

Jamiat Khas

November 2015

From the 11th to the 15th of November 2015, I attended my second Jamiat Khas (JK). The title of this JK was *We Are Murshid!* The JK is a gathering of Sufi teachers from the Ruhaniat¹, many of whom are also dance mentors. This time it was at the Institute of Noetic Science² in Petaluma, just north of San Francisco, where they have been researching consciousness and paranormal phenomena. IONS is of great interest to me in terms of my research into integral consciousness.

The experience was powerful and inspiring as the first JK had been for me a couple of years earlier at the Abode of the Message. The JK itself is a leader's retreat that is like a conference. This year there were 147 participants, many of whom were murshids, murshidas, sheikhs, sheikhas as well as being senior dance mentors. It's a very powerful gathering, which for me is a little like landing in dancing heaven. Many of the famous international dance leaders like Shabda, Saadi, Tansen, Allaudin, Abraham and Halima, Leilah Be, Mariam – all people we may see individually once every couple of years in the southern hemisphere, were all gathered in this one place. This year Tasnim was also there, as she and Saadi have started leading dance retreats together again.

The experience has again reminded me how much the dances and the Ruhaniat are now one body, as they were in the beginning when Murshid Sam began teaching at the Mentorgarden and in the Golden Gate Park. However when Saadi and Tasnim founded the Dances of Universal Peace, they wanted to create a separate organisation so

¹ see <http://www.ruhaniat.org>

² see <http://www.noetic.org>

that the dances would be accessible to people of all different backgrounds. The dances have returned to the Ruhaniat in recent years.

At the JK we started each day with morning practices. The ones I attended were led by Murshid Abraham. This included meditation, Fatima's gifts – the 3 Wazaif, element breaths and other practices.

At breakfast we had a chance to mingle with other groups using the IONS facilities, as the dining area was all combined. As I like to sit outside I was invited to join a table of people who were practicing the *Altar of Creation*³ work. This is a new energy healing modality that was developed by Dr Steven Weiss, an osteopath and shamanic healer among other things. We had some great conversations over breakfast about music, vibration, energy, healing and our cultural backgrounds.

The first session of each day was devoted to Wali Ali and the biography of Murshid Sam⁴ that he has been researching and writing about for several years now. As he was Murshid Sam's secretary and now lives in his house in the Mission District of San Francisco, Murshid Wali Ali is in a unique position to undertake such a project. His sessions each morning, which included practices, were great. I felt I developed a deeper understanding of both Murshid Sam and the Sufi Ruhaniat International, which he founded, as a result of these sessions.

Then we met in small groups facilitated by the Murshid's circle. I was in Saadi's group, which was very informative, as one would expect. It was a combination of sharing by members of the group and a chance to clarify some of the material that Wali Ali had brought up in the

³ see <http://altarofcreation.com>

⁴ see Wali Ali's blog: <http://www.ruhaniat.org/index.php/current-news-and-inspirations>

morning session. As well questions were raised about how to deal with issues that people encountered as a Sufi guide. Such questions also came up during the afternoon session I attended with Murshida Khadija: *Tassawuri and Transitions: Initiator & Mureed Stages on the Path*. Each afternoon there was a choice of several sessions during this time slot. On the second day I did *The Walking Concentrations of Murshid Sam*, with Murshida Halima. On the third day, there was a wonderful water ritual by Murshida Darvesha with Sophia and Arjun from Colombia: *The Ecological Self: Widening and Deepening our Identification with All Beings, the Ecosystem, and Gaia*. This ritual was held outside and involved wild water that people had brought from all over the planet being mixed together. I brought a bottle of Bondi Beach water, and returned with some of the mixed water that had been blessed in the ceremony. My inner social ecologist was naturally delighted by this ritual, which had resonances with rituals we did in our social ecology residentials, for which we also brought wild water from where we lived.

The afternoon sessions were led by Pir Shabda⁵ in *Adventures in Fana-fi-Pir*. This also involved a report on the progress of the Dargah project for Murshid Sam at Lama (please refer to Abraham's report above).

The evening sessions generally involved the dances, which again were very powerful and uplifting, with 3 circles and a band of musicians in the middle.

As always I find at these events it's the people you meet in between sessions and converse with that really enriches the whole experience. Sometimes it was people I met at the lunch table, over making a cup of tea in the morning or just walking to the dining hall from the main hall, where we met for our whole group gatherings. The

⁵ see <http://www.ruhaniat.org/index.php/explore/communities-projects/murshid-sam-dargah-project>

walks themselves were beautiful. In the forest where we could run into a deer or two sleeping under a tree or see some birds like the turkey buzzards soaring high in the sky. Then there were the vistas of the green rolling hills of Petaluma, stretching forth in the distance.

I've attached some photos to give you a better idea of the event and the country.



Pir Shabda talking about Murshid Sam's Dargah



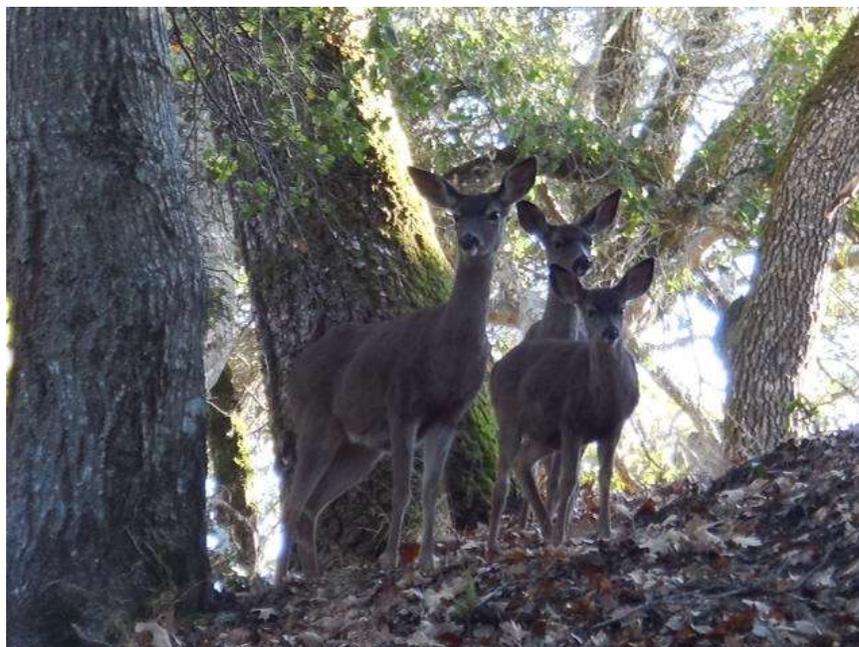
Murshid Wali Ali presenting the Biography



The Altar at the JK



The Water Ritual



Some curious Deer



The Forest Walk



Murshid Abraham and Murshida Halima at the Water Ritual



Arjun from Colombia organising the water ritual



The autumn colours of the trees near the dining hall