



Fresh Rain

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

SPRING 2021

IN THIS ISSUE: Essays by Binah Taylor, Anna Zweede, Klaus-Peter Esser, Sharif Peter Hawkins, Pir Elias, Yona Chavanne, Isha Francis, Ali MacArthur, Viv Quillin, and Carol Barrow; Poetry by Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, Jeanne Rana, Erica Witt, and Amrita Skye Blaine



Dear Friends,

This Spring season's theme is **Patience**. The issue is thick with wonderful responses! We received prose contributions from Binah Taylor, Carol Barrow, Pir Elias, Anna Zweede (and be sure and read her "Meeting Each Other" bio), Klaus-Peter Esser, Isha Francis, Sharif Peter Hawkins, Ali MacArthur, Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, Viv Quillin, Sharif Peter Hawkins, and Yona Chavanne. Poetry was offered by Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, Jeanne Rana, Amrita Skye Blaine, and Erica Witt. Enjoy the contributions! And special thanks to Mèhèra who provided Sufi Inayat Khan's quote.

For Summer, let's consider **"Is There Really a Normal? Can we ever get back to anything or anywhere?"** Isha Francis suggested this timely theme—it's a question I've asked myself almost daily during the pandemic.

Thanks to all who offer poems and essays for Fresh Rain. Please consider writing for future issues. It can be serious or light-hearted. I look forward to reading what you send; it delights me.

With love for each one of you,

Amrita

editor, Fresh Rain: freshrain@sufiway.org



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The Power of Patience

by Binah Taylor

Growing up in a helter-skelter household, patience was surprisingly a frequent topic of conversation. Described as a necessary inconvenience, it was also billed as a virtue. I was curious as to why patience was so reluctantly entered into when doing so was designed to endure the lag in gratification. The way people around me talked about patience—"Oh, one must just be patient"—sounded like bad-tasting medicine which would do you good. What I noticed was, while patience was given such virtuous status, few around me seemed to practice it. If anything, impatience seemed to rule the day. "Do hurry up, haven't you finished that yet?" If I was to aspire to patience, how would I learn if no one modeled it?

Life, as I discovered, provides plenty of opportunities to practice, but more than that, how to see and experience patience differently.

Rethinking patience really began at the end of pregnancy with my first child. The forty weeks were up, questions were being asked, and my anxiety was mounting. To distract myself, I would while away the hours playing the card game Patience—yes, that old-fashioned solitary activity so described because you had to organize the cards sequentially by each suit, which sometimes meant doing it over and over. Uncovering the cards became a metaphor: if a sequence unfolded completing the suit, then surely my labor would begin?

"Are the cards being awkward, dear?" Murshida Sitara would ask from across the room, where she was reading by the fire. "Perhaps a cup of tea will help," and up she would get and put on the kettle. We were both in the patience game, waiting for something to happen.

The mysterious dictate of pregnancy, which has its own timeline, was teaching me it was impatience (and its link to fear) which made waiting so interminable. Patience (with its link to trust) was altogether different.

From the vantage point of forty years later, I appreciate more fully the power intrinsic to patience itself, rather than being seen as a place of limbo waiting for something to happen. I recall some years ago being given a master class in patience while I was sitting on a log at the edge of the Niger in Segou, Mali, waiting for the pirogue to take us across the river. The boat was due to arrive at 11 a.m. but was nowhere in sight. I was struck by how patient my six fellow travelers were, although not surprised, for this is a quality deeply embedded in African culture. Several more people arrived, delighted the boat had not yet come. There was no rush, things would happen in due course. As we waited for our transport, people increasingly engaged with each other: water was being shared in the now blistering heat, manioc root peeled and bits passed around, and I added to the "pot" with my peanuts and orange segments. There was a lot of laughing and when a drumbeat sounded in the distance, several got up to dance. Kids came round, pestering us for sweets. Patience was a party! About noon, the pirogue came and, heaving from side to side, took us across.

Now, as I sit and write, I move into patience—like a comfy chair—to let the thoughts arrive on the page, the stories unfold, as they will. Being patient is being rooted in the moment, out of place and time, having nowhere to go. And that is powerful.



Garden

by Anna Zweede

We will create a garden together.

We'll begin tomorrow, under the chilly sky of these last days of winter.

It will take time. Time every day.

We'll string the days onto the thread of each week one by one. Your four-year-old understanding of certain things taking time—what it means to wait for later to come—will require explanation from me on and off. I will tell you that, even having lived fifteen times as long as you, I ask myself the same questions.

Spring will come, its showers and sunshine coaxing tiny tips of green to break through the topsoil. You will spend time peering at them, on hands and knees in the wet earth, as if you might draw them out faster with your breath. The first tiny leaves appear as the slender stalks slowly stretch upward. We will tend to the stalks with care, watching attentively, waiting expectantly.

By and by, we'll tie week-threads end-to-end to make a month, and another.

The leaves will grow bigger and buds will emerge. You will count them when there are a few and then spread your small arms wide and say "This many!" when they've become abundant. Finally, gaining sufficient momentum, the buds will burst open.

The flowers will bring color to our summer. They will be our joy and delight.

But at this moment, for the now of our here, we bide. Tomorrow's beginnings are soon.



Impatience Is My Teacher

by Klaus-Peter Esser

If I were to describe what my biography taught me with regard to patience, here it is: punctuality, hurry, efficiency, no waste, doing, performing, failing is no option....

Sounds like a terrible childhood, but it was not! I just learned to adopt to my parent's expectations and I learned that impatience is okay. Over the years impatience became a real friend to me, pushing me and helping me to get things done quickly, being on time—always—no matter how appropriate that was.

For example, a planned family excursion: my wife, our young kids and myself had agreed upon certain departure time for leaving the house. When it was time, I found myself waiting impatiently at the front door, looking at my watch, unable to understand why my beautiful wife and my beautiful kids were unable to be on time. In those moments I was far away of seeing the beauty of my beloved family. I just was angry and, moreover, I felt I was right! Today I feel ashamed of myself of having confronted my family with my impatience.

Now—about thirty years later, being in my seventies, I have learned to deal with my impatience without social damage. But impatience is still there, like an old companion. Over time this companion has become my teacher: When I notice today the well-known feeling of impatience coming up, rising from the bottom, ready to cause some very useless reactions, there is this inner voice asking: "Take a breath. Slow down. What is now?"

The answer is simply clear, unspoiled presence, unfolding the beauty of this very moment—no need to hurry, accepting what is, enjoying the time I have been given to wait until my wife or my kids or my grandkids are ready.

Patience is fed by love. We can never have patience with anybody without love. How valuable is patience! As it is said in the Quran, "God loves the patient."

—Sufi Inayat Khan

Patience

by Sharif Peter Hawkins

Our beloved Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi writes:

Patience is not sitting and waiting. It is foreseeing. It is looking at the thorn and seeing the rose, looking at the night and seeing the day. Lovers are patient and know that the moon needs time to become full.

As many of us are confined to our homes by the latest pandemic lockdowns, banned from hugging dear ones, or traveling, and struggling through the late winter storms, our patience is being sorely tried. For those, like me, activists, who tend more to what Fazal Inayat-Khan termed: “The Way of the Warrior,” rather than the path of the contemplative, patience is not easily learnt, but a capacity that is essential to our balance and healthy being.

Patience is waiting upon the Gods—waiting for what needs to happen to show itself, for the way forward to become clear. But spiritual patience is not just passive, it is actively looking through what is immediate and focal and seeing the larger pattern of what is emerging. It is wide open-eyed patience, becoming like the five bridesmaids in the Christian New Testament, that stayed awake with their lamps lit, ready for who and what may come, without knowing how or when that would happen, but still being ready (Mathew 25 1-13).

I have for long been intrigued by the short ditty:
Patience is a Virtue; Virtue is a Grace; Grace is a little girl who did not wash her face.

To be open to Grace, to the perpetual giving of the wider eco-system, we need to wash our face, remove the masks of the roles we play, the appearances we “keep up” and have all our embodied senses open to what comes.

Otto Scharmer, one of the best contemporary writers on Change and Leadership, writes beautifully about how we have to wait with “open mind,” “open heart,” and “open will,” in order to “let go,” to “let come.”

Patience is letting go of trying to control what will happen next, while impatience tries to squeeze what life is giving birth to, through the narrow confines of our own limited expectations, past experiences, beliefs, and habits, into our constrained comfort zone of the familiar and known. With patience as our guide, we can allow the new to be fresh and unknown, rather than quickly try and convert the new into previously constructed categories.

In another, much quoted poem from Mevlana, known as “The Guest House,” we are encouraged to meet and greet whatever comes at our threshold, laughing. These guests include both our own arising feelings and emotions, but also whatever life presents us. Patience is a capacity we can all constantly develop; the capacity to treat all that arises with compassion and curiosity, and rather than see problems that need resolving, to see new challenges or chillas that life has sent us, as our next teacher on the path. Our perennial teacher Hazrat Inayat Khan reminds us that: “All our difficulties in life, all our failures come from lack of patience” and that “Patience is the best quality that man can cultivate.”

Nine Thoughts about Patience

by Pir Elias

- She who is patient accepts what each moment serves up without insisting it should have served up something else.
- Patience is not waiting; it is accepting what is, even if what is is impatience.
- If I want ice cream and there is no ice cream available, patience accepts that situation. “Be at peace even when you want something.”
- Equanimity is the ground of patience.
- The secret of hitchhiking is patience.
- If to be patient requires effort; it isn’t patient, it’s self-control.
- Trying to be obedient to the idea of patience is to be trapped in the idea of time.
- Patience is wiser than impatience.
- Patience is kind.

Al Sabur, the Patient One

by Yona Chavanne

"The door is round and open."—Rumi

Impatience wants things to change, to go ahead, jump to another moment: impatience is afraid to get stuck, to fall into some black hole. Impatience is young and vigorous. Impatience is the virtue of desiring.



Patience stays intimately close, even at a distance, to the faraway.

Patience is what one finds naturally when diving deep.

It is not exactly patience in its usual sense, rather a non-time deprived of expectation.

As opposed to time, duration isn't measurable. That is its beauty.

It is homogeneous, one with what is or could be.

This non-place is so quiet.

Patience is a long note heard on an alto violin, a cello, a bamboo flute ... the silence that follows....

One cannot find an edge where patience stops: it is infinite waiting for something one doesn't know, a beautiful and boundless space.

It is not accompanied by or depending on thoughts.

In this patience, inside and outside are closely connected, inseparable.

Yes, it is sensual. Soft as a bird's finest feathers or a horse's nostril.

There is joy, freedom, wonderment in this spaciousness, joy to be alive, wonder of not knowing.



Then, of course, impatience to live, to die, is taking hold of us again.

On Patience

by Isha Francis

Patience seems to be one of those ideas (perhaps aspirations) that most commonly speaks to our behavior when something or someone happens along that we don't like, don't find appropriate, don't welcome, don't expect, don't want. It is usually suggested, expected (hoped) that, whatever it is, we accept it, abide with it, definitely don't get angry or upset with it, bear it, even embrace it.

We should generally, it is offered, maintain our balance, remember to breathe, and cultivate an open heart as we maintain or find our patience.

But. Patience only appears to be about accepting circumstances imposed upon us, whether it is by friends, neighbors, weather, politics, or the pandemic. Patience only appears to be about tolerating the actions, opinions, or attitudes of others, which fly in the face of our own.

Imagine instead that patience is actually and only a result of the apparent existence of time. For without time bearing down upon us, where are we but here, now?

And if we are here, now, what is there to anticipate, judge, forgive, or regret? Here, now, we have no context within which to take a measure of any of these events which have happened previously or we imagine

might happen in the future. What is there asking us to be patient? What is there about which we could be patient?

It is impossible to be patient or impatient if we are here, now. In that present, with presence, our breath flows, our body relaxes, our heart opens, and there is nothing whatsoever to tolerate, accept, or reject.

*Given that awareness is unchanging...
everything is of the nature of space—
what arises, arises timelessly;
what abides, abides timelessly;
and what is free is free timelessly.*

— Longchempa



Patience

by Ali MacArthur

Patience is about living in the present moment.

I lived for so many years as a very impatient person, often restless and wanting things to happen immediately in the way I wanted them to. It was an uncomfortable way to live, causing me to be judgmental about myself, other people, and things around me that I couldn't control. I still feel that irritation arise in myself occasionally, but now I recognise it as a restlessness that is not caused by anything outside of myself. Over many years of spiritual practice and seeking for Truth, I have seen impatience for what it is, and slowed myself down to a place where I have stopped trying to control my life and my environment.

One of the biggest lessons for me has been learning to *listen*—to listen to others, to Nature, and to my inner, deeper self. I discovered that truly listening entails leaving aside that person who thinks she is the center of the universe and opening up to my deeper being with curiosity and humility. In this state I am able to hear (and

see) where another person is coming from, or indeed what is really going on in myself and around me. Truly listening slows everything down, including the breath, bringing a stillness and a presence that allows everything to be as it is, everyone to be as they are. In this stillness we are able to be patient and to deeply connect with the truth, whatever that may be in this moment, and accept it with equanimity.



Patience Grrr

by Viv Quillin

It was one of the dark days when, once again, the Pandemic had removed the possibility of seeing my Finnish family. The yearning to be with them, particularly the grandchildren who are so young, and growing, and changing so fast, seemed to get worse as the time without a visit grew longer.

When I told a well-meaning person this, the response was “It will be over one day and you’ll see them again. Be patient.” These words were meant well, and I’ve said them myself to others as a means of comfort. But on hearing the advice about patience, I immediately felt that I was being silly to be upset. Worse, I was Making A Fuss About Nothing.

Even before the remark, I’d been telling myself that I somehow shouldn’t mind about not seeing the family because I’m so much more fortunate than some and also have lots of photos and videos to look at, so in every way those feelings were not okay.

“Be patient” can seem like a command to do the impossible, to stuff down the feelings of sadness, rage, frustration, disappointment. From my complete lack of success it has become clear to me that telling myself not to have a particular feeling doesn’t help and, in fact,

causes me to have another pile of negative feelings on top of the one I’m trying to have. In this case, Patience.

When I sat deeply with the Patience word, what came to me was that I need to have patience with my feelings. This becomes beautiful, as the judgments drop away, somehow the now-allowed impatience, frustrations, and disappointment become part of the richness of being. I realize that the ache of missing the Finnish family was there before the pandemic. I miss all the absent people that I love and this is an ache that I live with. Some of what I ache for will never come back, so patient waiting is pointless. What I need is patience with uncomfortable feelings, to simply allow them and to be sympathetic whilst they rage or merely grumble, without trying to rationalize them away.

Although I’ve only spoken of one situation where I’ve drawn on patience, I’m experimenting with others. It seems as if patience toward me is an aspect of kindness, which is something that I’m always very keen on applying to myself. This does feel embarrassingly indulgent, and yet, it appears that only after this action does the self-kindness, and now self-patience, turn outward and become patient with the world, just as my advisor suggested.

Thoughts on Patience

from a Sometimes Patient Woman

by Carol Barrow

When I think of patience, I think of standing in a long line at the post office, noticing the agitated sighs of the man in front of me, the young girl singing as she touches every gift card in a display, and all of the feelings taking place within me.

A friend recently shared a Buddhist quote about patience: "Patience does not mean putting up with problems or bearing pain; it is the effort to maintain nonaggression. That is the definition of patience: maintaining nonaggression."

Non-aggression...it's nice to have a word for what goes on when I'm fine with just standing in line until it's my

turn and to also have that word when I'm feeling the aggression of impatience, wanting people to hurry up and things to happen faster. Applying the word, "aggression" helps me to see how harmful impatience is, to my peace of mind and to those around me.



Allowing Beauty to Express Herself

by Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

There is a place of beauty

There is a place of peace

There is a place of harmony

Within you

(These are the words to a zikr Murshid Fazal Inayat-Khan composed)

There is a beauty and blessing in aging.

Allowing oneself just to be...

It takes time to drop all unnecessary leaves

It takes patience too

Waiting for that moment for leaves to drop

Spontaneously ... one by one

What spaciousness ... what delicious emptiness



I can sit back watching the birds compete with one another for food ... in the snow, they know spring will be here soon where they need all the strength to deliver and feed their offspring. The patience of these beautiful creatures incubating their eggs for so long—then the real work starts ... flying to and fro to take care of their little ones, without ever thinking, "What about me?"

Watching nature, I see patience everywhere. There is no hurry, no preoccupation, just being. Everything happens in its own time, just like the leaves dropping.

— Arriving at a stage in my life in which I can do things I am most drawn to.

— Spontaneously started drawing and making aquarelles.

— Being in nature and observing helps to feel into the beauty one wishes to express.

In creating these little drawings, I feel the beauty I am experiencing through observing is somehow re-expressed. While doing so, the I disappears and submerges with the object. Not that I think big art is being created here ... it is just this expression of love and patience from within and without and a kind of dissolvent along the way ... and which Pir Elias frequently quotes, "Let the beauty you love, be what you do." (Rumi)

Life is like

Passing through a landscape
 The quiet remains still
 Witnessing what is,
 Is rapidly passing by

Looking through eyes
 Gazing through
 A wettish window
 Snowflakes spatting apart
 On their flight

A horse in a meadow
 Its back white wet
 Scrapes a hoof for food
 Awaiting the green to come back

Sheep search
 For a bite of frozen grass
 Their bellies full of happy spring
 Awaiting the first gentle day
 For the lambs to pop out

Fields of white-covered black earth
 Fruitful darkness
 Tender Caring Holding
 The space, till the first gentle day
 Arrives for the seeds to pop up

Speeding through the black and white world
 Eyes gazing out
 Quietly sitting witnessing
 The passing and the quietude
 That peaceful awaiting
 For spring to spring

Patiently



Like a cat awaiting its prey
 The moment comes
 Prey and cat unite



Life is like a train passing by
 Witness and life
 Melting like snow
 Into One

— Umtul Valetton-Kiekens

the good soldier

all night all day
 an army of pine trees
 stands on the hills

conifers are patient
 responsive to weather
 or could they be sleeping, dreaming?

I want
 to root like they do
 face storms and mild mornings

I will provide rest for birds
 a home for the squirrel
 I'll watch moon rise and stars move

I will be constant
 attentive or asleep
 a good soldier

— Jeanne Rana



PATIENCE D.I.Y.

A small job really
 Hardly worth bothering
 Boring how long it takes.

Litany of dire outcomes.
 Distractions. Indecisions.
 Anxiety overload. Dead end.

Brain battery flat.
 Job not finished. Job still waiting
 Pill. Eat. Sleep.

Remember creativity, fun, freedom
 How far away it seems, that carefree world
 Of nonchalance and laissez-faire.

Back on the job. A personal crusade.
 Eyes fixed, mind focused, hand steadied.
 One wobble, two wobbles, yay.

Fuck it. Dropped it.
 Job not finished. Job still waiting.
 Pill. Apathy. Cup of tea.

Remember the history of perseverance
 Small increments of effort, long ago learned.
 The scent of satisfaction, praise, celebration.

Job not finished. Job still waiting.
 Light fading. Day ending.
 Gathering shreds of concentration.

Last push past the pit of mutterings.
 Don't listen. Start to sing.
 Smile at the stiffened bone and brain.

You can do it. Can you do it?
 Focus. Surrender. Breathe.
 Focus. Maybe. Yes.

Yes. Maybe. Yes. Yes. YES.
 PATIENCE REWARDED.
 Small job really.
 Pill.

— Erica Witt

Consent to Silence

from Father Thomas Keating's work with the
Centering Prayer

*[author note: this contemplation unfolded over
a three-month period.]*

Two instructions:
prior to sitting
—give an internal bow
—consent to silence

Yes, the internal bow
Consent?
to silence?
In the deepest core
what does this mean?

The lexicon defines consent:
permit, approve, agree,
comply, yield
or archaic, be in harmony

Permit, comply, and yield
all require surrender—
that as well,
but not quite right

Approve and agree,
closer to
my inner resonance

Harmony
ahhh...
There's the core,
the perfume of melding

Holding this,
the instruction, again:
consent to silence

— Amrita Skye Blaine



Meeting Each Other

In some issues 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



Anna Elizabeth Zweede

Born in the USA of Dutch parents, Anna grew up in Ohio and New Jersey. She moved to Paris, France as a young adult and resides there currently. Her parents were born in Indonesia, making her the third generation to leave

her birthland to found a family and life elsewhere. Her professional calling has been in education for over forty

years. Though devoting her workdays to teaching and leadership in an international middle school, storytelling remains essential. Writing about the universal themes of the human experience, often exploring the subterranean depths and darker emotions, Anna also sources her poetry, fiction, and song lyrics in the world around her and the sky above. She is active in the interdenominational and highly diverse American Church in Paris and was brought into the Sufi Way by a summer workshop at Four Winds in 2001.

Upcoming Programs 2021



Coming Home

Awakening through Aging and Dying
Online retreat
Spring 2021



The Invisible Offering

New Eden Retreat Centre
The Netherlands
September 1–5, 2021



All Is Well

A weekend retreat at the
Universal Murad
June 25–27, 2021



Enter Into Silence

Walking retreat in the Moroccan desert
November 6–17, 2021

