

Dear Ones,

It was a long time ago we met - somewhere in the US, at a Sufi event - but seeing Amina Meyer again recently (Zoom and in event advertisements) I'm reminded of Murshid Wali Ali's tasbih.

Years ago, Wali Ali used to wear a tasbih around his neck. A striking tasbih, very long with large beads and other ornamentation, strung together in an unusual way. On one of Wali Ali's early visits to PTA - the annual Peace Through the Arts DUP camp held in southern England - he offered up this tasbih for the auction that was held yearly to raise funds to support the camp. I happened to hear Wali Ali say that the tasbih had been made by his daughter, Amina, when she was a child.

This had a deep effect on me. Wali Ali was showing willingness to let go of a tasbih he not only wore and used, but a tasbih made by his own daughter. A tasbih clearly made with much youthful creativity and enjoyment. The implied relationship between father and daughter, absent in my own family, moved me greatly and I felt a huge respect for Wali Ali's act of generosity. I decided to bid for the tasbih in the auction.

The bidding was interesting, exciting and, as usually happens, bidders began to drop out until there were only two left, myself and another. To my complete surprise suddenly the other, apparently determined, had also dropped out. Afterwards, holding the tasbih in my hands, I went to speak to the other bidder, questioning his withdrawal. "I thought you really wanted it" Amida said quietly. Again, I felt overwhelmed by the generous act being shown. As I'm writing this, I recall this wasn't the first time such action had been demonstrated to me. Some years previously, sitting side by side, Murshida Kamae and I had both been bidding, with much laughter, for the same small item - a dream-catcher - at a PTA auction. This time I dropped out of the bidding - and when Kamae was handed the dream-catcher she immediately turned and put it into my hands. I was speechless with astonishment and surprise. It hung in my bedroom for many years afterwards.

When Wali Ali's tasbih came into my possession, it crossed my mind to wonder how, with such simple yet meaningful modelling of generosity from both Wali Ali and Amida Harvey, I would at some future point find a way of releasing the tasbih myself.

Yet, after all, it was easy. Ever since becoming a DUP teacher there's been a strong urge within me to share the Dances, share the Sufi Message, the Aramaic work, by participating in, or leading events in other countries as well as in remote regions of my own. Some years ago, I spent nearly two months on the other side of the world, and while there attended the New Zealand DUP annual camp. Like PTA, it had an auction. Externally at least, I was able to emulate Wali Ali's earlier gesture at PTA, and felt pleasure at releasing the tasbih in another part of the world.

Yet the story is not quite over. The person who went away from that camp with Wali Ali's tasbih told me - spontaneously, I didn't ask - that she would pass it on at a future auction. So somewhere in the world - who knows where! - someone may be counting out their 101s with Wali Ali's tasbih, and it may have gone so far and been exchanged so many times that the present holder has no conscious knowledge of the tasbih's origin.

As they use that tasbih, may they feel the love, the vibrancy and the open-heartedness that the tasbih was gifted with by its creator and first owner.

Personally, I feel immense gratitude that the Cosmos gave me the same lesson more than once in different ways - from three people who have been so significant in my Dancing Sufi life.

Love and blessings from Edinburgh – Namaste,

Fateah
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