



Fresh Rain

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

FALL 2022

IN THIS ISSUE: Prose by Sabah Raphael Reed, Gabriel Leslie Mezei, Karim Noverraz, and Sara Landman; Poetry by Ayaz Landman and Amrita Skye Blaine



Dear Friends,

This autumn's theme is **Spiritual Renewal**. How do we renew ourselves? It feels more needed now than ever before.

We received prose contributions from Sara Landman, Karim Noverraz, Gabriel Leslie Mezei, and Sabah Raphael Reed. Poetry includes Ayaz Landman (four poems from the desert) and Amrita Skye Blaine.

The elegant desert photo credits: page 6, Mantautas Kvedaras; page 7, Yusuf Bashir; page 8, Jean-Pierre Datachary. Special thanks to Mèhèra Bakker for Sufi Inayat Khan's quote.

For the Winter Solstice issue, let's consider **Dualities** (light/dark, innocence/experience, joy/sorrow, agitation/serenity, etc.) This theme was offered by Jeanne Rana.

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

With love for each one of you,

Amrita
editor, *Fresh Rain*: freshrain@sufiway.org



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Tribute for Martine Jesus

The one who has learned friendship need learn very little else.

— Sufi Inayat Khan

Martine nourished many deep and long-lasting friendships throughout her life. She was a kind, loyal, caring and considerate spirit with a rich sense of humor.

Not only did she dress elegantly, her surrounding had a breath of elegance and culture; she radiated elegance in who she was and in whatever she did.

She embraced life in many different ways with an extraordinary intelligence. Always eager to learn and to attract and explore new developments.

It was Martine who spotted the house in Tourly and she was very happy to spend most of her time with us there.

She was an enthusiastic traveller, sleeping in the Sahara desert, crossing the US from the East Coast to the West Coast in a rambling car. Trekking in high altitude in Peru, trekking through Persia and Afghanistan, Thailand Indonesia, Tahiti, it couldn't be exotic enough. She loved the quests with Rabia and Elias in Utah.

She was a bright and warm shining light. It has been a great joy and immense gift to have shared so many experiences together. Martine was a beautiful human being to be with. We can't thank her enough.

After all the constraints she experienced the last two years, it consoles us to know that she is now traveling Toward, after a beautifully well lived life.

May Martine be blessed eternally.

All love,
Dahan & Mèhèra



Martine's Note

My first encounter with the mystery of life happened in the fifties when, as a small child walking to the grocer's shop in the city of Blois (France) where I was born. I suddenly realized that the moon was following me! This had triggered a yearning to know the answer to all these questions: why is the sky blue rather than green, where do we come from, where do we go, who are we, etc. To the point that in addition to be a voracious reader, I was ready to study everything. I finally chose for a MSc in Physics — that would undoubtedly unveil to me the mysteries of the world — which of course it did not. With little appetite for patient work in a laboratory and a curiosity about life in the world, I started a business career with Colgate after a MBA at Insead. I have found it hard all along, although I certainly learnt a lot about others and myself!

I had almost lost hope, when I finally "came home" quite by chance in my early forties. I was initiated in the Sufi Way twenty years ago by Murshida Sitara and it has been ever since an incredible journey on the Open Path, where "everything" finally comes together, where questions and answers do not matter any longer.

The Fresh Rain of Spiritual Renewal

by Sabah Raphael Reed

Reflecting on the theme of spiritual renewal has itself been a renewing experience. Four faces of this multi-faceted jewel have shone out for me.

Reflecting the moment

Healthy spiritual movements welcome being renewed and refreshed in order to avoid becoming ossified. Such vitality first drew me toward the Sufi Way and particularly the Open Path teachings of Pir Elias who in *Fresh Rain: An Introduction to the Sufi Way* describes Sufism as “the self-cleaning capacity of the human heart” and as “the current of renewal that breaks free what has become stuck.”

Indeed the roots of the Sufi Way are marked by an orientation toward transformation and renewal. The Chishti lineage is known for its emphasis on love, tolerance and openness and Sufi Inayat Khan’s own journey to the West and teachings of Universal Sufism were profoundly attuned and responsive to the historical and cultural conditions of the time. Similar responsiveness was fundamental to the establishment of the Sufi Way in 1985 by Pir-o-Murshid Fazal Inayat Khan.

Pir Elias continues this willingness to innovate and to ensure relevance through the Open Path practices and teachings whilst depth and stability are assured through a strong root in the lineage and an honoring of the *sil sileh* (a chain of initiatory transmission). Striking a balance here is not easy but is itself a creative act—an art.

What then are some of the defining aspects of our contemporary moment that might be calling for spiritual responsiveness and renewal? Escalating economic and political conflicts, climate collapse, environmental degradation and an unraveling of the social and ecological fabric of life all mean this moment feels existentially different from previous eras with signs that a sixth period of mass extinction on Earth is underway. In the spirit of the Inayati tradition we must continue to ask ourselves “in what ways does our spiritual awakening contribute to the wellbeing of others and how well do our teachings, practices and beliefs address, and help us to meet, the challenges of the contemporary moment?”

Renewing our vows

Our personal connection to a spiritual teacher, path, and stream needs to be renewed and refreshed, as a form of respect but also in response to the deepening threshold moments that arise on the journey.

The simple and beautiful ceremony of initiation into the Sufi Way marks our commitment to awakening and service whilst initiating a lifelong experience of transmission and transformation. I’ve come to understand it not as a one-



off event but a continuous stream of blessing, resourced through relationship with our Pir and others and through a range of mystical experiences. Pir Elias and Murshida Kunderke Noverraz initiated me in 2013 on my sixtieth birthday. As I approach my seventieth year I find myself being drawn again toward embracing the invitation of initiation—consciously stepping into the unknown, re-committing to my relationship with Pir Elias, the Open Path and Sufi Way, and surrendering still further and deeper into the current of spiritual awakening.

I was also fortunate to be initiated as a Sufi Way celebrant in 2016. As part of that initiation I made a vow, which I recently came across in a written form. Reading it brought me to tears as I had forgotten the solemnity of the commitment made but also because I could see how over the last six years the vow has been doing its work and constantly renewing itself in and through me. This speaks to the power of the initiatory moment, whether we are aware of it or not. It has also brought me to a place where I have decided to consciously renew that vow.

I wonder, is there a vow that you want to make or wish to renew? Is there a vow that you have already made that is doing its work through you and which you might want to honor in some way?

Surrendering to spirit

There is no work to be done except to surrender, to open, facilitating spirit to flow through us, to constantly renew us. Our individual and communal practices are all about clearing the stream, strengthening the flow and I certainly know that when I lose connection to those practices I soon feel depleted and unmoored. Spirit itself has no need of renewal ... it is ever-present, non-divisible, inexhaustible. We are not “renewing spirit”; rather, with grace, with attunement, spirit is renewing us. As we embrace the clear, fresh openness in each moment, we are constantly rejuvenated in the fresh rain of pure presence; free medicine indeed. What a blessing!

Manifesting as love

The dance is a constant love affair with the Beloved, inviting us to show up in each moment animated and

amplified by spirit, by love. Available. Responsive to the enduring question "What is asked of us?"

*In the garden of non-intention
The Beloved
dances us round and round,
moving us,
praying us,
completing us beyond us,
delighting in ever and always*

*bursting us open again and again.
Praise this miraculous outpouring.
Praise each curiosity, each joy,
seeding every moment
in the fertile
Now.*

I see now in writing this how each of the four facets of spiritual renewal explored here are interwoven with each other and shimmer on the web of awakening. Thank you "Fresh Rain" for precipitating such a shower of revelation!

Spiritual Renewal Quotes

Offered by Gabriel Leslie Mezei

We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise, we harden.

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

We need a renaissance of wonder. We need to renew, in our hearts and in our souls, the deathless dream, the eternal poetry, the perennial sense that life is miracle and magic.

– E. Merrill Root

Each time we exhale, the world ends; when we inhale, there can be, if we allow it, rebirth and spiritual renewal. It all transpires inside of us. In our consciousness, in our hearts. All the time.

– Tom Robbins

We die on the day when our lives cease to be illumined by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of a wonder the source of which is beyond all reason.

– Dag Hammarskjöld

Life is the perpetual surprise that I exist.

– Rabindranath Tagore

A rebirth out of spiritual adversity causes us to become new creatures.

– James E. Faust



Seek the wisdom that will untie your knot. Seek the path that demands your whole being.

– Rumi

The heart is a thousand-stringed instrument that can only be tuned with Love.

– Hafiz

Once the soul awakens, it begins to see that truth is always new and renews the soul, giving it perpetual youth.

– Hazrat Inayat Khan

You ask what you're supposed to do as this living human person. The answer is always the same. Love more.

– Elias Amidon

When we learn how to become resilient, we learn how to embrace the beautifully broad spectrum of the human experience.

– Jaeda Dewalt

I think we need to do some deep soul searching about what's important in our lives, and renew our spirit and our spiritual thinking, whether it's through faith-based religion or just through loving nature, or helping your fellow man.

– Louis Schwartzberg

There is in us an instinct for newness, for renewal, for a liberation of creative power. We seek to awaken in ourselves a force which really changes our lives from within. And yet the same instinct tells us that this change is a recovery of that which is deepest, most original, most personal in ourselves. To be born again is not to become somebody else, but to become ourselves.

– Thomas Merton

The genteel wind of restoration moves silently, invisibly. Renewal is a spiritual process, the communal melody that sustains us. Inexpressible braids of tenderness whispering reciprocating-chords of love for family, friends, humankind, and nature plaits interweaved layers of blissful atmosphere, which copious heart-song brings spiritual rejuvenation.

– Kilroy J. Oldster

In spring, the dead trees, roots, and animals come to life again exactly as they were, thus providing hundreds of thousands of examples, specimens, and proofs of the supreme resurrection.

– Said Nursi



The heart is like a being which is asleep and receiving a sharp blow it awakens. Also the heart is like a stone and the fire which is hidden within it can only be brought to life when it is struck by a hard material. Then the fire appears. So it is with the heart. The fire which is life, love and feeling and which is the most sacred thing in us, is hidden in the heart as the fire in the stone. When it is struck hard the fire appears. That is why we receive great blows in life. The person becomes thoughtful as soon as the fire appears. And he looks at things differently. But of life's changes and great blows the wise realize that joy, rest, and peace come.

– Sufi Inayat Khan



Photo: Mantautas Kvedaras

Life Has Become So Simple

by Karim Noverraz

The silent walking retreats in the Moroccan desert are like nine-day-long meditations. We extract ourselves from the agitation and comfort of our habitual lifestyle to engage in an experience where “life” and “meditation” become integrated with one another. The infinite expanse of sand and the open sky are our meditation room and our walking path, as well as a place of inner renewal and a fresh relating to the world and to people.

After people have registered, they first regard each other as fellow participants in a spiritual event. But once the vehicle has dropped us at the edge of the desert, far from the last village we crossed, we realize that we are a group of friends going to live nine days together, all by ourselves with our desert guide, the camel drivers, and the camels. When the weather is fine and the desert sweet to us, the whole group celebrates this radiant life together. If a sandstorm breaks out, our mutual support becomes foremost and brings us closer together.

At night and at dawn, we sit and meditate together at the campsite, reciting poetry and singing Sufi songs. During the day, we walk in silence. Step by step, we repeat the Divine Name that we have received in the morning, taking in the mineral vastness that surrounds us. As Ibn’Arabi said, “The mineral reign is the closest to Allah.” The gentle physical effort of our walking purifies our body and empties our mind.

Once back in the guest house, we gather in a neighboring palm grove to share our experience of our collective and individual journey with each other. The words sound sweet and peaceful to me; I feel a profound connection with my fellow pilgrims.

Only a few days later, we are back home. I am asked sometimes, what remains from the walking retreat we have just lived? Beyond the deep bonds, beyond all the memories—the sandy plains and the sandy dunes, the innumerable stars at night, the presence of the camels, and so much more—a subtle and liberating feeling appears in me: life has become so simple!

A Sufi Pilgrimage in the Moroccan Desert

by Sara Landman

What longing brings us to the desert and calls us to leave the comfort of our homes? I write words to myself, calling in that spaciousness, that vastness and luminosity that my soul longs for—to be free from the bondage of things, full of gratitude, open, surrendered and trusting in God....

And so we walk—beginning each day in a circle with our intention—“Open, Transparent, Lucid, Awake” and each day a new mantra.

The first holy name of Allah to contemplate—to repeat as a mantra as our footprints mark the sand and follow in those of the camels ahead of us leading the way.

YA FATTAH: The Opener

Who opens the solution to all our problems and eliminates obstacles....

How does the desert open me? I open my eyes and expand into limitless sky—blue, blue, and bluer. Opening my ears to the sound of Amazigh, our Berber guide Zineb talking, as she walks, to Ali, our clear-eyed camel driver with his purple turban and wide smile. Opening my heart to my fellow pilgrims from as far apart as Canada and

Lithuania; opening my arms to encompass this desert world and welcome what each day brings.

YA WASI: The All-Embracing

Limitless capacity and abundance; the all surrounding, embracing presence....

Our camp prepared by the camel herders, with our tents up, embraced us every evening with a blazing fire. Where did they find the wood we wondered – it was provided from the desert sands by the camel herders who trusted what they would find. The abundance and generosity of the meals lovingly prepared by them—always passed around to the left until they came back to the beginning—a circle of sharing. The welcome mid-morning snack in the shade of a lone Tamarisk tree—nuts and dates and dried figs. Bowls of salad for lunch chopped and prepared with enormous care on Zineb and Ali’s laps. We licked olive oil from our fingers and savoured slices of cheese. And around the fire in the evening we shared stories and in Karim and Elmer’s care felt the desert surround us and embrace us like the arms of the Beloved.

YA QUDDUS: The Ever Purifying One

Purified by the endless sun beating down, by the discipline of walking—day after day and the desert air, by the



Photo: Yusuf Bashir

preciousness of the water which restored us and refreshed us and was even there for washing us in the evening. And purified by our vision quests. Alone in our sacred space, freeing ourselves from the bondage of things, watching the sun get lower and coming face to face with ourselves and in so doing, with the Divine.

YA KABIR: The Great Beyond Comprehension

Looking out over the desert from the highest sand dune in *Chigaga*—with the sand dunes stretching as far as the eye can see and the limitless sky turning red as evening falls. Then lying on our backs looking up at the night sky and the Milky Way as Elmer describes the never ending mysterious landscape of stars while we wait for the moon to rise. There is a timelessness to walking in the desert, like our ancestors did ... no beginning, no end; just infinite presence beyond the boundaries of time and space.

YA NUR: The Light Luminosity itself

At first light—the call to morning prayer.... In full light—the heat of the midday sun. We search for shelter in the shade—so bright is the light. In the soft light of evening camels graze across the sand. Later is starlight which holds our gaze. Then firelight which illuminates the faces of our fellow travellers and pilgrims and later still moonlight which lights up the sleeping camels and the pale blue

flowers of the desert in bloom.... Walking in the desert brings light to my mind and light to my heart.

YA LATIF: The Infinite Subtlety

The secret of kindness, tenderness and love with a hint of sweetness....

The long fineness of the shadow of the desert grass. The tender embracing curve of sand dunes. The delicate sweep of sand ripples. The finest black seed mixed with sand. The transient floating of white petals—ininitely tender. The softness of a camel's hoof. Ali's bare feet walking in the sand. The slow sprinkle of a camel weeing. Elmer's song from on top of the camel. The gentle desert wind. The kindness I am met with. All these are in my heart.

YA RHAMAN: Endless Love

And so we end our pilgrimage in the desert singing the zikr of gratitude. May it sound forever as a beginning....

*We don't go into the desert to escape people
But to learn how to find them:
We do not leave them in order to have
Nothing more to do with them
But to find out the way
To do them most good*

—Thomas Merton



Photo: Jean-Pierre Datacharry

Algorithms of the Stars

What the wild teaches
 Is sovereignty
 How each of us
 Can come to find
 A radiant beauty
 Not by what we do
 But by relaxing into
 Who we are
 As algorithms of the stars
 Brilliant in our veins

The Making of Sand

Empty pages
 Flap in the wind
 In the sovereign silence
 There is no history
 There is only the cracking
 And polishing of stones
 By the sun
 You see the making of sand
 Is a long business
 Shaped and re-shaped
 By surrender

A Named Place

Aching for green
 I have been longing
 For a named place
 A place to net and catch
 The cool that is the tenderness
 Of the breeze
 The sun when it's low
 And sweet in the sky
 And the singing voice I had
 Before I was born

Taking the Embers Home

There is no roof
 There are no sides
 I love this place
 That takes me
 To the heart of myself
 Petals collect in soft
 Cupped hands
 While tree limbs
 Tough
 As the ages
 Are bleached into silence
 I love this place
 Where I am reminded
 By the wild extravagant solitude
 To live with the living
 And take the embers home

— Ayaz Landman



Dhikr

repeating sacred names
 she enters the
 silence behind sound
 hands entwined, they
 sway from side to side
 movement clarifies stillness
 sacred paradox

— Amrita Skye Blaine

And This

by Amrita Skye Blaine

As the Open Path did its miraculous work on me, I've had more and more difficulty separating spiritual renewal from the rest of my life. It's all one. Here are two poems that speak to ways I've sought renewal.

With love,
Amrita

the Dervish turn

1999

she settles her *sikke*
firmly on her head
prays it will not fall off

bows to the *Sheikh*
raises her wings
one palm skyward
receiving grace
one palm earthward
offering mercy to
this mutilated world
turn, turn, and turn
until everything vanishes

her circle skirt rises
soft leather slippers
kiss the ground
there is music
she does not hear it
silence settles inside

down on her knees

myriad times
catapulted into prayer
she dropped to her knees

yet praying to what?
for what?
what is not already here?

praying needs an "other"
your ailing love
a sick child
the cry for country calm
prayers for rain

she asks again
what is not already here?
and still is called to pray

Upcoming In-Person Programs



Staying Open-Hearted in a World Under Threat

September 30 – October 2, 2022

Eugene, Oregon
Pir Elias Amidon and
Murshid Kiran Rana

A unique weekend program of lively and relevant conversation between seekers and guides on the spiritual path. Click [here](#) for more information.



Enter Into Silence

Walking Retreat in the Moroccan Desert

February 11 – 22, 2023

Karim Noverraz and Elmer Koole

This walking retreat offers us an opportunity to experience how the vast emptiness and silence of the desert connects us with our own inner silence. Click [here](#) for more information.



Save the Dates!

The following retreats are being planned for the summer of 2023:

England: A 4-day retreat with Pir Elias • May 25 – 28, 2023 at Poulstone Court Retreat and Meditation Centre, Kings Cople, Herefordshire, U.K. • More information soon!

Germany: A 4-day retreat with Pir Elias • June 8 – 11, 2023 at Ellernhof Seminar Centre (www.ellernhof.de) Am Hamburg 20, 21368 Ellringen, Germany • More information soon!

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

