



Fresh Rain

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

S U M M E R 2 0 2 1

IN THIS ISSUE: Prose by Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, Binah Taylor, Viv Quillin, and Amrita Skye Blaine; Poetry by Gabriel Leslie Mezei, Lysanna Robinson, Jeanne Rana, and Ayaz Angus Landman



Dear Friends,

This Summer's theme is **Wholeheartedness**. We received prose contributions from Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, Binah Taylor, Viv Quillin and myself. Poetry was offered by Gabriel Leslie Mezei, Lysana Robinson, Jeanne Rana, and Ayaz Angus Landman. Enjoy the contributions! And special thanks to Mèhèra who provided Sufi Inayat Khan's poems.

For Fall, let's consider **Can we ever get back to 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. (And apologies to Isha; I think this was supposed to be the summer theme, but I got confused.)

Thanks to all who offer poems and prose 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's like opening digital presents!

With love for each one of you,

Amrita

editor, Fresh Rain: freshrain@sufiway.org



Contents

Life Is Like a Flower p. 2
– Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

House of Swallows p. 3
– Binah Taylor

Kalyan p. 3
– Sufi Inayat Khan

The Felt Heart p. 4
– Viv Quillin

Wholehearted Engagement p. 4
– Amrita Skye Blaine

Thy Wish p. 4
– Sufi Inayat Khan

IN AWE! p. 5
– Gabriel Leslie Mezei

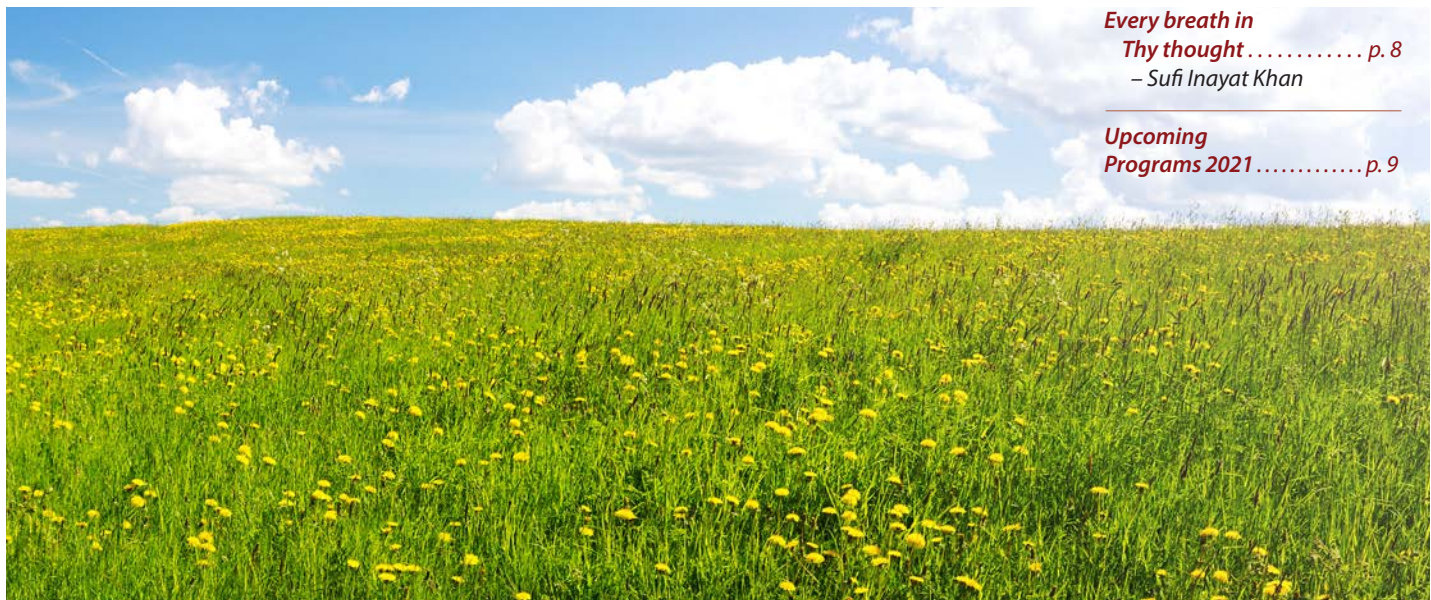
Cherry Blossom p. 6
– Lysana Robinson

The Subjunctive p. 7
– Jeanne Rana

Only My Heart p. 8
– Ayaz Angus Landman

Every breath in Thy thought p. 8
– Sufi Inayat Khan

Upcoming Programs 2021 p. 9



Life Is Like a Flower

by Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

Life is like a flower, look at a tulip or a rose ... how graciously they open up, one petal at the time, until the flower is whole ... whole-heartedly opened itself. Showing her heart to the One ... knowing that will be her annihilation. Nevertheless she opens up without hesitation and drops her petals one by one.

There is a lesson to be learned from watching nature, as Inayat Khan wrote: "There is only one holy book, that is the book of Nature." You can see this openness all through creation; trees bloom, get leaves and let go of them, and wait patiently until next spring, to start the whole cycle again.

Animals, if they get a change to live in their natural habitat, know where to get food and water, also know when the time has come to die. They resign somewhere and give their soul back wholeheartedly to the One.

I like the intenseness of flowers, trees and animals. The completeness of Being in the here and now, doing what is most suitable at that moment in time.

It is warm in the Netherlands now, my little white cat is lazy, what else is there to do, whilst on cooler days she plays around a great deal of the day.

When my dearest Michael realized he could not recover from this liver disease that has been teasing him, feeling his strength diminishing day by day, he decided it was time to let go. When he talked to the physician, he asked her, how do I know when is the right time? She replied: "You will know." Bless this wise doctor ... she came to see him every day and one day he told her he knew what was the right time. She accepted his decision. Bless the fact we live in the Netherlands where someone can decide to step out, when he or she realizes there is no more cure and the rest of the road will be rough and bumpy. Not knowing how and when it ends.

However difficult his decision was for me, I respected his choice wholeheartedly. I could see his strength diminish too, and the sickness taking over his brittle body, and I was observing he was terminal anyhow.

To my great surprise I witnessed too, once the date was set: clarity of his mind and soul that we had not seen for a long time. The sick liver had blurred his mind, but now he was back! Wide-awake and conscious. To me this caused a dual feeling: "Oh is he getting better?" The doctor filled me in and said that this was seen very often and this could occur through of a sense of relief because of the fact the end was near, and no more suffering was ahead.

We had a wonderful last week, all of his dear ones were gathered around him. We celebrated his life and his life's philosophy of hope, trust in humanity, and love in a farewell ceremony. We all gave tribute, speaking from our hearts, and he responded to each one of us, in such a clear and awake manner.

Of course the ceremony was not without tears, but was filled with love and deep gratitude for his life, for his gentleness, his wit, and loving kindness.

The final day arrived and I must confess that caused a double feeling, knowing it is the last day and yet it will set him free! The physician came on the agreed time in the afternoon. We put him to bed and, there it was this holy moment, with all of his dear ones gathered around him. I was sitting next to him, holding one hand; while the physician was doing her thing on the other arm. He spoke his last words to me and looked concerned, I knew he was concerned about my future being alone; he had a frown on his forehead, whilst speaking his last words, and my last words to him were, "Let go, let go of this thought too, let go!"

I could see the frown in his forehead disappear and he went with a deep sigh, like the flower offers her last petals to the One....

You know, I could say, "I let him go wholeheartedly." That may be true, but it may not be, either. It came straight from my heart and it was the right thing to say at that very last minute.

May he be blessed in the wholeness of the One Light.



Tulips by Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

House of Swallows

by Binah Taylor

They make brief yet frequent visits, a swoop down into the Andaluz¹ patio, then an ascent to enter through the open glass doors of the upper floor. The generous room height allows them to freely circumnavigate the copper light pendant, whose reflective surface must surely please, before they finish their mini airshow to exit and soar over the red-tiled roof. In the past week, these avian navigators have expanded their repertoire, circling my house to pirouette through the front floor-length open window on my upstairs landing. Here, they find me sitting on the sofa, head deep into my laptop. I look up as they burst into the room, swirl up to the rafters, sending the Calder-type mobile into a frenzy. Pas de deux briefly becomes ménage à trois.

“Hello, Lovelies!” I greet them. Each day my affection grows.

What a handsome pair these golondrinas² are, weaving halo patterns above my head, calling to each other, making music to their jive. One of the pair has taken to returning alone to perch on the lantern above me for a quick chat, red throat quivering, cream puff breast jutting, forked tail twitching to keep balance. We share a few words about the not-so-hot state of things, the importance of taking time-out from tasks at hand. After a long trill, a swift exit to head skywards.

I love how my house is the go-to place for this couple. They are the best of guests, entertaining me with their mating dance and skillful movements. Their playfulness, of course, has serious intent. Nesting will follow for the second clutch of chicks who will be nurtured, then fledged; by late summer all will head to Africa. A pall of quiet will descend on the village; some will cheer (“they boss the space, good riddance”), others, like me, will miss them—and fret about their welfare along the eleven K kilometer³ odyssey which will claim many.

We are not there yet: the mating dance still in Act 2, frenetic now with midsummer imminent. The leads are well supported by their sparrow chums, a chorus of continual chirping, an uninterrupted radio on a steady frequency.



This masterclass in wholeheartedness is enchanting. I scarcely leave my home these days lest I miss an opportunity to witness their play. The commitment of these golondrinas to fulfill their mission recalls too, an earlier stage in my life when I was building a family, allowing me to embrace that time again. In turn, I offer my wholehearted welcome to these beautiful beings who grace my home with such ease and trust, and bring me joy.

¹ open, enclosed patio

² Spanish for swallows

³ estimated return journey each year for swallows

Kalyan

From the “Gayan” by Sufi Inayat Khan

Thy music causeth my soul to dance;
In the murmur of the wind I hear Thy flute

Thy music causeth my soul to dance;
The waves of the sea keep the rhythm of my dancing steps;

Through the whole of nature, I hear Thy music played.
My beloved, my soul while dancing speaketh of its jot in song

Thy music causeth my soul to dance

The Felt Heart

by Viv Quillin

The meaning of “wholeheartedness” has changed for me over the years since I was a young woman. It used to be about throwing myself enthusiastically into a project. It could be creating a book of cartoons or starting a new relationship. Optimism and high energy would fire the haste that drew me impatiently towards a clearly visualised goal. It seemed obvious that I couldn’t fail.

Then, the drawbacks that I’d brushed aside would begin to mount up and “dis-hearten” me. Was I failing in the project because it was harder than I’d anticipated? How could I have ignored obvious pitfalls? Was I either stupidly incompetent or doing the wrong thing?

Over time this see-saw attitude has gradually transformed. My heart is no longer dualistic but an integrated place, the warp and weft woven through with tiredness, hope, pessimism, and acceptance. It’s a relief to bring all of me along and not try to shut out the cynical, fatigued

feelings. They are part of me too and seem to need kindness. Anyway, they make tangles when I try to leave them out of the weave.

Whilst I relish the memory of my passionate enthusiasm, I remember the plummets to disappointment and giving up. Being a winner or a loser.

The quiet, plodding along journeying has its own joy. Life’s beautiful and intricate pattern constantly changes. This universality includes my thread as we fray and repair, hopefully with embellishments (this is called Upcycling).

Years ago a friend gave me a red, felt heart for my birthday, the different fibres woven so closely that they couldn’t be separated. I like to hold this heart, so soft and warm.



Wholehearted Engagement

by Amrita Skye Blaine

A couple of months ago, an unexpected email showed up with the offer of a seven-month study group, looking at seven translations of the *Pratyabhijnahridayam*, a one-thousand-year-old Sanskrit text from the Kashmiri Shaivism tradition.

My heart leapt!

For the last year, one recent translation of this text by four women has been my close companion. *Pratyabhijna* [Recognition] *Hridayam* [Heart], is translated by these women as “The Recognition of Our Own Heart.” The original Sutra is only twenty short stanzas filling two sides of a page. The translations and commentaries amount to a couple of thousand pages.

Although this Sutra is not from the Sufi tradition, it is a

nondual text that delineates the full journey from the One into manifestation and back again.

Who knew that I would begin waking up at 5 a.m. (my normal rising time was 8 a.m.) hungry to begin study? Who knew that my heart would beat fast every other Thursday morning as I await the start of the study group? Who knew that a seventy-five-year-old woman could be this excited to dive deep and learn?

When I look back over my long life, there are five times I’ve felt this level of wholeheartedness: when I discovered weaving in my late twenties, when gave birth to my son in 1974, when I committed to my wonderful husband in 1989, and to writing in 1992. Most recently, when Elias introduced me to nonduality and the Open Path in 2008. It’s been thirteen years since I’ve felt that ecstatic pull, and I welcome it back with delight.

Thy Wish

From the “Vadan” by Sufi Inayat Khan

Let Thy wish become my desire,
Let Thy will become my deed,
Let Thy word become my speech, Beloved,
And let Thy love become my creed;

Let my plant bring forth Thy flowers,
Let my fruits produce Thy seed,
Let my heart become Thy lute, Beloved,
And my body Thy flute of reed....

IN AWE!

Amazing!
I Am
Alive

Wonderful!
Being
Existence

Mysterious!
Essence
Ground of Being

Miraculous!
Spirit
Energy

Fulfilling!
Soul
Awareness

Fabulous!
Universe
Galaxies

Abundant!
Earth
Our Home

Ample!
Bodies
Personalities

Reassuring!
Healing
Recovery

Spacious!
Minds
Ideas

Fertile!
Creativity
Novelty

Nurturing!
Family
Community

Encompassing!
Unity
In Diversity

—Gabriel Leslie Mezei



Robin and Its Reflection by Umtul Valetton-Kiekens

Cherry Blossom

A cluster of pink Cherry blossom
surprised me this morning.
As if on springs, petals have burst out
from Winter's cold dungeon.

Yesterday they were buds
showing me patience and
how to await, with grace,
my own longed-for freedom.

Held captive by an unseen enemy
and well-meant protective restrictions,
I sense we too are poised,
coiled up ready to break free.

Fourteen months of fenced-in solitude
have brought prolonged,
quiet introspection and virtual
world-wide human contact.

A strange mix of realities
prompting my ever deeper questioning.
Recurring thoughts, disturbing thoughts,
challenge long-held ideas and beliefs.

Is anything actually tangible?
Am I taking part in material life?
Maybe I've died, a mere by-stander
viewing life as a disembodied spirit.

When the pandemic restrictions
are finally lifted, will I flounce,
carefree, out of my gate
like uncoiled Cherry blossom?

—Lysana Robinson
Sunday 25th April 2021



The Subjunctive

Act as if

you are healed and whole

as if — the air over the city were clean

as if — you had already published your *Collected Poems* to wild acclaim

act as if

you aren't afraid of pain

as if — you have moved beyond duality and all suffering

act as if

the sun rises just for your joy

the moon's path across the water leads you home

live without fear

as if there were no tomorrow
(there isn't)

and yesterday were dust
(it is)

—Jeanne Rana

© 2008



Only My Heart

Only my heart
Can hold
All these contradictions
Of shapes
And remain at peace
Anywhere else
I want to use
My fists to fight
Or my legs to run away
But my heart
My heart can allow the waves
To keep breaking
In endless succession
Without carrying their weight
Allowing gravity and the moon
The natural order
To return the heaviness
To the sea
Whilst I
I am just left
To taste their salty residue
And give thanks
For no reason at all.

—Ayaz Angus Landman

For Be
10/05/20



Every breath in Thy thought by Sufi Inayat Khan

Every step in Thy path
Draws me nearer to Thee

Every breath in Thy thought
Exhilarates my spirit

Every glimpse of Thy smile
Is inspiring to my soul

Every tear in Thy love, Beloved
Exalts my being.

Upcoming Programs 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

