



Fresh Rain

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

WINTER 2019

IN THIS ISSUE: Essays by Andy Bayliss, Ali MacArthur, Carol Barrow, and Suzanne Inayat-Khan; Poetry by Pir Elias, Sharif Stannard, and Ali MacArthur



Dear Friends,

It's cold now; in the mornings, I need to squeegee the windows on my car. At least in northern California, it's the rare day that I—using a cane—have to take special care on frosty pavement. The fireplace is alive in the evenings, and the flickering flames remind me to slow down and enjoy the season.

For the Spring issue, the theme is "**Patience.**" I look forward to your thoughtful pieces on this topic. The Summer theme will be "**Habits.**" Oh my, we all have them. Some support us, some do not. Consider their role in your life!

With love for each one of you,

Amrita

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Contents

Contact p. 2
– Andy Bayliss

**Slowing Down—
Drawing Gently in** p. 3
– Ali MacArthur

**Slowing Down—
Seven Flashes** p. 4
– Pir Elias

The Turtle p. 5
– Carol Barrow

Slowing Down p. 6
– Suzanne Inayat-Khan

Nada—May 2018 p. 7
– Sharif Stannard

The Silent Hum p. 8
– Ali MacArthur

**Upcoming
Programs 2019** p. 9



Contact

by Andy Bayliss

What is the nature of This? Alive, eternal, trusting, quiet, spacious, with a dollop of delight. Fully Itself with no apology, and no opposite. And yet, without slowing down, I walk right past This.

So busy since returning to the land of “one thing after another” from my mountain retreat. How do I slow down when there is apparently so much to do? Creating a place to live, finances, looking in on Mom, then more time spent trying to “deescalate my nervous system” with exercise and company. I actually believe in my anxiety—like a potent God! I offer my worry and time in a desperate bid to appease it.

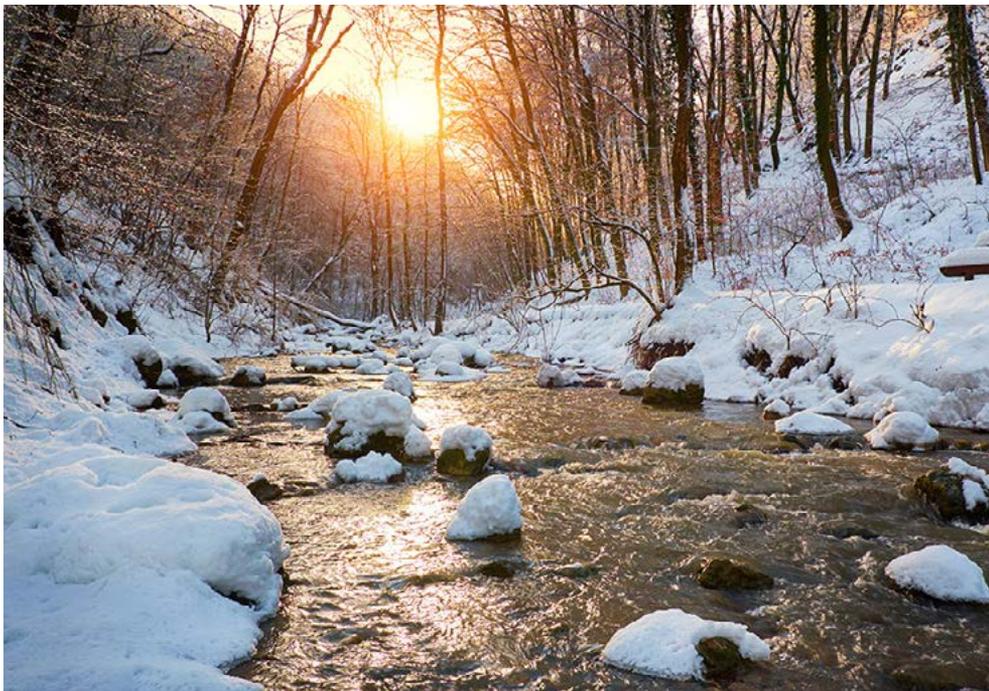
Elias said to me once when I spoke of my recent projects: “There seems to be an urgency about the things in your life.”

Meantime Ashland Creek glistens in the moonlight, leaves falling when no one is around. Last year’s steelhead spawn lie under the edge of granite boulders, unseen, breathing.

This magical world continues... When I step away from my compulsive drive—who is driving anyway? I find the trees erect and moving a little; the leaves golden, scattered on the boulders; the moon high and bright; the sky a quiet, open joy. All Delighting in being Itself.

All This, patiently waiting. Well, not waiting, but continually being, with an invitation which feels like patience. Waiting? Perhaps yes now, waiting for me. This Being is infinite, apparently, because when I slow down—slow down my body a little, my talking, and let my agenda fall away, the palpable presence lives, eternal in these trees and stones. This living quiet knows me; I can feel this knowing; knowing is its nature. This knowing quietly invites me into itself and itself into me.

Contact.



Slowing Down—Drawing Gently in

by Ali MacArthur

Over the past several months, I have noticed that beneath the surface activity of trying to “slow down” in my life, there appears a quiet and inexorable “drawing gently in,” which brings itself more and more into my awareness.

The pull of this gentle drawing in causes me to sit quietly, allowing the mind chatter to fall away, thinking of nothing. As I allow myself to follow this “non-desire,” everything slows down, my body and mind relax and there is a sense of warmth, peace and the rightness of everything. My being is drawn into awareness itself, as precious breath continues to flow in and out of my body, in its own miraculous rhythm.

At the commencement of my 8th decade I am aware that death draws closer every day, be it one or many years ahead. We each travel our unique journey from birth to death, and as we age in this lifetime a natural slowing down occurs—a poignant and beautiful twilight to welcome and delight in.

I watch the young generations bringing into the world their high energy and strident care. A chord of recognition sounds deep within me, evoking the memories of days gone by. What a joy it is to see their enthusiasm and

determination inspiring others to join them to create change in this chaotic world of today, and to gratefully hand over this task to them.

Aging brings its bodily pain too, of course, which also slows us down. I sense that an attitude of acceptance and gratitude, rather than despair or denial, helps me to be with both my physical suffering and the suffering of others. The gentle drawing in holds my body in a loving embrace and cares for it. Pain is a necessary element of our world, its discomfort reminding us that we are alive. In this being alive our body is our earthly home, the miraculous form we inhabit that enables us to live our lives on this planet. It houses our being, as our journey slows down, taking us back toward the source from which we came and to which we will joyfully return in due time.

As Rumi sings:

*I will sing you a quiet song, Beloved,
and welcome you as you creep into my hearth, my heart;
My Hearth;
My Heart.*



Slowing Down — Seven Flashes

by Pir Elias

If I could live my life again
I wouldn't be in such a hurry.



Let your heart be as quiet
as the end of this sentence.



You keep reaching for something
beyond your reach. Relax.
Join your self to your self.
What you've always wanted
is what you've always had.

The fastest way to slow down is to listen.



Even when you're in a hurry
you never move from where you are.



This is your chance. Sit very still.
Let your grudges go.
This moment is shared by everything.
Touch it lovingly.



Here, where there's no more to say, we meet.



The Turtle

by Carol Barrow

A few Christmases ago, as I opened a gift sent to me by my mother-in-law, Helen, I found, buried in a fluff of tissue paper, a brown and green ceramic turtle. The turtle was as big as my head, and heavy, like a brick. It was nice, but as much as I love animals, I didn't need or particularly want a ceramic turtle. It was one more thing to take up space and gather dust. I appreciated the thoughtfulness, but I really longed for a personal and heartfelt connection, which I wasn't able to find in this gift.

I found a place out of the way where the turtle could live, and then I forgot about it.

Last week, my husband Michael and I flew to Boston to visit my mother- and father-in-law. My father-in-law has dementia. I enjoy being around people with dementia, maybe because of the slowing down that is asked of me.

One quiet evening, while Helen relaxed in her favorite chair and read the paper and my father-in-law let out rhythmic snores from his recliner, I sat on the couch across from them, taking in the scene. After a while I focused on a couple of large ceramic turtles and a smaller one eyeing me from the window ledge next to Helen. I asked about them, and Helen's eyes sparkled.

My good friend makes these turtles, she said.

I think I have one like them, I said. Did you give me one years ago?

I may have, Helen answered. It would have my friend's initials on the bottom.

When we got back home from our trip, I searched for my turtle and quickly found it in the corner of our screened-in porch, behind a chair. I dusted off the green and brown creature and turned it over. There were Helen's friend's initials.

I was taken back to the day I had opened a box in which I found the turtle, swallowed up in the fluff of tissue paper. At that time, even while holding in my hands an example of one of Earth's slowest creatures, I had failed to slow down enough to see the love within the gift. Today I'm finding it impossible to deny the kindness and generosity that came to me disguised as a green and brown ceramic animal.

How is it that this inanimate object can at one time be something to collect dust, then suddenly change into a sign of love? It's not the turtle or the giver that brought me back to love. It was the slowing down, coming into presence, where I found the happiness that is always here.

I put the turtle on the window ledge next to my favorite chair, because sometimes I need a reminder.



Slowing Down

by Suzanne Inayat-Khan

What arises in me when I read that phrase is, it's not about slowing down nor about speeding up. "Slowing down" is a phrase that can be used to describe much more than what it says. Some people say it when they mean "I'm doing less." Or, I'm not so capable as I used to be. Or I'm taking more time to do things I enjoy rather than the things I have to do. Or, I'm deliberately doing tasks slowly as a spiritual practice. That's just four interpretations, but they all refer to something experiential that has a quality of life aspect about them.

There's a timeless timeliness where things happen as and when they ought to. We recognize that action in time because it happens simply. What wants to arise facilitates itself to happen. It feels natural and without tension and life works without undue effort. That doesn't mean I don't need to plan or have a diary; it doesn't mean I won't miss the train if I am late and I don't hurry; these things are just part of the nature of it all. At those times I know everything happens as it should, of course, because that's what is happening. But sometimes I resist! I want it to be different, like a demanding toddler! That's when I know I need to be slowing down. But, of course, I rarely do.

I know when I'm rushing through my life because my head feels like it's out in front of my body. I can recognize that sometimes my atmosphere is on a borderline: there's a brightness and a lightness; an intelligence and an acuity—at that stage it's fine. But when I try to continue it beyond its true moment, I find myself juggling, spinning,

controlling, tightening, feeling a separation from all around me. It's a lonely place. Very easily I become agitated and anxious; before I know it, I am triggered into anger and deep tears. Then, weary, I drop into stop mode. But not stop restful stop. I'm sluggish, I feel heavy, I need to go and lie down. I want to sleep but can't. I feel sad at best and shame at worst, judgmental, misunderstood and mistreated, the story depending on where the trigger landed me. My body-mind is now totally consumed by my story, regret about my behaviors, imperfections, lack of grace and elegance. When I'm here, there's nothing to do but wait for the clock to move on, for time to move on to another moment.

In this standing-still time I can see how my back-and-forth narration created the discord and agitation that I had so wanted to avoid. It really didn't matter if I judged myself as too fast or too slow, what mattered was that I had fallen out of timeless timeliness. I forget that when I look out of my eyes it is not I that sees.

My thought on slowing down is: I say it when I mean I need to drop down into being empty of doing myself, because it's a happier experience there. There's a pace in my day-to-day that suits me, that keeps my heart open and in front, leading me, not my head. There is a rhythmic life dance where I keep in time with myself, I don't lose my footing, I don't step on others toes. Its joyful, its easy, its buoyant. It's ordinary and natural and it's me.

What's more, compared to how fast our world spins and moves through space, I'm not really moving at all.



Nada—May 2018

We are a school of thirsty fish
Gathered from far and wide
To learn what we already know
To taste what already fills us
To touch what already embraces us.

We read, reflect, meditate
Talk and discuss until...
Meanwhile, outside, a bird sings
And the grass dances with the wind.

Do we reach conclusions? No.
Do we find answers? No
Only more questions.
Is it all worthwhile?
Oh yes! Yes!
We have touched once again
The joy and gratitude that is life itself.

—Sharif Stannard



The Silent Hum

We are released
 From the prison of our beliefs
 As soon as we truly know
 In our deepest Being
 That Life itself is continuously
 Flowing,
 Silently Flowing...
 Ceaselessly Flowing, Flowing... Flowing...

And that we and everything
 ARE
 This
 Never Ceasing Flow of Life itself.

Simple.

Yes, it is simple, because
 then
 we can stop worrying about
 thinking that we can control life,
 trying to change it,
 imagining we should be experiencing
 something different to what we are actually experiencing,
 wishing that we were not who we are, or
 that we were who we are not!

Then
 We can live consciously
 Immersed in
 The awareness of
 The
 Silent
 Hum



Of Life itself,
 That underpins
 Every thought,
 Every feeling,
 Every sensation,
 Every experience that
 We can ever have,
 imbuing all of these
 With an underlying
 Continuous joy
 And certainty
 That Life is the
 Miraculous
 Gift
 Of
 LOVE.

—Ali MacArthur

Upcoming Programs 2019



Sufism and the Eros of Nonduality

A Series of Five Sunday Afternoon Gatherings
with Pir Elias Amidon
Boulder, Colorado

**January 27 • February 24 • March 24
April 28 • May 26**



Love and Nonduality

Practices of the Awakened Heart
Advanced Open Path Retreat with Pir Elias
Himmelreich Retreat Center, Lindau, Germany

May 8 – 14, 2019



The Nondual Heart of Sufism

Two workshops exploring a contemporary
Sufi approach to the essence of nonduality
with Pir Elias Amidon and Murshid Kiran Rana
Berkeley, California

**Doing the Beautiful • February 8 – 9, 2019
Love and Nonduality • June 21 – 22, 2019**



Continuous Realization

A 2-Day Workshop
with Pir Elias and Murshid Kiran Rana
Berkeley, CA

June 21 – 22, 2019



Open Path Training

Six-Month Training in Nondual Realization with Pir Elias
Still Meadow Retreat Center
Damascus, Oregon, USA

Seminar I: **March 14 – 17, 2019**
Seminar II: **September 27 – 30, 2019**



Wilderness Vision Quest

A Nine-Day Experience
with Murshid Elmer Koole and Chris Covey
Canyonlands, Utah, USA

September 20 – 28, 2019



Doing the Beautiful

A 2-Day Workshop
with Pir Elias and Murshid Kiran Rana

Berkeley: February 8 – 9, 2019



Love and Nonduality

Practices of the Awakened Heart
Advanced Open Path Retreat with Pir Elias
Buckland Hall, Brecon, Wales, UK

October 13 – 18, 2019



Open Path Training

Six-Month Training in Nondual Realization
with Pir Elias

Engineer's House, Bristol, UK

Seminar I: **May 2 – 5, 2019**
Seminar II: **October 9 – 12, 2019**

