



Fresh Rain

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

WINTER 2015

IN THIS ISSUE: Sufi Inayat Khan on the Heart, reflections and poems by Pir Elias, Carol Barrow, Daniel Adamson, Amrita Skye Blaine, Puran Perez, Azima Forest, and more...



Dear friends,

Earlier today I was sitting with Buddhist scholar and activist Joanna Macy, my old friend and teacher, at her home in Berkeley. We were talking about the despair many people feel now for the fate of humanity and the earth.

Joanna said, "Don't try to talk them out of it. Despair is an honest feeling, considering all that is happening — species extinctions, climate catastrophe, the poison of nuclear waste. This karma is forever."

Then she went on to say, "But despair comes from our caring, from our love for what is being lost. And as long as our hearts are open to love, we have hope. *The heart is hope.*"

This issue of *Fresh Rain* is dedicated to this mysterious, wondrous capacity we call "heart." Far deeper than sentiment, the open heart holds all in its embrace — from the ecstatic to the tragic. May we "take heart" in the words here, as we pause at the dark of the year to renew ourselves in the heart's hope.

With all love,

Elias



Contents

The Heart Quality..... p. 2
– Pir Elias Amidon

On the Heart..... p. 2
– Sufi Inayat-Khan

Open the Eyes of My Heart..... p. 3
– Carol Barrow

On Sound and Silence... p. 3
– Daniel Adamson

Cracking Open..... p. 4
– Amrita Skye Blaine

Valves..... p. 4
– Puran Lucas Perez

"empty your house".... p. 5
– Carol Barrow

"Toward the One"..... p. 5
– Lynn Raphael Reed

"At Rumi's Grave, Dargah"..... p. 6
– Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

"Heart Is"..... p. 6
– Azima Forest

Meeting Each Other.... p. 7
– Simon Vivian
– Yona Chavanne
– Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

Calendar of Programs..... p. 8





The Heart Quality

– PIR ELIAS AMIDON

If I ask myself: *What is the heart quality?* I find that my curious attention first turns to my chest area, looking for evidence. Then I notice a kind of current alive there, a current that flows or, better to say, opens both inwardly and outwardly. My sense of “I” recedes.

The sensation of “inward opening” reveals increasing stillness, emptiness and clarity—a spacious receptivity.

Simultaneously, as I ask this question, I notice a sensation of “outward opening” or current of heart that I feel as a kind of expansiveness or radiance—a spacious radiance.

If you ask yourself this same question—*what is the heart quality?*—and look into your direct experience, you may notice something similar—an inward opening of receptivity and stillness, and an outward opening experienced as a subtle, inclusive radiance.

“Inward,” “outward,” “receptivity,” “radiance”—these words are close to what I’m describing, but they veil as much as they reveal. Best to invite the inquiry yourself and see what appears to you. My guess is you will report, in addition to the sense of receptivity and radiance, a further intuition, a quality congruent with both the inward and outward current of opening. That is the quality of *warmth*. Both the *inward* current of receptivity and the *outward* current of radiance are saturated with this sense of warmth. This is not a warmth of temperature, but more like a quality of intimacy, of connectivity and belongingness, that feels, well, warm.

These descriptive words—receptivity, radiance, warmth—are traces left in my mind of the wordless heart quality. But they give me a hint for how to practice openheartedness. When my ego is in the forefront, when I relate to others through the filter of my self-concerns, I can easily become judgmental or irritable. Noticing this, I have the opportunity to drop into the heart quality and flow with its current of receptivity and radiance, letting the natural warmth it gives guide my actions.



Sufi Inayat Khan on the Heart

To discover the heart is the greatest initiation.



It is the lover’s heart that touches the depths of life.



The heart that receives the divine peace is blessed.



Criticism, indifference, pessimism are the three things which close the doors of the heart.



Jealousy is the refuse of the heart.



The heart is itself its own medicine.



If your heart is large enough, there is nothing it will not accommodate.



When the human heart becomes conscious of God it becomes like the sea: it extends its waves to friend and foe.



Beauty is heart’s only object, its inspirer, its all.



Spiritual attainment is to become conscious of the Perfect One, who is formed in the heart.



Open the Eyes of My Heart

– CAROL BARROW

I don't know how I found it, a video of a ten year old orange-haired boy, blind and living with autism, singing on stage in front of an audience, "Open the Eyes of my Heart, Lord. Open the Eyes of my Heart. I want to see You. I want to see You." The beauty of that moment brought me to tears, and I clicked on the "Play" button over and over, singing along with the sightless boy who so sweetly sought to see God.

I have no problem with the word Lord, but I could just as easily replace it with Grace, Love, Oneness, Awareness, or Buddha (except that some of those words don't fit well into the song).

I have kept that prayer inside me, humming it as I pick up broccoli in the health food store, and singing the words in my head when I notice judgmental thoughts that want to lodge. Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. I want to see the

truth beyond the appearances that show up as this person and as that situation.

In the song's lyrics, that which can open the eyes of the heart is also that which will be seen once the eyes are open. The beauty of that brings me to my knees. Is it not grace/love that will open the eyes of our hearts, letting us see the grace/love that is all around us? I want to see you, Lord, in the beautiful and the mundane, the gentle eyes of a lover and the fierce look of a wounded warrior, the freedom of good health and the challenges of a cancer diagnosis.

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. I want to turn and see that this heart is You.

Truly, the eyes of the heart cannot be closed. This prayer—as with all prayers, songs, zikrs, and practices—helps us to remember that, to access the openness that we are. And then, as Elias suggests:

"If you pray, let your prayer be as gentle—and as forthright—as the sweep of your arm scattering ashes of a loved one from an ocean cliff."



On Sound and Silence

– DANIEL ADAMSON

You can't close your ears.

And so you sit and meditate in the quiet, sunlit soundscape of the morning. From an open window, a child's voice: *Daddy?* An electric saw, far away, gentle, dropping an octave as blade bites wood. A drop of water falls—*tok!*—onto a tin can in the yard.

These are fragments of an endless symphony, conducted and performed by no one. It's millions of years old, uncomposed and utterly indifferent. A song that never ceases or repeats, a chime and scrape and rattle whose origins vanish, untraceable, into the intricate, branching, endless map of cause and consequence.

Most of the time, I don't listen. My mind is a bumblebee, bumping dizzily against the world, greedy, aimless, tilting from one thought to the next, weaving a crazy invisible

pattern between the flowers of memory and urgency, anxiety and nonsense.

The *adhan*—the call to prayer—appears in the room. Here is a sound that catches the meandering of the mind and holds it, alert and listening. It is not simply that the call, amplified, is louder than the other sounds. It's in the structure.

The *adhan* is built around a series of phrases, each of which rises to a pitch and then falls away to nothing. You can hear the voice fade and vanish at the end of the each line, disappearing into the same unarguable silence that swallows a bell's chime. That's the point: your attention, snagged by the voice, is pulled into the silence and left there, adrift in a quietness that has suddenly become intimate, unignorable.

And it's here, in this quietness, that you hear the silence behind the silence. The silence that cannot be displaced or disturbed by sound. The silence that holds the saw and the child's voice, the *adhan* and the bell. That holds the screen, and the looking, and the looking away.



Cracking Open

– AMRITA SKYE BLAINE

When we are born, we are wide open; innocent and vulnerable, we know nothing, and trust everything. From that moment forward, we develop a shell of protection. This may occur quickly if our infancy is traumatic, or incrementally if we are raised in a nurturing and safe environment. But the shell develops, either way—in response to being denied, physically hurt or neglected, snapped at, not understood, or any number of other ways we are shaken into learning that we are separate. Our parents teach us this too, in hundreds of tiny ways. I cannot speak for all countries, but in the western cultures, we do not escape the experience of separation.

We cling to our shell because it is familiar. It is how we have learned to move in the world, based on decisions we made at a very early age. I learned that I needed to protect myself from my older brother's wrath, and then expanded that world view to include all men. I understood that if I didn't abide by my mother's rules, she psychically withdrew her love. My heart contracted; it no longer felt safe or comfortable to remain open.

Later in life, some of us are drawn to unlearning this sense of separation that we have accumulated. This can occur abruptly, but that is rare. For me, it has taken a long time. Perhaps this process begins on our own, but it is more likely that we find a teacher, someone who can point both by the example of their presence, and their teachings, to the deeper truth of who and what we are.

Finally, after many decades, and with the pointers of more than one teacher, a dear and thoughtful husband, and friends, I learned to see the ways that I cut myself off, made myself separate. Later, I saw how believing my thoughts framed my world, and the old patterns and conditioning fell away more quickly. This leaves a softer and more vulnerable heart; this is the process of cracking open. Just like the baby chicken who grows until its shell is so unbearably tight that in desperation it flails and pecks it until it breaks, we too must crack open the shell of our own creation. After the first crack, when a touch of light pours in and we taste a new way, the unlearning may be able to be slowed, but it will not be stopped. We crack open to the truth and to love until we see that they are not two. We were *never* separate—never were, never can be.

As a precious friend, Louisa Simons, said, "It is exactly so: the shape of the heart is changed. And there is no way back."

see Louisa's blog: www.thisunlitlight.com



Valves

– PURAN LUCAS PEREZ

Sufis talk a lot about heart. But sometimes the more we talk about something, the more we succumb to the enchantment of words. That delight—the neuronal pleasure firing in the head as we believe we understand something—can become a trance and, before you know it, we have drifted sweetly elsewhere, *thinking* about "an awakened heart."

Heart prowlers, on the other hand, are out there looking to connect; actively aware, attentive to motions that beckon the heart, that quicken affection. Because we live in ordinariness, in a world of reason and the rhythms of habit, what we find out there is not a blinding flash of soul-searing love. Mostly we find pebbles, dried flowers, the sound of a door creak, the wan greeting of a tired partner when we get home.

We learn not to expect soaring revelations that will blow open the pulsing center of being. That's just not on the menu for the most part. Instead we're alert for random smiles on the street, the sound of laughter down the hallway, how pleased someone becomes when you compliment them sincerely. We go about our simple daily stuff listening for the appreciativeness that wells up within because we've had a good meal, a great conversation, a tearful mending of a friendship.

It's always, or mostly, the simple things that enliven us if we heed them gently. It's a refinement of attention that sets off joy more often than a glimpse of The Beloved peeking through a sunset. And as for the other great Sufi trope—the one about "polishing the rust from the heart"—that too seems simpler, more ordinary than I used to believe.

Would we need *zikr* if we could just stand still, right here in the luminous presence of this? What purpose would meditation serve if we could see clearly, without commentary, this wave of blessedness, this breathing assembly of happiness in orbit?



empty your house

an accident.

things were going well, laughing,
noticing the sunshine yellow leaves,
then an accident.

like an innocent, pudgy toddler
laughing and running and
uh-oh, pavement rises to head.
waaaaahhhh!

an accident.

knocking the ground right
out from under beliefs.
shock. life wasn't supposed
to go this way.

after all seems safe and calm,
the scene replays itself

over

and

over.

Love says,
"Empty your house of all
that doesn't exist. You and I
need this place all to
ourselves."

Allah

Allah

Allah

– CAROL BARROW



Toward the One

When she comes to me

I feel

her breath on my cheek,
whispering the first lullaby;
her elemental gaze
holding my febrile supplication;
her face vaulted invisibly
in rock, earth, stone, stars;
her lap, her breast, her arms, her exquisite
tenderness.

When I come to her

She feels

my body flood with silent waters rising up inside;
my boundaries split and spirit into intimacy;
my heart thrum at the world's rim;
my eyes tremble and brim.

She becomes me when I become her
and then
there
is
no beginning and no end;
no before and no after; no her and no me.

There is instead a feeling of being undone;
the hook and eye of ego parting, the light flooding
in.
A feeling of fusion, of relief.

§

A feeling of finally being emptied
and in that moment
arriving
home.

– LYNN RAPHAEL REED



**At Rumi's Grave, Dargah
(Pilgrimage to Konya 2012)**

Boarding on wings of longing
Rising beyond fear, my heart pounding

Ascendance on wings of love
landing down in hearts of people
Open faces and sacred dance

One day at the shrine of Mevlana
Welcoming wine in great stream

Opening beyond openness
My heart in one big scream

Throwing me at center of the Tavern
and rooted me down
for now and ever

—UMTUL VALETON-KIEKENS



Heart Is

The breathing center
Of everything
And Nothing

The place I go
To know
And not-know
To heal
And be Real

The radiance
That enspirits
The spirit
That radiates

The source
And depository
Of gratitude
And joy

—AZIMA FOREST

Meeting Each Other

With each issue 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



Simon Vivian

The early years of my life were spent in central and southern Africa. I grew up bi-lingual, spending much of my time with my ayah which I feel informed and opened me in many ways.

Back in the UK in the mid 1970's, happenstance brought me to the community that Murshid Fazal Inayat Khan had established. It was only supposed to be a visit but I never returned to whence I had come—even leaving behind my treasured collection of music LP's. But there was no loss, only a whirlwind six years there, compressing what seemed a lifetime.

Out into the "real" world I became a businessman, salesman, trainer, chef and now a massage therapist. And all this time the Sufi Way was and is at the heart of what I am and do. When Pir Elias succeeded Murshida Sitara some ten years ago, it felt as if a new opening was offering itself. I jumped on the train and am still riding to wherever it will take me both inside and out in the open.



Yona Chavanne

During the turbulent 60's, having dropped out of Geneva's university where I was studying literature and philosophy, I started wandering with musicians, friends and seekers. As a single child, I needed company and solitude. Three long stays on the island of Crete nurtured my body and soul.

In 1973, Fazal Inayat-Khan came to Geneva to give a program called "Mysticism of Sound." Encountering him impressed me profoundly and sealed the beginning of an intense experiential period. In 1975, I joined Pir Fazal's community in Katwijk-aan-Zee, attending his classes and wonderful musical tunings in the Universel. Around were the dunes, and nearby, the North Sea.

Back in Switzerland in 1980 with my companion Darudh, I did various jobs while graduating from the Art School. Then I worked many years as an assistant and translator for a publishing company.

After Fazal's untimely death, Pir-o-Mda Sitara Brutnell took over the Sufi Way. Her subtlety and mystical music influenced me to study zikr and harmonium playing with Mda Mèhèra Bakker, a blessing, and work in process!

The sacred quest continues. I walk the Open Path, practicing a nondual living sufism, guided by our Pir Elias, and encouraged by other dear Friends....



Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

Born in post-World War II, in Amsterdam 1945, I became aware of how precious peace is. Looking for a "path to peace" I got to know Murshid Fazal in 1973.

Besides many teachings, we were taught how to survive all kind of "warfare games." Eventually I understood that these were not about winning, but about cooperation, which, of course, is a key to peace. He showed me how to love truly too. Murshid Elias however showed me a clear gateway into the "Open."

I am currently living in Bergen, Holland, with my gentle spouse Michael and Cocker Spaniel Sophie. Murshid Fazal invited me to work in the book trade, which I have done for thirty years. At present I love gardening, writing, translating and traveling.

We are running a guest house and facilitating Open (Sufi) evenings in Bergen. I am engaged in Quantum healing. I also serve as Editor of the quarterly Sufi Way Newsletter in The Netherlands. I feel blessed and grateful and am at peace with life and hope to spread this feeling for who so ever is open to it.

Upcoming Programs 2015



Living Sufism

Year-Long Teleconference
Oct. 19 – June 21
Eight Senior Teachers of the Sufi Way
Bimonthly talks



The Way of the Message

https://www.regonline.com/the_way_of_the_message
A Summer Gathering of the Sufi Way/Open Path at the
Universel Sufi Temple, Holland
August 18–22, 2015



2015 9-Month Open Path Trainings

A nine-month training to introduce you to the
direct experience of pure awareness
England and Germany
Starting Feb. 2015



Celebrants Training

A training for Sufi Way initiates in creating and
facilitating rituals, worships, and celebrations
Universel Sufi Temple, Holland.
August 23-24, 2015



The Sufi Way

<http://alternatives.org.uk/Site/Talks.aspx>
Evening talk at St. James Church, Piccadilly, London
Pir Elias Amidon
Monday, February 9, 2015 7:00-8:30 PM



Journey to Iran

Poetry, Music and Mysticism
Kunderke and Karim Noverraz
September 19 – October 5, 2015



Mysticism of Music

A Weekend Retreat in Geneva
Kunderke and Karim Noverraz
February 28 – March 1, 2015



Wilderness Quest

A nine-day rite-of-passage in the
canyonlands of Utah
Elias Amidon and Rabia Elizabeth Roberts
September 25-October 4, 2015



Clear Light and the Beauty of the World

An Open Path retreat at Nada Hermitage
Crestone, Colorado
Pir Elias Amidon
April 9–16, 2015



The Last Great Passage

A retreat on aging and approaching the end of life
Nada Hermitage, Crestone, Colorado
Elias Amidon and Rabia Elizabeth Roberts
November 12-19, 2015