

Dervish Pilgrimage to the Red Centre June 2018:

Ya Salaam, Ya Shakur, Ya Sabur

Toward the One. We enter Creation Time, *Tjukurpa*, and invoke the Beautiful Names. Uluru and Kata Tjuta are the planetary solar plexus chakra. Our intention is to sow seeds of peace: cultivating the qualities of gratefulness and patience that we may need for our journey!

Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim

We begin in the name of the One, the Sun and Moon of Love. The luminous pre-dawn moon at Uluru, gently coaxes our souls to carve out sacred space for the day ahead. Morning Practices are held outside our cabins in a popular, crowded Yulara campground. Allaudin leads us into the rhythmic zikr. Our breath takes us into stillness as we chant: *Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim*. We sway close together as shoulder meets shoulder. The temperature hovers around one degree. We set our intentions. Our icy breathing meets the earth, the sky and the predawn darkness and light. We are between the worlds and the door opens. We walk silently to see the sunrise: *The sun at the dawn of creation, the light of the whole universe* which lights up Uluru, Kata Tjuta and the surrounding desert landscape, with an ethereal glow of gold, pink and blue and all colours in between.



Ya Kabir Ya Mutakabbir

Nothing can prepare one for the awe, greatness and majesty of Uluru. *Ya Kabir* is a signpost to the infinite presence of Allah, beyond the boundaries of time and space. *Ya Mutakabbir* means this vastness is always moving beyond our present experience or understanding. We used these names as a spiritual practice for our pilgrimage.

This is my first trip to the Centre. I feel the Divine Presence deeply within. Uluru connects with Kata Tjuta for 6 kms in subterranean rock: adding weight to the statement that what we see in this phenomenal world is only the surface of that which lies hidden within. As we are guided to the *Mala Puta Cave* and hear the creation dreamtime story, there is a signpost with the concluding moral: *You must finish that which you start, but also take heed if you are warned of coming danger*. This reminds me of the Rasul prayer: *Warner of coming danger, Awakener of the world from sleep, Deliverer of the message of God, Thou art our Saviour. (HIK Rasul prayer)*. The Christ Spirit, *Ruh Allah*, the Breath of God, surrounds us.

The pilgrimage was 12 months in the making. There were times when I felt the logistics were too difficult, but I persevered, through the encouragement of others, and my own sense of inner rightness and timing.

Now I am here, and time is suspended. We enter into the *now*. Nowhere else to be. We touch eternity. In the evening, we walk with stealth to the viewing platform. No-one else is present to witness the event except for the stars and the moon. Allaudin leads us into a zikr under the dark night canopy of these endless shining stars. My heart is turning I remember that I am made of star dust.



Ruh Allah

Kata Tjuta brings us further in touch with the rainbow snake. The domes are a distinctly feminine counterpart to Uluru's monolithic majesty. We are urged on by a powerful wind, *the breath of the serpent* as we walk into Walpa Gorge. We finally find shelter between the breasts, as we take refuge in the bosom of the Mother. Allaudin's Dance and song: *Ruh Allah* spontaneously arises. We summon the *Prince of Peace* to guide us through the dark of night. The different parts harmonise into a symphony of sound...a sound that swirls through time and space. Within and



Without merges into Oneness. At the Valley of the Winds, a quietness descends upon us. We sit in attentive stillness, listening to the sounds of the didgeridoo, welcoming us to country: one of the many synchronicities that occurred.



Shabbat Shalom

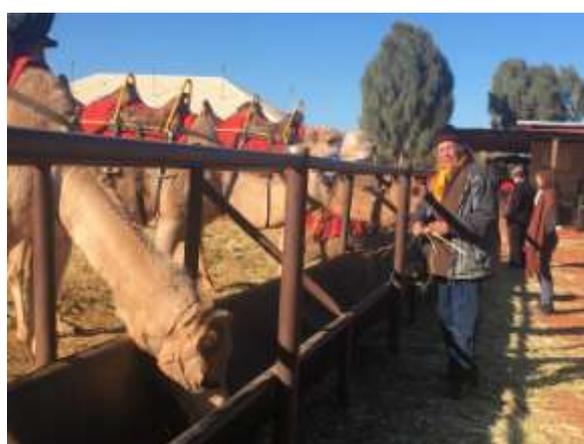
On the last day at Uluru, we meet with Barbara Randall, with whom Arjuna had been trying to connect with through the Mutitjulu community but without success. It so happened Barbara was at the campsite with the Noosa Steiner School, at the same time we were. We certainly were riding a wave of synchronicity in the heart of the desert.

Shabbat Shalom. We decided to have a shared meal under the sails in the barbeque area of the campground to celebrate Shabbat. The Steiner school teachers and more than twenty year 11 students, as well as some French tourists joined us for the dance. It was again an ecstatic evening under the stars, with two circles, singing their hearts out with effulgent joy.



Be nice to camels, they are very neat.

Just as we were ready to depart to Kings Canyon, we came across the camel station at the Yalara Resort...complete with a myriad of other animals: kangaroos, piglets, goats, lambs. Camels are an insignia for Allaudin, so it was “very neat” to come across them. The camels became a portrayal of our journey. “driving together in a caravan, walking in the desert, making tracks in the sand.” Sometimes some of us “camels” strayed, but not too far and all came back safely to be fed in the evening. We were pretty good walking as a “camel train”



The next day some pilgrims, who felt superfit in body and mind, challenged themselves to do the majestic rim walk at the Kings Canyon, in the *Watarrka National Park*. The rest of us took an easy walk to Katherine Springs, where we continued to feel the presence of the Rainbow Serpent, the protector of the waterhole. The birds lined up on the limbs of the tree, taking their turn in drinking. This was the place where the Luritja people would come to hunt. We found middens containing remnants of pottery and ochre. We were walking in the ancestors footsteps. There was a very cold wind at this spot, where we sang: *Water of Life*.



My House Shall Be a House of Prayer.

On Sunday we arrived at Alice Springs, just in time to be welcomed by the Lutheran Community in a farewell concert for the parish priest, and his wife, who had been instrumental in organising the international tour of the “Song keepers”: an awesome mostly aboriginal women choir. It was such an honour to be in the presence of these wonderful women and men, who sang like angels.

On our arrival to *Campfire in the Heart*, a thriving Christian Mystical Community, run by David and Sue Woods, we were welcomed with warm soup. Some of the Steiner school teachers had come to join us. We danced at the Steiner School eurythmy hall, which was only two doors down. I had no idea, that these two were so close. The miraculous was becoming the common ground. The biggest dilemma became: *which aboriginal painting to buy!*

As we stepped into the *Campfire's* prayer room, we were met by red dust in the shape of the rainbow serpent traversing its way around the sacred scriptures and symbols of the land. The banner on the wall read: *My House Shall be a House of Prayer for All People (Isaiah 56:7)*. Murshid Sam had resonated with this same scripture. We had arrived home. This had been a theme for this year's annual Dance retreat, that had snaked its way to our present location with its theme of renewal and transformation.



We joined the community for morning prayer. This became our regular practice which nourished and sustained our souls and multiplied the gratitude for each day. Some of us managed to walk the labyrinth made from the red earth. *Campfire in the Heart*, was a place where we felt at home to connect with the ancestors of the land.





There were many other adventures to the West MacDonnell Ranges which included: Hermannsburg, Ormiston Gorge, Standley Chasm and Simpson's Gap just to name a few. The vegetation and landscape greatly varied in each location as did the rock features. Each spoke to us of their own story. *Dadiri*: we listen deeply.



Ya Mulhim Ya Hadi Ya Rashid

In the mornings we managed to do some deepening sessions led by Allaudin. We danced and sat for an extended time to integrate both stillness and movement. One such dance *Ya Mulhim Ya Hadi Ya Rashid* is found in Allaudin's new CD which he gifted all of the pilgrims called: *Vision, Bewilderment and Love*. There were no CD players in the Mitsubishi outlanders we had rented (such is the way with modern camels!) so we had to wait to get home to hear the CD, which is fabulous. This dance was so appropriate as we had trusted God's guidance and the nudging of the Spirit throughout the journey. *Ya Mulhim* was our inner guide, *Ya Hadi*, the guide for the group and *Ya Mulhim* the guidance of our Murshid, Allaudin.

Somehow the desert amplifies the inner voice and aids in the cultivation of stillness and emptiness and provides a rhythm that does not encourage hurriedness in one's everyday endeavours: a failing of mine that I call "efficiency"! Salik sits in a pensive mood ...he is *rocked in!* and looks like he has *got it*.



Sacred Women's Business/Men's Business

Behind every great man there is a greater woman!



We were blessed to have Allaudin's delightful wife and partner, Yasmin, on the journey with us. That is her in the first picture above. One evening we divided up into women's business and men's business in the manner that the Arrernte people do. They acknowledge the differences. Yasmin led us in different practices of light that Murshida Vera Corde had transmitted to her. How blessed we were to have this fellowship of women.

Well, I have no idea what the men got up to: maybe played cards or watched the footie? Ha ha!

We learnt from the *Songkeepers* that the tribal men had moved into rock'n'roll and country and western music while the women continued to sing their traditional songs as well as the songs taught by the Mission. The grandmothers of the different tribes had kept these sacred songs alive, and then like boomerangs the songs returned to their place of origin and now are being shared throughout the world. Our own pilgrimage had a large number of grandmothers singing sacred songs across the world! And we had grandfathers too! We have a lot in common with our shared humanity, beyond colour or race, when we meet in the heart.

Shakur Allah

On our last day we broke up into teams and danced at the Steiner school with three of the classes. The dances were warmly received with an interest to use them in the future. In the evening, *Campfire in the Heart* invited us to their communal dinner and we danced around a huge log campfire, warmed by our collective experience.



Had it only been nine days together? It had seemed like a lifetime suspended amongst the red dust and capacious monumental red rocks and yet it was also seemed timeless.... The landscape of my heart had been transformed.

No words could do justice to the wordless experience of our own spiritual heartland here in Australia. The cultivation of gratitude on our trip was palpable. I love this quote from the *Physicians of the Heart* which says: *When you feel gratitude in your heart, your gaze can then be directed outward to the signs of Allah in the world.* I feel like the prophet Muhammad when he described himself as *abdun shakurun*, the thankful servant. I may have put some of the nuts and bolts together to make the trip happen, but I was in awe with what actually did transpire under the guidance of the One Being, as the many I's stepped into the unknown. *Ya Mutakabbir!* The ever- expanding cosmic wave removes all boundaries to finally ask a profound question: When is a beanie, a beanie?

The desert is certainly a fertile place for creativity and Alice Springs is renown as the Beanie capital of Australia!



The Red Centre had called us from many directions to experience Oneness. *Ya Ahad Ya Samad.*

So much gratitude for all the pilgrims who came from far flung distances: Allaudin and Yasmin from the USA; Salik, aka Robert Orange, from the UK; Chando, Kafia and Brenda from Tassie; Margaret from Maori NZ Aoteora; Fatima from WA; Mary and Margie from Queensland; Rahima, Habiba, Sabira Jane, Arjuna and Karen from Sydney who had done the ground work with the potters in Hermannsburg; Raimunda from the Central Coast; Noah, Andrew and myself from the Northern Rivers NSW. We were a mighty team sharing our love, harmony and beauty, and our dances and songs with whomever we met. Our message of peace has been indelibly imprinted on the landscape.

I will be doing further annual pilgrimages to the Red Centre, *Inshallah*, so let me know if you are interested.

Zebunissa July 2018