Representing Divine Love
by Saphira Linden

As soon as guidance became clear, obstacles one by one seemed to lift and create a clear path. As soon as the decision was made to go to India for the Urs, my consciousness was flooded with images of the sacred feminine, including circles of women from Europe and North America sitting and meditating together in sacred space. I had other images of meditating with individual women. As I explored these images further, I felt some kind of an energy balance of the ancient male ritual that was to be performed at Murshid's dargah. I didn't know what form this might take, but as the time got closer, I felt like something was calling me and these images were guiding me. Through it all, I felt Murshid's strong presence and blessing. It felt like this energy circle of women would serve as a subtly balanced container of love—something like that—hard to explain. I tried not to work at figuring it out but to stay open and receptive.

A few days before I left, I was very moved when I heard from Taj about Zia and Siraj's baby, Rasul's accident with her burned face. Luckily she had second degree, not third degree burns from the oil that splashed onto her face and she was totally healed. I was very affected by all the stages in her process as I heard about them. I'll come back to her later in my reflections.

In Delhi I stayed at the Sri Auribindo Ashram of "The Mother." The main teacher there is Karuna Mayee, who is also a most wonderful singer/musician and who was scheduled to perform a concert at the dargah on February 7. I learned that she performs every year at Murshid's Urs. She considers Hazrat Inayat Khan as one of her most revered teachers. His picture and books were reverently displayed throughout her apartment in the ashram. I got to know her quite well, into the night over tea and intimate sharing and laughing. Such a gift. She really embodies Divine mother love, though she has never had her own children.

I had met her two years ago, officiating as a Cheraga at Una Lese's rite of passage, Bat Mitzvah/high school graduation Universal Worship Service in which she sang and played music. Karunaji (as she is affectionately called) shared with me that she had always wanted to have a Universal Worship in her courtyard around the foundation stone of the founder of this ashram in Delhi. "Would I please consider leading one?" she asked. "I would be honored to do so," I answered. I invited the Cheragas that were staying there from Europe and North America to join me (our circle of European and American women, I spontaneously thought to myself). I asked Karunaji if she would do the music for the different religions. She so joyfully accepted that I knew it was meant to be. Our theme—just like our new feminine candle—the traditions of the great mother—Divine Love, within the ashram dedicated to this teaching. This service took place on the day before the Turban tying, perfect timing. I had envisioned the circle of women at the dargah. But this was much better, since there were so many people and other preparations going on there at that time. The service contained such powerful energy with clear intention to send Divine Mother love energy to Zia's ceremony. It felt so beautiful. There it was. I was really moved at how it unfolded so organically with so little effort.

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The dargah is surrounded by a basti (neighborhood) filled with poverty. Several times I walked around there inundated by beggars, sometimes mothers with their babies. I knew coins wouldn't really help. I was so grateful to see the classes of young women learning to better themselves, and to have a place to donate to, that could make a difference for some of these women. I was grateful that Pir Vilayat had the vision to begin this program and that people like Carmen have the dedication to do the work of making these programs a day-to-day reality. I was glad that it attracts our young people like Melea Press, who are dedicating time in their young lives to serving these people and this loving work.

The investiture ceremony had a lot of baraka. I could appreciate the presence of the lineage to which we are all connected. There was a lot of powerful energy enhanced by all of our Sufi family who was present. I was very moved. That's the truth. And to be honest, I can still say that the ritual was too male, too Islamic, too exclusive for my taste. And still, I could be present for the beauty of what it was and be aware of my judgement and let it go at the same time. My heart was overflowing as I felt the joy of Pir and Taj in their shared sense of fulfillment of a destiny that they shared.

For me, I was working with keeping my heart open to the totality of the experience and being with all of it. I felt my own heart expanding in the process. I took personal comfort in some words from my former husband, who had also shared my ambivalence about coming, but seemed similarly connected to Murshid's baraka. He shared some thoughts about one of our sons, which have remained helpful. I feel grateful for that. The days that followed, all part of it for me. I was touched that the Sufi Order had thought to honor its 10th and 11th degree initiates with gold robes embroidered with a heart and wings, and to have scarves embroidered for everyone. I mostly felt that it was a thoughtful gesture for Europeans and Americans coming so far to have at least one moment in all of this where we could make real contact with both Pir and Zia for a blessing. I appreciated that. It helped me feel more connected to what was happening at another level.

At the beginning of the Urs there was a qawwals concert and procession from the Nizamuddin dargah area. During that whole concert a young boy sang very loudly in a high pitched voice from his heart as part of it, a kind of answering back chanting that was so pure sounding. Zia was clearly touched by this. He took the sound in and somehow it was a catalyst to release the floodgates of his own heart from all the emotion that had built up through all this time in preparation for this, in the context of all his recent personal trauma as well as all of the other pressure he had been under. He sobbed and I, for one, was relieved and experienced a kind of catharsis with him. I hoped others did as well.

Sri Karuna Mayee
camera. She had quite an independent spirit and called the shots as they say. I especially loved how she turned the inner sanctum of the dargah into a playhouse, sliding in and out and playing with the chains of flowers. I happily encouraged her. I felt great grandpa smiling.

My Sufi Jungian analyst (she was in a Cosmic Celebration in the 70s) pointed out that perhaps the burn incident and total recovery a week before the investiture was symbolic of this generation not sacrificing the young feminine. As I played with this fiery independent spirit, about whom I had just heard her daddy speak, in his first major talk as a Pin, I couldn’t help but feel that she is beginning her life making sure that he not only talks about her, but that her joyful loving spirit is present right from the beginning of his tenure in ways that make a difference—great beginning—way to go, Rasulan! As he spoke about her, his heart was open and though faith was the topic, love was what we experienced.

The fragrance of the roses that people placed on the casket in the dargah are still with me. I brought many home with me from the Uro day, after carefully drying them with my friend, and have been giving them to Boston Rops, some mureeds I guide, and to my sons. I loved meditating in the dargah, especially before and after the main festivities. The energy was so full and rich and potent. I received so much blessing and the answers to so many important questions.

Sometime in the middle of all of the serious talks and events, I found myself drawn to the twinkling fiery energy of a young toddler. Next thing I knew, we were playing peek-a-boo and drop the doll games. I was also trying to take a few photos with my throw away

emotional, and mental domains. I start to get questions when I mention the moral body or domain. I have a simple definition for this domain which is: “the moral body is that living tissue that connects us to the rest of existence. Using modern parlance we might say: it’s the nurturance and development of an inner and outer ecology of being.” We have discovered a physical corollary to this. In each of the systems of the physical body we find a protective sheathing in the form of connective tissue. For example, around the nerves we find the peri-neural sheathing, and around the muscles we find the fascia. Originally it was thought that these were protective coverings and that their essential purpose was to support and protect. Today they are beginning to be seen more as systems of communication.

Somatic space can be developed either from within or from without. One can be present to the physical structures of another through the fingertips and through the light of the breath passing through the fingertips. At first one may experience a hardened structure, one without much softness, flexibility, or viability. The feeling tone may be dense with little or no feelings. As one stays present through touch, without any manipulation, the hardness will generally soften. Then there will be release and opening. As this space is developed and begins to penetrate the various domains, physical sensation, emotional subtlety, mental thoughts and images, experiences of connection or disconnection may arise. I believe that there is an intelligence implicit with this space, the light of which orients the various bodies toward organic restoration, the development of natural tonality and a deepening of harmonious interactions.

At this point the healing presence may initiate a far more complex and even more uplifting discussion.