

THE IMAGINAL WORLD IN SUFI SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

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"My imagination, what are you? - I am the stream that feeds the fountain of your mind."
Hazrat Inayat Khan

On the Sufi path we are given practices that help us to identify with our divine essence, the qualities of our soul. The work on our spiritual journey is to learn how to shift our identity from a limited sense of self to the realization of our divine nature. What most helps us to get there? In the Sufi Order, we are given meditation practices to do daily by our guides and we go on longer meditation retreats, repeating many different practices sequentially through the day and evening.

Pir Vilayat during THE COSMIC CELEBRATION process said, "the purpose of this work is to make the unconscious conscious." This pageant celebrates the unity of all religions. It dramatizes the parallel transformational process of prophets from five of the major religions. The narration begins: "Beyond the dreams and fantasies of our conscious minds, the stage is set for the play of shadows..." To make the unconscious conscious is to face our shadows, that which is hidden. In order for people to shift from a limited sense of self to the realization of our divine nature, it is necessary to be present with everything in our psychic being and not judge if it is light or dark, good or bad, holy or profane. As Sufis, we are seekers of the truth, whatever it is. The question is, "how do we help facilitate this kind of awareness and create the accommodation for authentic transformational processes based on truth, to take place with our mureeds within the structure of the guide/mureed relationship?"

In the early years of hosting meditation retreats in our Boston khankha, there were many different retreat guides facilitating retreats. Retreatants would do many hours of Dhikr having many emotions, images, memories, unresolved issues emerge from the depths of their beings, but because there was no process for working with this material, when the retreat was over, these deep emotional states, memories, and energy blocks, would often go back underground into the unconscious. Sometimes this would happen at a great emotional cost to the retreatant, creating confusion and fragmentation.

On a long personal retreat I took in the Alps, I had an incredibly powerful dream that seemed to dramatize many painful life issues that I was being called to look at and deal with on the retreat. My retreat guide listened with a pained look on his face and then breathed deeply and said, "OK, now just go into Samadhi." There was no comment or reference to the dream, which had surfaced after doing many hours of Dhikr for two weeks. I was confused and at best felt disconnected and invalidated in my inner experience, feeling that it wasn't 'spiritual' and therefore not to be honored.

This paper/talk is an attempt to share some methods and practices from the "mundus imaginalis" found in transpersonal psychology, Jungian alchemy and dream work and expressive arts therapy that I have gradually integrated with the traditional Sufi practices that we have learned over the past 30+ years. In developing the use of the imaginal realm, after three decades on this path, it is my strong feeling that our challenge is to train our representatives, guides and retreat guides how to consciously honor and work with whatever surfaces in a mureed's process, dark or light, as sacred. I will also be presenting some references to ancient Sufi masters and philosophers writing about them, contemporary psychologists as well as contemporary Sufi teachers practicing in at least one other Sufi order.

At a previous convocation that Prajapati organized, I wrote a paper on the "Dark Night of the Soul" as an important stage on the spiritual journey. We need to learn to recognize and honor this milestone, instead of thinking that once we get through this darkness we can then get back to our spiritual work. This is an attitude that many of us have had growing up in the Sufi Order. My friends, this *is* our spiritual work. I look forward to this changing in order to ensure the spiritual development of balanced and whole human beings in our charge.

According to William Chittick in *IBN AL-'ARABI'S METAPHYSICS OF IMAGINATION: THE SUFI PATH OF KNOWLEDGE*, one result of the ongoing search in the west of lost intellectual and spiritual heritage has been the rediscovery of the importance of imagination. In putting complete faith in reason, the West forgot that imagination opens up the soul to certain possibilities of perceiving and understanding not

available to the rational mind. One of the important thinkers who have pointed in this direction is the late Henry Corbin. It is Corbin who coined the phrase 'imaginal world' or 'mundus imaginalis.' All religious traditions accord a central role to imagination, though not necessarily by this name. The 'mundus imaginalis' is the realm where invisible realities become visible and corporeal things are spiritualized. Corbin's masterly work on *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Al-'Arabi* demonstrates the essential role which Ibn Al-'Arabi accords to imagination. In fact, his metaphysics cannot be understood without grasping imagination's importance, and his view of imagination cannot be understood outside the realm of metaphysics. In dialogue recently with a Jungian analyst who is also a Sufi Order initiate, I learned that the 'active imagination' process of Carl Jung, was directly connected to Ibn Al-'Arabi's teaching. Also, Henry Corbin appeared at many of Jung's annual conferences in Europe and was a personal friend of Jung's as well. This analyst sees Jung's 'active imagination' as a piece of Ibn Al-'Arabi's creative imagination or perhaps, one form of expression of it.

Jeffrey Raff, a Jungian analyst who has gone deeply into the study of little known alchemical texts and ancient Sufism, illustrates the spiritual nature of Jungian 'active imagination' and explains:

"During active imagination, the ego, while fully awake and functional, experiences unconscious contents or products, or even a physical sensation. The ego, having focused its attention on the unconscious, must give up all critical thinking and simply open to whatever the unconscious presents. In this state of receptivity, it must wait for the unconscious to manifest. Once it has seen, heard, or felt something, the ego then elaborates on the image it perceives, or on the voice it hears, and expresses it as fully as possible. For example, the ego may have a fleeting image of a waterfall. It may then paint that waterfall, or continue to imagine itself listening to the sound of the water falling, or actually take a drive to a real waterfall and sit by it for an afternoon. It must do whatever is necessary to empower the experience.

Having developed the experience sufficiently, the ego must next determine the meaning of it. This is of crucial importance, for without coming to some understanding of the meaning behind the manifestation of the unconscious, the ego will not be able to discover the position that the unconscious is taking. Simply enjoying the sound of the water, or admiring the painting one has done, is not enough. Despite current theories to the contrary, just being with the image is not sufficient; the ego must derive meaning from the experience."¹

¹ Ibid, pg. 19

Sometimes 'active imagination' leads to an experience that transcends the personal psyche. "According to Ibn 'Arabi," Raff writes, "spirits embody themselves through the power of imagination. They do this by taking on the characteristics of the physical world in order to express themselves. For example, a spiritual being might appear in the imagination of a person as a beautiful creature with wings."²

Raff quotes Ibn Al-'Arabi about the nature of imaginal forms:

"form is related to the spiritual being just as a light that shines from a lamp into the corners of a room is related to the lamp...the form is not other than the spiritual being itself; on the contrary, it is identical with it, even if it is found in a thousand places, or in all places and is diverse in shape." In other words, there is no difference between the spiritual being, itself, and the imaginal form in which one experiences it. Active imagination with such a figure therefore relates one to the world beyond the psyche, to the spiritual domain and reality in which the divine resides. Though it may never be possible to experience that reality in and of itself, one can experience it through the form that it assumes. Since that form is no different than the thing itself, the imaginal encounter with the form is the encounter with the divine entity from which it originates.³

"Imagination as the spiritual manifestation of the self has the power to effect both physical and psychic worlds because the self transcends these worlds, and yet encompasses them. The imaginative power that the alchemist described would only be potential within the latent self, but with the emergence of the manifest self, that potential would be realized." By the self he means the individuated self who is powerful, luminous and complete.

The self has a power concentrated within it - the power of imagination. As the self emerges from its latent condition and becomes more conscious, its powers of imagination increase and multiply. Imagination as the spiritual power of the self is required in its transition from latent to manifest. This power is essential for its own transformation, and through it the self will operate on both inner and outer realities in order to promote its own development. It is important to keep in mind that the powers being discussed do not belong to the ego. Alchemy is not about the inflation of the ego through identification with such imaginative capabilities, but rather about the expression of the imaginative power of the self for its own creation. The ego is an essential part of this process, but by no means is it in a position to manipulate the great power being discussed. If it should try, the imaginative experience would degenerate into mere fantasy, and the very powers the ego was seeking would disappear."⁴

²Jung and the Alchemical Imagination, Jeffrey Raff, Nicholas-Hays, Inc., York Beach, Maine, 2000 pgs. 64-65

³Ibid, pg. 31

⁴ Ibid, pg. 63

In summary, for Jung, the religious attitude consists of attending to the self, of living with the self as an inner partner. Because the spirit belonging to the self manifests in dreams, visions, and active imagination, one can maintain relationship with the self by engaging those images. In its normal, latent condition, however, the self competes with complexes and archetypes, which also manifest as images. The religious attitude then consists not only of paying attention to the self, but also of working with it in such a way that it becomes powerful and dominant within the psyche. This work, the spiritual work par excellence, transforms the self from the latent to its manifest state. In so doing it transforms the whole personality, including the ego and unconscious."⁵

"The deeply held belief system of the ego working with the unconscious determines the nature of the image of the self one experiences. The expectation that one brings to the unconscious often determines the unconscious response.

The imaginal world is found in all religions as the basis of the symbol system that differentiates them. Ibn 'Arabi, who believed that this fact explained religious diversity, also knew that conscious belief will determine the nature of imaginative experience. People of different faiths experience the images of their beliefs in the imagination, and for this reason all religions should be equally respected, for all derive from the imaginative encounter with God. The imaginative power of the self expresses itself in terms that are familiar and comfortable to the ego, and this allows an initial period of cooperation to occur. Later on, as this cooperation deepens, the self may challenge the ego to expand its theories."⁶

The imaginal world is very potent in healing as far back as the time of Paracelsus. He was one of the most influential of the early alchemists, and said that imagination is the light of nature that reveals all her secrets and allows the physician to determine the correct substance to heal a particular disease.

Raff suggests that:

"The search for one's divine twin is the goal of mystic life, and union with one's twin is the means to spiritual fulfillment. In the system of Ibn 'Arabi, God has an infinite number of names, all of which are living entities that can personify themselves as imaginal figures. The goal of the mystic is to determine his or her own name and unite with it, and through that particular name to unite with, and embody, all the other names of God."⁷

⁵ Jung and the Alchemical Imagination, Jeffrey Raff, Nicholas-Hays, Inc. York Beach, Maine, 2000 pg. 11

⁶ Ibid, pg. 91

⁷ Ibid, pg. 144

One of the rich expressions of our imaginal world is found in dreams. Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, a Naqshbandi Sufi teacher in *Catching The Thread: Sufism, Dreamwork and Jungian Psychology* writes: "...through dreams we are told of these changes of the wondrous alchemy of the psyche through which our inner darkness is turned into gold."

The Naqshbandi Sufi path, as Llewellyn has experienced it, has little outward form or structure.

"At our meetings [he says] we meditate, drink tea, and discuss dreams. Within the dynamic of the group the individual is given the opportunity to work upon himself, to meditate, aspire, to go deep within the unconscious and accept both the light and the darkness that are found there. The path to the beyond is unique for each seeker. There are as many ways to God as there are human beings, and this journey demands that we each make the ultimate effort. To follow the thread that is hidden in the heart is the most demanding task life can offer. And the teacher can only point out the way; even the great teachers like Christ, Muhammad, and Buddha could do no more than this."⁸

"In dreams, the Self, {this time with a capital S}, comes to meet us, not as an overwhelming power but as a symbol to which we can relate. But these symbols are not just images of the Self; they carry and communicate the numinosity and spiritual direction of our higher nature. They connect us to this deepest source of wisdom and power that exists within us. Symbols of the Self bring into consciousness what is hidden in our center and help in the work transforming us."⁹

"From a psychological perspective, how much the ego of the individual ultimately determines the actual dynamic of the individuation process is unclear. The ego can cooperate, responding to the energy of the Self and Its guidance offered in the form of intuitions, dreams, and hints. Then the conscious and unconscious work together in harmony."¹⁰

"The substance of the Self is love, and it comes to us in many forms and images turning our attention away from the outer world, back to the root of the root of our own being. This love is also the light of the Self, which will take us into the darkness, where our real nature is hidden."¹¹

This sufi teacher tells us that "The heart is the alchemical vessel, in which we place the substance of the shadow, which is then transformed through the fire of love. It is for this reason that Simone Weil wrote: "we must not wish for the disappearance of our troubles, but the grace to transform them."¹²

⁸ *Catching the Thread: Sufism, Dreamwork & Jungian Psychology*, Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, The Golden Sufi Center Publishing, 1998 pgs. 44-45

⁹ *Ibid*, pg. 182

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pg. 183

¹¹ *Ibid*, pg. 186

¹² *Ibid*, pg. 89

Llewellyn quotes Al-Hallâj, "When truth has taken hold of a heart she empties it of all but Herself."¹³

Then he quotes Carl Jung:

"One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The latter procedure, however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular."¹⁴ He reminds us that the energy of love is what activates the unconscious, bringing us face to face with our own darkness, enabling us to purify the psyche and prepare a space where lover and beloved can meet."¹⁵

My colleague Penny Lewis, with whom I share the directorship of our Transpersonal Drama Therapy Certification program begins her book, CREATIVE TRANSFORMATION: The Healing Power of the Arts with:

"The dance between the conscious and unconscious is choreographed in the magical place of the imaginal realm. Here is where children play and where heroes and heroines come alive in spontaneous creative dramas. Here is where remembered dreams live to pull from our misguided paths. Here is where all the creative arts emerge: painting, sculpting, singing, dancing, acting, composing, and writing. Here is where inventions spring forth and spurts of intuitive insight erupt. Here is where a culture's unconscious is brought forth in the form of myths, fairytales, and stories of gods and goddesses. Here is also where our histories live, where childhood emotional patterns and early relationships with primary care givers hang out and influence our present lives, distorting the moment by recreating the past in an imaginative "pretend" drama of which we are unaware.

In this transitional space exists all that impedes us from our growth and wholeness but also all that can serve to heal the wounds, bring us to balance, transform inner relationships, and direct us on our unique life journeys.

In times past, societies provided vessels for the experience of the imaginal realm through rituals, community celebrations, and rites of passage. Many of those rituals are no longer practiced and many more have lost the mystery which they once had. This is in part due to an imbalance between the rational and the imaginal.

More and more therapists (and I add, more and more spiritual guides) from different traditions, are seeking other conduits to and from the *mundis imaginalis* within the transformation process. Here the creative arts can play a vital role. The arts provide vehicles for the accessing and re-experiencing of historical traumatic events and relationships, as well as providing a medium within which healing and transformation can occur. The expressive arts also allow an individual access to the deeper meaning of existence, to a connection to humanity, and to the divine as they journey within the archetypal through the stages and rites of passage of life.

¹³ Ibid, pg. 188

¹⁴ Ibid, pg. 50

¹⁵ Ibid, pg. 51

In developing with Pir Vilayat theatrical pageants and the process for creating spiritual practices out of which the attunements were developed, I learned how to help people dialogue with an image of who their character was - a prophet, angelic being, or even the musical expression of a particular vibration. We developed a rehearsal process that centered around offering all participants (as many as 350 at a time) an inner concentration that helped them create an image through imagining a particular prophet, angelic being, etc. and how they might look, move and sound by embodying that imaginal presence, engaging in a dialogue with that character or presence ala Jung's active imagination process and then taking it one step further, embodying the consciousness of that being by enacting it physically, emotionally and psychically.

Universal Worship, theatrical pageants like the Cosmic Celebration, healing order work, ziraat, kinship work, meditation retreats and daily practices are all vehicles potentially within which the imaginal world can consciously be called upon to create the possibility of authentic transformation for individuals, as well as for the spiritual community as a whole.

As a Cheraga, I have had many wonderful experiences creating rite of passage rituals using the framework of The Universal Worship Service. In one universal worship context, a seventeen year old girl was honored in a rite of passage that celebrated both her Bat Mitzvah (a Jewish ritual of celebration that welcomes thirteen year olds into young adulthood, which she had not celebrated earlier) and high school graduation. In the service preparation, she was helped to create an image of her empowered being and to write a speech to her parents and community from that place and then deliver it. All of this was within the sacred vessel of the universal worship service. To witness this sometimes shy, young woman, speak her truth in this way was thrilling and served as an initiation into the next cycle of her college life.

One woman found closure in a long hysterectomy process. She used the universal worship process to grieve the loss of being able to ever bear a child. She envisioned herself as a mother in other ways.

Another woman, in a private universal worship service with me, grieved the loss of a breast after having a mastectomy and envisioned a future free of cancer.

Since our retreat work is the deepest work we do with mureeds, I would like to offer first some uses of the imaginal realm in a group retreat and then in a concrete case study of one long individual retreat that integrated traditional retreat practices with the use of dreams and other imaginal exercises.

In a recent group meditation retreat on “The Luminous Heart,” that I guided here, the imaginal world approach got integrated with traditional sufi practices in a number of ways. I’ll give a few examples. The meditation on the charkas, for instance, created an accommodation for images of the physical body tensions and challenges that correspond to each chakra to emerge and be concentrated on. Then healing light was sent to that area of the body in the form of the color of that chakra.

We worked with creating mandalas spontaneously without a goal. Then retreatants were invited to look at their image and ask how it affects them, what is the question that arises, what is the answer and what is the gift.

We did several writing exercises including writing a love poem to oneself. These poems were shared in a sama between repetitions of the Dhikr.

And finally, we did a group enactment of one person’s dream which worked with reframing the challenge of the dream into an envisioned transformation with the group playing supporting roles that also helped each of them in their own transformation process.

A retreatant who is a representative and retreat guide herself, having done many Sufi Order retreats and therapeutic processes before this, requested that I guide her on a 28 day retreat. Through her other retreats and therapy she was never able to reach core healing and transformation. The retreatant wrote about our process in Heart and Wings in greater detail, but I will cite some pieces of that here. In her words,

"When I came to you wanting this retreat, my life was in a process of what felt like complete disintegration. I was in a clinical depression, I was having panic attacks, my marriage was on the rocks and I knew that the only way to fix anything would be to take a long, long retreat. The goal didn't matter so much but what mattered was the process to find out what it was in me that was creating all this pain in myself. The only way to do that was to go within and really work on those causes.

I answered that it became very necessary for me to use whatever tools I had from whatever my different trainings were, from different arenas, to help her get to those root causes. And I didn't have a concept about what is traditional, what isn't traditional. I didn't even think like that. I gave myself permission, in a sense, to tune in freshly without being restricted to certain forms or parameters. I didn't know if I and this retreat process could really give her what she needed.

I had worked with dreams in my therapy work and had noticed over the years that dreams came up with people randomly in retreats. But I never tried to use them as we did in this retreat. I suggested to her to remember one or two dreams every night. (She had never remembered dreams before. She didn't know if she could do it.) She was able to remember one or two dreams every night like clockwork, for 28 days. She never missed a night. And I found that enormously helpful because dreams come from the individuals themselves. They tell me what's going on in the person's psyche, what they're ready to deal with. It gives me clues as to who the person really is that she/he hasn't uncovered yet. So the dreams became a guiding light. We worked with the traditional practices, wazaif, breathing practices and Dhikr very powerfully, but we integrated them with processing the dreams, doing some writing, doing some drawing, and some other arts related modalities to get at what the dreams reflected, and what the psyche was trying to uncover and work with. In regards to some of her deepest issues, it was quite powerful to have the dreams guide us how to best work in the context of this sacred chalice, the retreat, Within the context of Dhikr, which helps us to remember that God is the only reality, while you're going through very difficult emotional states, it's not surprising that challenging life material comes up and is really crying to be paid attention to and be dealt with. I feel that that's been one of the problems with our traditional retreat process. These images, emotions come up in the Dhikr, like sexual abuse or violence memories that the psyche has repressed. These repressed memories can create panic attacks because they work on you inside and there is no place for them to surface. Retreats can surface

them, but then they must be dealt with so that they have the possibility of being transformed.

The retreatant continued:

What amazed me during this process was that I learned there is no such thing as a nonsense dream. Every single dream has incredible significance. Left to my own devices, I would never have figured out the significance of these dream images. But you encouraged me to dig through the symbolism and find what my unconscious was really telling me. Every dream actually turned out to be pretty profound, at least in my experience, even the ones that were incredibly silly on the surface.

Absolutely, that's the thing about dreams. The dreams also refer to some part of oneself that is asking for an audience or asking to be heard. Working with arts modalities can be very powerful. For instance, one could be directed to enter the consciousness of Murshid, or other masters, saints or prophets, or of any great being one feels very closely attuned to in one's spiritual life. To think about what that being would tell you is a good exercise, but to become that being by physicalizing that image can be much more effective. It allows you to get in touch with that part of yourself. Similarly, entering the consciousness of the person that you're still most in conflict with, perpetrators, challenging bosses, parental figures for example, allows you to explore those issues that are unresolved. It helps you to get a perspective from that person's point of view. That can be enormously helpful in the healing process.

The retreatant realized said that the whole crux of her retreat was centered around the Dhikr and the practice Ya Batin—Ya Zahir. Ya Batin is that which is hidden and Ya Zahir is that which is manifest. You can't manifest your true nature until you bring to the surface that which is hidden. In Jungian terminology that is one's shadow.

The retreatant shares more of her background:

My family system was fairly dysfunctional. My father was an untreated, raging alcoholic. He was extremely violent. While I did not get the brunt of his anger directly, I certainly witnessed enough of it with regular beatings of my mother and my brother. One night when I was 9 years old, he pounded down a solid oak door with his fists in order to gain access to my room. I experienced an emotional white out. It was actually being too frightened to feel fear. And certainly underneath the fear is all that anger and that sense of invasion. I remembered exactly what happened but I just didn't feel anything about it at

all and that's called disassociation. Intellectually I knew that was at the root of the depression and the panic attacks and the somatization.

I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 1982 and while it has been fairly benign, in my particular case, there were still issues around that and I had to deal with that as well. And so that's the background from which I came and what I offered to you, Saphira, to help me heal.

We called on our Silsila, all the masters, saints and prophets of our lineage, including Murshid and Pir Vilayat and we also called on some of the ancient goddesses so that the feminine could come into the healing process as well, Thus we created the sacred container for the retreat process.

The retreatant revealed her learning:

One of the most important lessons that I learned throughout the course of the retreat was withdrawing projections. I think that one of the reasons we had such difficulty in our marriage is that there is an archetypal dark mother that I was projecting onto my poor beloved husband. And he actually had that too, the archetypal dark mother that he was projecting onto me. And so of course we're going to bump heads. My husband did do a five day retreat with you and learned about the importance of withdrawing projections. We had a little work to do in addition to that, but fundamentally, I think that was the bottom line of many of our problems. And everything else we could work out.

The other lesson was owning qualities which seemed impossible to lay claim to, learning to embrace the shadow of myself. One of the exercises that you gave me was to draw my father and I told you I can't draw. And you suggested I draw him energetically. Well, that was easy. Then you said write out the good qualities which was a very short list. Then you said to draw what you called the nemesis or button pushing qualities which was a very long list and this I did, feeling very good about it. Then I had to own as a part of myself both those good qualities and button-pushing qualities that I wanted nothing to do with. The whole process was a question of learning to embrace my own shadow. Now I had to embrace it and transform it. This was not a comfortable exercise but the benefits have been immeasurable. A lot of energy goes into holding something we dread at bay. This exercise frees up that energy which can be used for other more productive purposes.

Writing is another modality that can be used on retreat. Through poetry, imagery surfaces that help synthesize one's process while allowing other unconscious things to surface.

The retreatant continues:

Along those same lines, prior to the retreat I was feeling really stuck creatively. The energy was flat and colorless, just like my feelings about what had happened in my past. But a single practice in the last days of retreat I found to really be the climax of a very long process. That experience broke the dam in my creativity. It was on the 26th day. I was repeating the Dhikr and my mind was flip-flopping all over the place. Unexpectedly I felt this gentle and steady energy around me and a voice said, "Try to stay with it. "

So I went deeper and deeper into the Dhikr. I began having this image that was like a dream only I was very awake. I walked into a cave with a man by my side. I saw a two-year old baby who was chained to the wall of the cave. The cave was very dark and enclosed. He unchained the baby and brought her out into the light. She wasn't crying. She was emaciated and very close to death. And he just held her. It was at that point I started to cry and cry and cry. That baby he was holding was me. The man walked back into the cave and I followed him. He held up a lantern and I could see children of all different ages chained to the walls of this cave. It occurred to me that every time my mother was beaten or there was a traumatic event in my house another child was chained to the wall of the cave. They all started calling to me and crying and saying, "feed me! Love me! Take care of me!" I turned to the man. How am I supposed to do this? There are so many of them! Where do I even start?" The man answered, "Write about them. It's time to give each child her voice."

It was through that process that I began to feel all the feelings that were too overwhelming to feel when I was a child. I had spent 20 years taking retreats, had been through years of psychotherapy and all of that was to get to exactly this place. As of this writing, after having processed these children, my marriage is now on solid ground. I'm falling in love with my husband all over again. I'm taking flying lessons and he's my flight instructor. The panic attacks are history. The depression is gone and I feel much more integrated and whole and more of who I am than I ever was before. Of course my husband took a five day retreat and Saphira guided him. He stayed up the hill in a hut. He is no longer the bear he used to be and neither am I. This was an incredible process to go through.

Working with the self is a life long work. Retreats can be a wonderful vehicle for depth self discovery and within which to integrate our life lessons into the process of identifying with our divine inheritance. This can happen within each of the points of the star—Universal Worship, the Healing Order, Ziraat, Kinship as well as the esoteric school. Working within the imaginal realm, using a variety of creative modalities including dreams, in concert with traditional Sufi practices, we can help ourselves and our mureeds make the unconscious conscious, becoming more empty, open, truthful and conscious. In this way, we may become clearer and more authentic instruments of this treasure of teachings that we represent, in service to ourselves, our families, our communities as well as the greater humanity.

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