself.”* [this was after the big storm of 1987 in the UK, resulting in trees being uprooted] *“It will probably take at least 12 hours so start in the morning. After rooting yourself in your authenticity and spending the night in the ground, you are to come inside and sleep for several hours, during which you will gestate a dream”* [this I had requested during our planning]. *“On awaking you are to walk in the woods while taping yourself speaking to your mother and father of their betrayal, at the same time forgiving them.”*

These are instructions for the “rooting chilla” (as I call it), the sixth and last, spanning a five-year period of undertaking chillas. It was poignant too, the culmination of a significant piece of work (and which he himself declared now complete) as well as the last time I saw him. While I asked to be challenged, I was not prepared for how arduous it was to dig for nearly seventeen hours in close to freezing temperatures with only water to sustain me. It felt more like digging my grave than forging renewal. What kept me going in the darkest hour—apart from burying myself under a pile of leaves for protection and warmth—was the rant I would give him for such a horrible chilla.

Debriefing my experience with him a few days later, my anger had dissolved, and I was overcome with love and gratitude. My abiding memory of this session was sitting



close to him, with his young daughter in his arms (she had asked to be let into the room). In telling my dream of looking for my long dead father—the father I never knew—I spoke of how I left the world and came into a space filled with white light. It was too bright for me to withstand—I was looking into a steaming cauldron where I could sense my father—then I was pushed back, which woke me up. In the telling, Murshid had come even closer and was listening intently, our eyes held in the gaze; in these moments, I felt we were in the “thin place” as the Celts call it, where worlds cross over, and borders disappear.

Fathers and daughters, cycle of birth and death. As I write this, his daughter is about to give birth, her first, and I like to think he will give protection as she ushers in new life—as he did for me. Recalling too those moments of rooting myself in the earth: this was my initiation back into the wildness of myself, connecting me to the arboreal community, our sustainers for millennia.

“This connection with trees and their energy is very much alive in me, informing and shaping my practices, as well as my commitment to care for them in whatever capacity I can.”

Chillas have given me so much, and continue to do so, in the unfolding dance of consciousness.

Murshid Sayyed Mohammad Abu Hassim Madani was the beloved Sufi Master of Inayat Khan.

Before the old Master passed away he had given Inayat his blessing and told him, “Go my child, into the world, harmonize the East and the West with the harmony of thy music; spread the wisdom of Sufism, for thou art gifted by Allah, the most Merciful and Compassionate.”

*I've always considered chillas to be sacred, those given by the Pir-o-Murshid or Murshid to be personal and private. However, I would like to share a recently self-imposed chilla.*

*Having written a poem on the Sunday after Russia invaded Ukraine, sitting silently on subsequent Sunday mornings, I found myself writing further poems. On the Fourth Sunday of War, I challenged myself to write something each Sunday at least until peace is declared. I found great benefit from seeking this weekly silent guidance. It helps me better understand the senselessness and, hopefully,*

*come to terms with the instability both personal and global. The chilla keeps Ukraine in my consciousness despite my aversion to the media news which has become evermore traumatic with gratuitously graphic details. I now only read the news headlines.*

*In the last Fresh Rain I shared with you my "First Sunday of War" poem, a war which had arrived here at Europe's threshold with Russia. I would now like to share my "Fourteenth Sunday of War" poem. It came to me as I gazed at the beauty of late May in my wild Hebridean Island garden off the west coast of Scotland.*

### Bluebell Ballet

Bluebells, Pignut and Stitchwort,  
astound me with their beauty.  
Being granted the privilege  
to witness yet one more  
color co-ordinated, glorious season  
is my deep-held wish come true.

Colors dance to the unpredictable,  
un-metered, gusty sea breeze rhythm,  
accompanied by the chimney  
singing the wind's plaintive song  
and the fledglings' demanding chirps.  
whilst raindrops gently drum the window.

Each glance at this ballet  
fills my whole being with gratitude,  
accumulating with every moment,  
each very precious and so fragile  
since I know that this is  
the Fourteenth Sunday of War.

—Lysana Robinson  
Sunday 29th May 2022





**Distractions: A Villanelle**

*how to avoid my chilla*

I find distractions every day.  
These errands! Now I need to go.  
I push my writing far away.

So many times, I cannot say,  
I've found a lawn I need to mow.  
I find distractions every day.

and now I have these bills to pay,  
then mend some clothes. I need to sew  
to push my writing far away.

Let's have a talk. Are you okay?  
I love your hair. Have you read Poe?  
I find distractions every day.

The music's loud. My hips will sway.  
I shimmy up and then below  
to push my writing far away.

An evening out? I'll bring some dough.  
Drinks all around! Try though I may  
I find distractions every day  
and push my writing far away.

—Jeanne Rana



Dekaaz is a poetry form of three lines: two, three, and five syllables. It's one of the forms that Jeanne Rana introduced us to in her class. This is a poem made up of six dekaaz. —*note from editor*

### Just Chillin'

Chilla  
is nothing  
but a direction

You can  
call it a  
pointing towards you

It can  
be hard to  
stick with a chilla

But when  
a chilla  
sticks deep within you

there is  
no more to  
be letting go of

It will  
let you be  
as free as you will

—Isha Francis



### koan

*note to self*

*"This that we speak of can never be found  
by seeking, yet only seekers find it."*

—Al Bastami, born 804 CE

it haunted  
lived inside my chest—  
for two years I  
leaned into it  
reckoned with  
the felt meaning  
I knew it spoke truth  
but couldn't tell you why  
a patient excavation,  
I breathed it  
pondered,  
but not with thought  
lobbed it into  
the big field  
let loose light  
splintered the kernel inside  
until it opened  
tight bud to flower  
released its perfume,  
the aching aroma of love

—Amrita Skye Blaine

## And This

by Amrita Skye Blaine

### off my wrist they sailed

*note to self 1993*

olive wood, worn pecan and  
buttery from my touch,  
fingering love, gratitude, peace,  
and prayers upon prayers upon prayers

ninety-nine beads, each an aroma  
of the beloved, plus two carved ones  
that mark thirty-three times three  
a gift from my Sufi teacher—  
bestowed from his *murshid* to him  
the indelible chain of hearts

three wraps around my wrist,  
always there. for thirty years,  
I'd passed the *tasbeeh* beads  
through thumb and forefinger  
marking a sacred word or phrase

precious, old friends.

on a ten-day island retreat  
I found a cockle at 500 feet  
above the sea—a shell, up here?  
Did the land upheave  
300,000,000 years ago?

my intention: throw it back  
from whence it came,  
return it home to the Maui gods.  
I made the cast and the shell took flight

as though in pursuit,  
my treasured beads sailed off my wrist  
aghast, I watched them fly  
a long, asymmetrical  
arc toward the woods

a *chilla*, a test, so very clear.  
suspended, frozen,  
my heart lurched at the loss  
*they're well and truly gone*

*let them go!*

did I pinpoint their likely  
grave in forest duff, spongy  
and deep? oh, I searched!  
frantic, desperate, digging, pawing  
they *must* be there.  
why had I not replaced aging string?

never found.

cross-legged on my bed,  
sick at heart that I hadn't  
released my claim on them  
I pondered the test I'd failed—  
how will it come again?

## Upcoming Online Programs



### Attunements

A Monthly Program of Sufi Practices

**Starting in January, 2022**

Click [here](#) for more information



### Sama

Monthly online communal  
musical meditations

Click [here](#) for more information



### Openings

Monthly meetings of Sufi Way  
initiates and Open Path graduates

Click [here](#) for more information

## Upcoming In-Person Programs



### Sama Circle Gathering

A weekend of Sama with Omar  
and Suzanne Inayat-Khan

**Buckden Towers, Buckden, Cambs**

**4pm Friday June 24 –**

**4pm Sunday June 26, 2022**

Click [here](#) for more information

