



# Fresh Rain

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

SUMMER 2023

**IN THIS ISSUE: Prose by Sabah Raphael Reed, Murshid Kiran Rana, Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, Kalandar Warren, and Elmer Koole. Poetry by Ayaz Angus Landman, Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, Lysana Robinson, Jeanne Rana, and Amrita Skye Blaine.**



Dear Friends,

Summer's theme is a continuation of **Climate Change** with the addition of **Nourishment**. These days, I walk outside with our new pup, enjoying flowers everywhere. The iris just finished, the jasmine and aloe vera are in full bloom, and the passionflower blossoms have started to open on the back fence. And oh, the sweet goodness of pea pods!

Our Fall theme will be **Harvesting**. Yes, of course our gardens, but what about our life's harvest? What are you working toward, or completing? What mark would you like to leave? What gifts do we offer our friends, our children, and grandchildren?

Thanks to all who offer their hearts in *Fresh Rain*. Consider writing for future issues, sharing yourself in words with our larger community. This is one of the ways that we get to know each other, this far-flung community of beautiful souls. It's time for a new influx of themes, too. Please send me ideas.

With love for each one of you,  
Amrita  
editor, *Fresh Rain*: freshrain@sufiway.org



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## A mandala practice for nourishing life

by Sabah Raphael Reed

Recently we've been creating and tending a new garden here at our home in Bristol. It is a small town garden enclosed with brick walls and we have been making a courtyard space with paths, small trees, climbing and flowering plants, vegetable and herb boxes and pots with seating areas that catch both light and shade.

It has become a lesson in creative visioning alongside listening and responding to what emerges, and acceptance that whilst some things flourish, others wither and die.

There is a kind of intimacy developing between all those involved: the soil and microbes; the plants and seeds; the sun and rain; the moon and seasons; the birds and insects; the slugs and snails; the architecture and the space; my husband and myself. And right now there is a fascinating process unfolding as more and more things emerge out of the darkness. The living breathing fabric of the garden is doing its thing ~ in many ways irrespective of our intentions and with a sense of alchemical energy that feels mysterious. *The force that through the green fuse drives the flower* (Dylan Thomas) most certainly does not belong to us!



I'm reminded of the use of Mandalas in various spiritual traditions.

The mandala represents the universe, the web of life, the sacred garden, the soul and Self, the journey towards integration, death and rebirth, the Beloved ~ and it is used in meditation and to aid transformation.

Our garden has become a kind of living mandala, both an embodied space and a metaphor for nurturing wholeness and nourishing life.

It is not the only way in which mandala forms have shown up and been helpful in my life. In a recent edition of *Fresh Rain* (Summer 2022) I wrote about my relationship with sacred journaling including creating mandalas to support awakening. I'd like to share that practice with you more, since I find it such a blessing.

Oftentimes when I feel myself out of balance or overwhelmed, or I feel that I have become scattered and depleted, I will go to the page and draw a simple flower form. This includes long ovoid petals with a central heart, which in a real flower is where the androecium (male parts) and the gynoecium (female parts) reside.

A contemplation on this in itself calms me ~ life emerging from the intimate association of masculine and feminine energies at the heart of creation.

I then bring my attention and focus to the petals of the drawn flower ~ visible aspects of manifestation ~ and ask myself:

*What needs attention in my life right now?* • *What needs nurturing or nourishing to feel whole?* • *What resources are available to support balance and integration?* • *What blessings or teachings have I fallen asleep to?*

Taking coloured pencils or pens, I write on each petal what arises out of this contemplation and use it as a mystical aide-memoire to gently remind me and to guide me home. Here's a recent example.

### Nourishing Life, March 2023

Over the years I have found this practice immensely powerful and supportive.

Firstly, the contemplative aspect allows me to attune to the whisperings of the Beloved. It doesn't feel like small 'me' responding to the questions. Secondly, the flower form connects me to the

wisdom of the natural world. Finally, the mandala aspect creates a sense of resourcing, integration and centering.

In our rationalist and logo-centric world, our intellects often try to address complex and irresolvable issues by creating lists of things to do. I'm an inveterate list-maker so I'm very familiar with this mode of being and it has its place and value. But lists never nourish. They direct. They demand. They imply a sense of priority and control that ultimately is an illusion.

In a world that is fast unraveling and in a period where domination of logo-centric and rationalist modes of thinking have failed us, or separated us from listening into deeper, holistic wisdoms, we urgently need to explore new ways of communicating and new ways of being.

So, this is what I offer to you.

Don't make a list. Make a flower, a mandala.

Don't think you know the answer. Ask the question and wait for the response to be whispered in your ear.





## A Litany of Hope and Activism

by Murshid Kiran Rana

One of my goals this year is to continue to compile what I call a Litany of Hope and Action in response to the climate crisis. This is an series of ideas, prompts and suggestions toward responding to what is here, what is coming, what is needed. Here is a first selection of ideas, many inspired by or taken from a book called *Hope Beneath Our Feet*, published in 2010.

I have put the ideas into three groups called **Activism**, **Attitude**, and **Spirit**. These groups are a little arbitrary and will probably evolve. I'm sure you will find your own ideas to add to this litany; I invite you to share them with me if you would like to. My email is kiransrana@gmail.com.

The entries below are identified by the writers included in *Hope Beneath Our Feet*.

### A. ACTIVISM is directing your actions to serve a goal outside yourself

1. "Grow some—even just a little—of your own food. Rip out your lawn, make boxes, get a plot in a community garden." Your food will be more healthy ... "1 calorie of food energy in our food requires 10 calories of fossil-fuel energy to grow. You will save carbon and get a workout"—this is a solution that begets other solutions. (Michael Pollan)
2. As much as you can, try to begin to avoid the commercial system—don't buy products or the ideology that products make us happy. Instead, choose friends, choose spirit. (Michael Nagler)
3. Consider pairing a constructive program and an obstructive action together Example: Constructive: Grow food; Obstructive: Fight school lunch programs that feed children a lot of sugar (a Joanna Macy version of a Gandhian approach).
4. Run for office at any level you can in any governmental or supervisory or administrative structure you feel competent in. Use your wisdom and your experience, use your toughness, pay your dues and guide your life. (Susan Bartlett)
5. Reconnect with your own body and its feelings of strength, loss, fatigue, achievement, sensory pleasure and displeasure. And then—and even before then—help children and grandchildren to do that, to come into the physical.
6. Insist on talking to people in as many situations as you can... Be gentle and patient, respect their doubts which are the same as yours, but begin to reach out wherever you can: online, chat circles, social media, WhatsApp groups, friendship and professional circles.
7. "The single most important way to advance the causes of conservation and peace, (Edmund) Wilson and other scientists say, is to improve the education of females in the developing world." (John Horgan)
8. Get ready for change—prepare in small and larger ways, don't sit and wait for it to happen to you. And help others prepare in areas you understand well. (Bill Molison)
9. Start a movement with young children in your life: introduce them to climate awareness thru story or song.
10. Simplify your personal message and goals, and be ruthless.

**B. Changing ATTITUDES is preparation for developing resilience**

1. Reduce stress in your life, including stress caused by climate change. ... “our intelligences are reduced by 20% when we are stressed.” (Jane Hayes—also, reduce stress in the lives of those around you)
2. When you decide what is important, in your work prefer being in love to being in power. (Barry Lopez)
3. So not to get distracted by what others do—we are all equipped to be leaders—discover how you lead, you already do—it does not serve to play small. (Vivienne Simon)
4. Keep trying: (a) “The world is worth it, humanity is worth it, Nature is worth it.” (b) “Trying to do what’s right in the world is a basic human instinct that can energize us. (Ben Gadd)
5. [Attitude/spirit] Know yourself—and be your own friend. What do I mean? Do a self-inventory of your qualities and tendencies, habits and behaviors. Look carefully at the positive in you and find ways to offer that in service.
6. [Attitude/spirit] More and more we are prisoners of our comforts ... add discomfort to your daily or weekly menu. Do the inconvenient, the uncomfortable, make choices that are not comfortable.
7. [Attitude/spirit] Soften the boundary between known and unknown. Expand your I-identity into We-identity, feel the web of relationships that we are all part of together. Reclaim the elements of your indigenous mind by going down from human relationships to earth relationships ... feel your connection to the planet to the earth to all life. (Kaylynn TwoTrees)

**C. Going to SPIRIT is knowing you have a connection to the Source**

1. Enter the Wild ... think about how can you bring the wild into your life? Find the wild in your orbit, show affection for it, give it character—the qualities you wish you and those around you had. (Diane Ackerman)
2. Open to the grief—not anger, resentment, etc., but the sorrow of what is happening. Open to pain—(consider: piercings are an attempt by the young to open to pain. (Nina Simons)
3. Try to love what is ... Be peaceful in your work, whether opposition or analysis. Try to find an understanding that is larger than the fear, anger, resentment and even horror that much of human excess, greed and poor judgment may call out in you.
4. Make an inventory of what you have received in life. Now try to give back as much as you have received.



5. Add one resistance activity and one activist activity to your spiritual practice.
6. Buddha said: “If we could see the miracle of a single flower clearly, our whole life would change. Look at a single flower every day for 5 minutes.
7. Recreate wonder in the non-natural word in your life through strangeness, by behaving in strange ways: hang upside down—spend time with strangers who are challenged or unusual—collect strange objects and make them characters in complex stories—get really uncomfortable at home—go places alone, maybe get lost—stay up all night.

You are all experienced in ways of spirit so find your own answers to add to these.

That was my list ... But one night when I couldn't sleep I found myself thinking: Where do I have to go inside myself to find the motivation and energy to do something—any of these things. Because the answer isn't just outside in all these suggestions; it's inside. And I realized, it's a quest. So I'm thinking that over—it's a quest, where we test our capacity for and the skill and beauty of our relationship with survival. Maybe we can think about it in those terms too ....

Two more thoughts:

1. The range of what will help is so vast, don't look for or wait for the “best” action.
2. Form a coalition. A group in your town or community. Something with loose organization: shared leadership, a few rules, good intentions and a sense of purpose.



## Ecology of Being

by Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

The ancient Greeks used the word *Oikos*, meaning matters around the house, family, estate, and the knowledge of it all. To have knowledge about what it is, what surrounds you, includes to have respect for whatever it is that surrounds you. May it be your family, your community, your livestock, what grows around you, etc. Understanding what they really are in essence, these beings around you, means that you have respect for it and tender love and care. Respect your neighbors and know their ways; if one interacts with people without manipulating, without wanting something in return for whatever you have offered them, that is part of ecology too. Nature is much smarter than we are, plants know exactly where they thrive best. Of course, for food, it needs to be sown and reaped, but we can do so with respect for it, knowing from inside out what is the right action, the correct place for plants and for animals. Let them live and thrive as much as possible, with respect for the basic needs of their kind. That is how nature operates, finding its way through its creation. To me, that means deep ecology.

We all know we are a tiny part of a much larger whole, and form unity with all and everything, so knowledge of



Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

our direct surroundings could stretch as far as one could possibly reach out. As Thomas Berry said: "We bear the Universe in our being as the Universe bears us in its being, Both are totally present to one another and for the deep mystery of existence."

There are moments where everything comes together in a way that all seems to be good and perfect as it is. Lately, I was walking along the beach and the seaside: clouds and horizon unified in a soft haze, making heaven and sea both into One, waves were calmly touching the beach bringing ashore all kinds of shells, a leg of a crab, a piece of wood, seaweed, and I observed a certain struggle for existence by it all. My footsteps printed deep marks on the moist sand. The rolling of the waves and, afterwards, the slurping sound of the retreating waters, emptied my head, making me feel and see that everything was as it should be: everything lives off and from each other. Birds are picking out the shells and the shells are being crushed under my feet as well. It was one and all creation, simultaneously one and all destruction. Everything gives, takes, grounds, eats from one and other, thus sustaining the whole ecology of being. Slowly, I walked on and did not feel who was walking, who was moving legs, who was listening to the slow rolling of the waves, and who was aware of what, who saw that it was good as it is... Something in my head was listening, but there was no I who claimed it was her listening: it was and it is in its own ecology of being.

The message of this all to me was and is, live and let live, with respect to the needs of others. Creation and destruction are walking along hand in hand and the more "dissolved" we are, the more everything around us thrives.



Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

## Re-interpreting Climate Change

by Kalandar Warren

This brief article is my overview of my “journey” of understanding the Climate Change issue. Al Gore’s 2002 documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* was a big step in that process. It offered seemingly incontrovertible arguments and based on his projections, the world was heading for big trouble; the “tipping points” analogy was a logical conclusion.

That film was twenty years ago, and a great deal has happened since then. Gore’s teacher, Roger Revelle, disagreed with his stark conclusions and his compelling yet alarmist, short-time frame graphs did not tell the whole story.

My own experience of Covid-19 convinced me that the UK government had lied and that lie was backed up by the establishment. If it could lie about that whole “catastrophe,” why couldn’t its basic mission concerning greenhouse gas emissions (ghg’s) and anthropogenic global warming also be concocted to suit its own agenda?

Reading Peter Taylor’s authoritative book, *Chill*, it’s clear the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) doesn’t like the idea of cycles; that implies climatic variability isn’t necessarily random and also that climate change may be linked to other factors besides increasing volumes of carbon dioxide. There are two distinct schools of scientists working on these issues; they are not on the same page.

The younger scientists use computer modelling to justify their simulated conclusions, while the older group are more hands-on field scientists e.g., taking ice-core samples from Antarctica or observing ocean currents. There is a basic division with the data sets; in the UK, computer modellers using recorded data e.g., temperature, rainfall figures only going as far back as 1850, whereas the field scientists can make observations in the field e.g., with sediment patterns in arid landscapes that can go back as far as 10,000 years or further. A lot of room for conflicting views here.

So, what is the truth?

In a sense, the answer doesn’t matter; there needs to be change; much more focus on adaptation, whether it’s an emergency or not. What does matter is whose hands the agenda is in. Are we living in a transparent world in relation to climate change analysis and methodology? The level of dissension over climate-related issues has been around now for decades. We all know the Exxon story.

Too many of the decisions that underpin UN thinking are influenced by big corporations who have invested huge sums of money to “achieve” the outcomes that suit them. That is also apparent in the C40 (smart cities) initiative to get people living in what some observers see as “digital prisons” necessitating a high level of surveillance and control, and mirroring what is going on in China. So, has the globalist agenda infected seemingly well-intentioned bodies like the UN and WHO?



It’s worth listing the basic active principles behind The Great Reset:

- 1) Vaccines and control of health
- 2) the 5G telecom network: the Internet of Things
- 3) The CO2 narrative re Climate Change: think “smart cities”
- 4) The Digital Identity passport, and
- 5) The CBDC (Central Bank digital currency) and the cashless society.

I’m suggesting here to ask questions and try on for size these tenets of what may sound far-fetched right now, but which increasingly have disturbing relevance. While the eighteen United Nations SDG’s (sustainable development goals) appear plausible and well-intentioned, some are definitely more questionable. Take one example: there is a vote at the end of May to determine whether nations signed up to WHO should hand over to it their independent control of medical responses to the next pandemic. If that happens the World Health Organisation will then move from advisory status to mandatory status in its deliberations. In my book, that’s the Great Reset taking shape.

So ... what to do? What factors can help to take our power back and organise effective adaptability responses?

Soil health is a good place to begin; looked after well, our soils store carbon in abundance. Secondly, the business of wars and the whole arms industry are negative drag factors; it means more concrete and more emissions.

Thirdly, develop personal resilience as a spiritual path.

Fourth factor is the electric car market. They may emit less CO2 but the greatest emissions are involved in first the whole build of the car, and secondly, in the enormous energy wrapped up in the making of the batteries, not forgetting all that imported lithium and cobalt from third world countries. As I see it, the VW and BMW e-cars are very expensive status symbols that virtue-signal your “green” cred.

Thus, the fifth point is we also need to acknowledge that the climate crisis is also a culture crisis.



## The Universel “Murad Hassil”

Dear friends,

I would like to tell you something about a sacred Sufi place in the Netherlands, the Universel “Murad Hassil.” Universel “Murad Hassil” is a Sufi temple, dedicated to the message of love, harmony and beauty of Hazrat Inayat Khan. In 1922 Sufi Inayat Khan had a very special experience in a valley in the dunes near the sea at Katwijk, a small village near to The Hague, Netherlands. Although he did not say anything about it, the immense impact it had was obvious. He called the place “Murad Hassil” (= wish fulfilled) and expressed that this valley was a place of blessing. Since then, Sufis from all over the world have come to Katwijk. In 1955 the Sufi Movement succeeded in acquiring this valley and plans were developed to build a Sufi temple next to the valley. Inayat Khan had left his ideas as to how it should look: a square building with light coming in from all sides, with a cupola, bringing together the East and the West. A fundraising campaign was started in order to make it a reality. It was successful: July 5th, 1970 the Universel was opened.

Since then the Universel is a place of worship for all Sufi “families” (Sufi Movement, Inayati Order, Sufi Way, Ruhaniat) and for all others who celebrate the universal message of love, harmony and beauty.

For two years now there is a new board of the Murad Hassil foundation. For the first time all the major Sufi families are represented in the board. The Sufi Way is represented with two seats (out of five) and is also chairing the board. That gives the Sufi Way a special responsibility for the future of this sacred place.

One of the most important goals of the new board is to prepare the Universel for the next fifty years. We intend do to that by reducing our carbon footprint and the energy costs. An energy package is developed with solar panels, heat pumps, better insulation and a completely new sustainable heating system. Energy-neutral heating for the Universel is a necessity, not only for the future of the Universel but also for the climate and the future of our planet. One of the principal Sufi thoughts of Sufi Hazrat Inayat Khan is *There is One Holy Book, the sacred manuscript of nature, the only scripture which can enlighten the reader*. Care for the “sacred book of nature” is one of the guiding principles of the board of the Universel.

This whole energy package needs a huge investment (200K). It will be covered by raising additional funding and so far we haven’t been unsuccessful. But, we are not there yet. Therefore I would like to ask for the support of our Fresh Rain readers. Have a look at <https://universel.nl/en/> and click on DONATE NOW. This will take you to a page where you can set your donation. You can also make a bank transfer yourself.

We will be most grateful for whatever support you can offer—it will truly benefit not just those of us who are able to spend time in the Universel now, but all those yet to visit, for years to come. Thank you! And for more information, like mentioning the Universel in your will, you can always contact me.

With love,

Elmer Koole,  
Chair Universel ‘Murad Hassil’ Foundation  
[elmer@sufiway.org](mailto:elmer@sufiway.org)



### Beyond Sides

Call me by my  
 True name  
 Say it how it is  
 This day  
 This moment  
 Now  
 Demands more than  
 A superficial offering  
 All form carries a shadow  
 Only the Formless  
 Walks alone  
 Into that ripe place  
 Beyond sides  
 I have no name for

—Ayaz Angus Landman



### Heart burning

Loves  
 Doing the beautiful  
 Loves  
 lovers Love  
 Into Depth  
 Of beauties love  
 In love with loving  
 All

There is no beauty  
 Without Thee  
 There is no love  
 With me

Only You

—Umtul Valeton-Kiekens



## The Quietness Inside

The Quietness inside expands  
through unseen ripples,  
like a gentle incoming tide.  
It nourishes my inner being  
before smoothly returning  
to the shoreless sea beyond.

—Lysana Robinson



## A Pantry Full of Memories

I'm recalling a recent blissful evening  
when I sat silently by my pond at dusk,  
the stillness broken by a Thrush singing,  
frogs croaking, a gentle breeze on my cheek.

I'm thinking of sunny springtime weather,  
the flowers radiant in my mind's eye  
and the birds still singing inside me.  
I feel the warm sun on my skin even now.

The blissful joy of slowly strolling  
through a bluebell-carpeted April wood,  
becomes a recipe for a comforting broth  
to be imbibed on a dreary winter's day.

A blackbird chuck chucks "time for bed"  
as the dayshift gives way to the night.  
The fading light beckons welcome sleep,  
the nourishment needed for tomorrow.

Moments of beauty, deeply experienced,  
are wrapped in gratitude and stored  
in a larder of precious memories  
to quench my thirst in parched times.

—Lysana Robinson

**everything moves**

I'm thinking  
of mountains,  
micro movements

pebbles in a riverbed  
slowly losing their rough edges  
as we slowly lose ours

I am old now  
my body slowing  
settling more to earth

I measure myself  
by ailments, changes,  
memory most of all

everything moves  
and destruction clears  
a space for some new thing

suffering only comes  
from lamenting what is lost  
and fearing what is beyond  
the next bend of the river

—Jeanne Rana



## And This

### touchstone

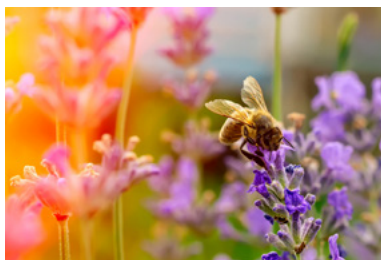
in the presence  
of a fresh breath,  
today, amidst strife,  
news so disturbing  
I cannot watch  
but know about—  
rolled-back freedoms  
climate misery  
election madness

still  
joy washes through

wonder doesn't rise  
from this world—  
it seeps in  
from the big field  
a welcome touchstone

the blessing  
of a passionflower,  
their five-fingered  
hearts beg bees,  
I unearth potatoes  
soil still clings  
carrots, too, their  
salmon selves slip  
from their bed

soak in this joy



### sighing

I sigh a lot these days  
in the brief moment I allow  
to check world news  
war  
sigh  
autocrats  
sigh  
climate  
sigh  
drought  
sigh  
politics  
sigh  
fire threat  
sigh  
mass shootings  
sigh

sighing to release grief  
grief so deep  
it almost swamps me  
yet lives  
a lump deep in my gut  
stay with it, girl  
this is important  
feel it  
and sigh  
sighing is a prayer

—Amrita Skye Blaine



## Upcoming In-Person Programs



**Vision Quest in Spain**  
 St Llorenc, Mallorca, Illes de Balearis,  
 Spain • July 5 – 19, 2023  
 Dr. Oskar Demmer, MD, Suzanne  
 Demmer, and Brigitte Gittenberger

This vision quest will take place in the western mountain range of Mallorca between Pollença and the monastery Lluc — a wonderful wilderness area with rivers, lakes, forests, canyons, and marvelous views of the sea. Click [here](#) for more information.



## Upcoming Online Programs

### Every Thursday



**First Thursday:**  
**ALANKARA**  
 A classic style of Sufi communal  
 contemplation.  
 Click [here](#) for more information



**Second Thursday:**  
**SAMA**  
 Musical meditations (zikr) with  
 Murshida Suzanne Inayat-Khan  
 and Omar Inayat-Khan  
 Click [here](#) for more information



**Third Thursday:**  
**SHARING SILENCE**  
 with Pir Elias.  
 Click [here](#) for more information



**Fourth Thursday:**  
**A TIME FOR QUESTIONS**  
 This is a time for asking Pir Elias  
 any questions you might have.  
 Click [here](#) for more information



**Fifth Thursday:**  
**ATTUNEMENTS**  
 Community offerings of  
 meditations and practices.  
 Click [here](#) for more information



**Living Sufism**  
 This year's theme is *Love's Drum —  
 the Resilience of the Human Spirit*.  
 Open to all. To register, click [here](#).



**Openings**  
 Esoteric Study Class open to  
 Sufi Way initiates and Open Path  
 graduates. Click [here](#) for more  
 information