

## Memories of Pir Vilayat by Aziza Scott

I first met Pir Vilayat in a dream. This was during a period in my life when I was searching very intensely for a spiritual guide. I had had a series of dreams where I met a number of Sufis and I felt that at some point, I would be meeting a being, a dervish-like being. It might have been Hazrat Babijan. I also experienced a series of beautiful poems, and when I went looking for their source, a book of Jelaluddin Rumi's actually popped out of a bookshelf into my hands. The poetry was so similar, even the wording and the feeling. So I thought, "Well, I have found my home." I thought I would really like to meet a living Sufi- I had always thought they were all ancient. It turned out that there was a Sufi center in Boston that met in a theatre. They were starting to do a kind of cosmic mass called the Cosmic Celebration. Pir Vilayat came to Boston to pick the cast for it. When I met him, I felt as if I'd met an old friend. It ended up that both my husband, Akbar, and I were cast in it. I was a fifth plane angel. I got to wear a kind of purple-orange outfit, which was quite glorious. My husband was John the Baptist. Going through the baptism was a powerful experience for him. I had to climb a spiraling staircase. It was such an uplifting experience to go up through those planes.

The next one was in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. I was told to sit right up front. I sat between Swami Satchidananda and other teachers from the different traditions. Pir was inspirational at that time. The energy was very, very strong, and his being radiated the Message of love, harmony, and beauty. The whole thing was an amazing experience, like being thrown into another world. He was able to embrace both worlds; he was like the guardian at the doors. He opened them and allowed the souls to come across those thresholds towards the state of unity, of *Azim*. I felt such glorification in his being. It was the emotion of the note of the soul, ecstasy and glorification. He could uplift souls into light and into Presence. He gave us so very much then.

For me, when I look back, that feeling of being nourished at the soul level was a profound and important experience for me and many

others. We live in a society where that kind of experience is not part of the culture. Just imagine, all of a sudden, to have that awakening, to have a continual kind of food for the soul through the teachings, and at the camps, and through his being. He could look at you with a glance, and you'd feel as if your soul was rekindled by light.

I remember that prior to meeting Pir Vilayat, I would go in and out of consciousness of my higher self very easily, but I never knew how I got there or how to get back until I started studying with Pir Vilayat. He would map out the journey, showing us different routes we could take toward unity. So that was very healing and very much a learning experience of my self and how to negotiate the inner planes beautifully in an integrative way. So, I would say that Pir Vilayat taught me how to find myself and how to be my true self in a consistent way so that I never felt as if I was out of control. And I never took any kind of marijuana or anything. That was not part of my journey.

At that time, we had a home on the ocean south of Boston, and Mansur Johnson had a center in that area. And I remember he would wear a kind cowboy hat. Once in a dream, I remember putting it on saying, "When will it be my turn?" That was the first time I suspected I would be a Sufi leader. But the truth is, I always knew I was a leader. Even as a very young child, I had the gumption to go forward, and I found that I could inspire people. I had been on the student council at Tulane University. All my life, I seemed to initiate activity. So I remember saying to the center leader, "I've been trained to be a leader. You should use me." That was rather forward, because you have to learn how to be a non-leader first. So, first I had a long period of learning how to be a good student.

Before I met Pir Vilayat, I had been on a spiritual adventure with my husband. He received a fellowship funded with a grant from the Ford foundation and worked in Africa. After that, we journeyed from Mozambique up the coast of East Africa through Zanzibar and over to India. We spent many months traveling in Southeast Asia before coming back home to Boston. During those travels we went to spiritual centers from many different traditions. Wherever we went, we always felt at

home, and strangely enough, when we were in India, we ended up visiting *dargahs* of the Sufis. It was almost as if we had an inner guide. In Delhi, we ended up in Nizamuddin and visited Murshid's *dargah* even though we didn't know anything about the Sufis – that was long before we met Pir Vilayat. A few years later, we went back to India with him, and, to my surprise, we went to all the same places.

I was trained in Education and I always wanted to start a school. Then I had a vision and that was when I knew I was going to start a school. I remember walking along the coast where there were lots of reeds on the side of the road. At that moment, I knew that the school would be called the Hollow Reed School. And then I saw a seagull flying and suddenly I was flying with the seagull; it was a very transcendent vision.

When I heard that the community in Boston wanted to start a school for children, I said: "Well that's for me to do." So we moved into Boston and a group of dedicated souls started the Hollow Reed School for children, embodying the teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan. All of this happened within a two or three year period.

We invited to the school many leaders from different spiritual backgrounds, to visit and share and tell stories. A Native American storyteller came, as well as Tibetan Buddhist monks who played and sang with the children. Pir Vilayat came and gave his blessing. He was so pleased to meet all of the children and the staff. Most of the staff were Sufis from the Sufi community. We were also involved with the Holy Order of MANS, the Christian group. Several of its community members were also on staff. We all shared such beautiful high energy together.

Following those dramas of the Cosmic Celebration, I was with Pir Vilayat at a camp he led in the Alps at Chamonix. There, he had a cave high up in the mountain. Food had to be brought up by all of us forming long, human chains. We would see him looking like an ancient desert father, coming up the mountain on his donkey that had these big, floppy ears. I had never seen anything like that before; it was an eye-opener.

If you'd been with him in the mountains in Chamonix you'd see how much at home he was in a cave, the joy he had waking up early for the sunrise, watching and being with the elements. He was like a mountain goat! I mean, we'd climb after him and we were half his age and we couldn't even keep up with him. He just felt so much at home in that setting. He'd have his walking stick and his robes around him.

He lived in this cave, which was quite lovely. It was sort of a slice out of a mountain you could go into. At one end he had slung a hammock. As you turned the corner, there was a little trickle of water that made a pool in a natural sink, where he could wash up and use the water for his *chai*. On the other side, there was an opening; a little area that was sort of dug-out where he often had a fire burning. This was a little sitting room where he would meet with us individually. We were invited to go in and sit with him and have *darshan*. I can remember going into that cave thinking, "Do I dare?" And, "Will I ever be the same?"

During that time, we were on a silent retreat for a couple of weeks. It was such an incredible atmosphere. I remember we had some remarkable weather, which was, I think, a keynote to Pir Vilayat's atmosphere; it produced an extraordinary cacophony of sound.

He was very much detached; it gave one a feeling of being the hermit, the *sanyasin*, rising above the conditions of the world. But at the same time, you could feel such an incredible warm heart in his presence. He was both the aloof *sanyasin* and at the same time very engaged, involved in life. I remember having several profound dreams during those years with Pir Vilayat, which expressed the depth of his spiritual search and the majesty of his soul.

Observing him, one could get the image of a hermit, in the most sacred and unique way. He modeled that so beautifully, waking up, doing the ablutions in a frozen stream, and watching the sun coming over the mountains. He would sit there looking at the sun rising – you know that look on his face when the sun rises; he seemed drunk with light and ecstasy.

He loved being up there. We'd have to get up early in the morning and go up to where the glacier melted, trickling down into a stream, and we would do the ritual of washing our face and hands with him. We would watch the sun come over the other side of the high mountains.

We were just swept into an attunement to the light and to the emotion of the angels and archangel of the sun, Prince Huraksh. He had a way of opening the door to that world. It was really overwhelming. All of us were drawn very deeply into the spiritual path of this master. Even his donkey was caught up in it. There was one night when he actually began to dance in the light of the full moon. We all saw it.

I asked him for a blessing for our marriage at that camp – just a blessing, as we already had been married. He made it into a full-blown marriage ceremony, Sufi style. The whole camp surrounded us, singing, dancing and hugging. We'd never experienced anything in our lives like this. Certainly we never expected to have a Sufi wedding. It was quite another eye-opener- to have so much energy and light and love surrounding us.

His young son Zia, who was about five at that time, came up to the camp. It was interesting to see him sitting at times by his father and the two of them doing things together. It was very special.

The strange thing was I had first seen him in a dream. This was about a year after I was initiated, but before I had gone to Chamonix. I dreamt of being on a train going through the mountains, and then going up to the top of a snow clad mountain where I met an old man with a beard and a young boy. I remembered giving chocolate to the young boy; it was Zia. When I gave him some chocolate I remembered my dream. It had all come true!

I did a number of retreats with Pir Vilayat – actually, I did many of them there, probably like five or six with him in the Pyrenees, where he had a second home. We celebrated his birthday there a number of times. It was just a very special time. We were staying in tents. It was very arid there and there was no water, so they had to bring up barrels of water to

the camp. He had a horse, and he would ride his horse to the camp and give teachings in the morning. He loved riding his horse.

One session, I remember, he was teaching about the ancient Sufis. By that time, I'd been working with him, sort of following up on some of his teachings about the Sufis. He looked at me and he said, "Aziza would you go to my pod?" He had a pod there like his others, "Would you go to my pod and just get those teachings I left on my desk?" So I walked back to his house, and I opened the pod door and there was a falcon perched right on his desk, over the teachings that he was speaking of. The falcon just turned his head and just pierced me with his glance and I thought "Well, I don't think I am going to go in there this time and pick up those papers, thank you very much", and I shut the door. That was a real face-to-face encounter.

Pir had that piercing look. You can see it in some of the photographs from that time. I think he sometimes looked falcon-like, with that eagle eye when he would look at you. It never disturbed me at all; I always thought it was kind of sweet. Probably he thought about the eagles and the birds of prey the same way they looked at him; you know, he just had a rapport with them. Well, I had a rapport with him, and I felt that eagle eye was filled with truth. But, I felt that truth of Pir Vilayat was out of love. So it was a precious time to spend time with him like that.

I remember another incident there with his dog. It looked like a Greyhound; only it had longer hair and was more fancy. Maybe it was an Afghan; a very elegant looking dog. They had a large, very beautiful chair for Pir and he was sitting up there and guiding a Universal Worship. It was a very glorious celebration and he had that special look in his eye, you know, of casting the light everywhere he looked, kindling the light of other souls. The moment he got up, his dog jumped up on his chair, and he did the same thing. He just looked all around at everybody. It was a very funny incident.

It's so interesting that in my life I had been to many places where I later went with Pir Vilayat. In this case, I had been at a finishing school in Switzerland with the aristocrats of Europe. After the school year end-

ed I drove with a friend of mine to her home in the Pyrenees, right near where Pir Vilayat lived. My friend whose parents were aristocrats had a chateau and we visited the ruins where the Cathars had lived, their sacred home. So I already had a feeling for that whole neighborhood. It was so interesting.

I remember once, I was driving with my friend's mother in this stately old car along this road in the Pyrenees, and there was a dead chicken in the road. She stopped the car, got out, threw the chicken in trunk of the car, and I'm sure we had it for dinner that night. That very quickly cleared away my impressions of what aristocrats were like.

Pir loved his little pod; it was very simple. There was always only a cot, a little breakfast table, and a stove, very simple living quarters. How happy he was with that. In this modern day when we're all enjoying more and more conveniences, it is very appealing to go back to simplicity on some level. I understand it, because when my husband and I went to Africa, we did not feel culture shock. We actually had culture shock coming back to the United States, having to deal with all the many complex kinds of things people depend on in this modern world. The way Pir Vilayat could immerse himself in simplicity, in spirit, was very appealing. And it was the same in India. As soon as he got up in the foothills of the Himalayas, by the river, his personality became sort of mute. He got into harmony with that setting and became a *sanyasin*, a being just totally absorbed in God, wanting to share that experience with others. It's very special to see how someone, who grew up and was educated in Europe and had a fine mind, could change his whole persona and be totally empty of all that and then somehow share it with us. The word *sanyasin* means "whiteness," "colorless." to be absorbed in the Divine. That is how it felt to me. It was so very beautiful to see him in that mode.

If you had only seen him in the States you would hardly recognize him in India. He just changed his persona completely with that culture despite the fact that he struggled with his part-Indian heritage. Certainly, we know he didn't like India at times. But when we were hiking up with

him from Rishikesh, across a river, then up this path toward Nilkanth, he seemed to be going home. You could feel that.

We were going up to a sacred pilgrimage site for Lord Shiva and then into the jungle, on the way to visit a cave of a great *rishi*. I think this was the cave where Pir Vilayat, many years before, saw the fine *rishi* who inspired him. He was taking us to the same place.

That evening, we stayed in a palace in ruins, which is such a beautiful image for the Sufi's life. At one time it was the home of a maharaji or something. There was actually an earthquake that night, and the building shook. It was very dramatic. This is a site where Lord Shiva had been, so you can imagine how very powerful it was. There was a street sweeper who was supposed to be an enlightened being. He came especially to greet Pir Vilayat. It was very moving to see Pir Vilayat greeting this street sweeper. The street sweeper tried to touch Pir Vilayat's toes in an honorable greeting. But Pir Vilayat didn't want that; instead he tried to hug him in the Sufi tradition. So, they ended up on the ground trying to hug each other. It was so touching to see that, to see the ecstasy that these two beings shared.

The next morning, we started hiking up this path toward this cave. But he worried about us. He would say "There are tigers in these jungles so I want you to stay together and don't wander off." But as you know, Sufis are people who don't like to listen to rules or advice. So of course, we immediately noticed several people in the group were missing; we were sure they had been eaten by the tigers. Eventually, we reached this cave; it took hours. There were a hundred mossy little steps going up to this huge cave. It was supposed to be one of the caves where the *Upanishads* were written. There was a young *rishi* in the cave at this time and it was such a powerful experience meditating in there. It was all very beautiful.

Before I met Pir Vilayat, I grew up in the United States in a rather traditional family. But, when I was school age, I went away to a boarding school in Europe, and then then spent a year abroad during college in Italy. I met many interesting and very different kinds of people. The finishing school I went to had many children from aristocratic families,

people from all around the world. We had princesses from Saudi Arabia and the like. Once, I went to Iran with a friend from school and stayed with her family. There I met some Sufis. In a way, Pir Vilayat somehow brought those worlds together for me. He showed how you could be in a very spiritual environment, or on a spiritual path and be in the world but not of it. What I appreciated very much was that he showed how that could be natural in some ways.

A Sufi is trained by experience, personal experience, rather than by any dogma. Since I always believed that, I admired it so much in his teaching. I was tired of people telling me how the world was supposed to be, or how things are, because I trusted myself. I often felt that I was not in-sync with what people were saying about the way things were. But, Pir Vilayat was so genuine in that respect; he really guided us through the spiritual teachings to personal experience on the inner planes. And I carefully observed his manner in dealing with people. He had a noble manner, which showed in his many beautiful qualities, such as his great love for people, a love that was unconditional.

In the early years especially, I felt his love for the transcendent, for the higher planes was so strong. Despite that, he did manage to talk about experience on the earth plane. He tried to give the teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan in a way that was helpful both in the inner work and in our lives. That took a lot of detachment on our part. I think that later on, there was a swing back into awakening in life, *samadhi* with open eyes, so to speak, integrating both of those experiences.

You know, everything, including the elements progress from the physical world to the spirit world of air and light. So again and again, he taught the steps toward awakening consciousness showing there are many paths to that state of oneness. First of all, in his training, he would give different meditations that would show stages of awakening, like Patanjali's *yoga sutras* or the Buddhist *satipattanas* or *jnanas* or stages to *samadhi*. When you sat with him, it was like being on an elevator, just going up through the stages into that state. It was such a blessing to have a living teacher who had that ability. He paved the way; he himself both lived and loved those teachings and the experience of sharing them.

He developed the Alchemical Retreat process to help do that. There are a total of six stages. The first part of it is *solve*, dissolving the self or the old, and the second part is *coagule*, which is recreating the new or recreating one's being in that light of the inner vision of your soul. Then he said, "Well, I'll create a seventh one which will be resurrection." In time, he would give wazifas that corresponded to each stage. There were so many different wazifas; we probably covered 99 names plus some more.

They are really living vibrations. Since he was a musician himself, he had a real rapport with pure vibration and sound. When he did these practices with us, you could feel the power and presence of the being of that practice. He would go through those stages of retreat again and again. He would continue doing it, but he would not say it the same way. He was very creative and intuitive, weaving that same system in the more subtle planes. It's similar to learning the scales, doing them over and over and then starting to improvise.

During the many training sessions, whether it was at the Abode, in Europe in the Pyrenees or at Fazl Manzil in Suresnes, France, he would reveal stages of awakening. He would speak of the different attunements of spiritual masters, saints and prophets so that you felt as if you knew them in a very intimate way. Then he would also lead practices to bring forth the qualities that helped awaken the Divine Manner in his students. What a blessing to be a part of that very rich time.

Once when he was going through a lot of wazifas – wazaif, names of God, at the end he sort of paused, and he looked at me and said, "Well, have I gotten them all?" And I said, "No, you've forgotten patience." And he said, "Oh, I don't have any." So that showed a sense of humor, I thought, because, you know, he put up with all of us. In the end he did work with Sabur. He did mention the Divine Patience.

He had a bit of a Shiva energy in him; he liked to work with something until he got it down, transmitted it and then he would just let it go, or would integrate it in different ways. He didn't let it go completely. He would give a certain teaching on a system, but then he would begin to weave it into other systems in a more subtle way. That's the way he

worked. I think it's just like building scaffolding and then when it's built, you knock over the scaffolding and let the building stand. After he got the system down, the process would become very intuitive and he just let it come in when it was appropriate to the unfoldment of the meditation he was leading.

All systems do restrict one somewhat and I think he was truly a free spirit. Also, he had such a quick mind and intelligence. Of course, he really admired those beings who had gone before him, who had found illumination and freedom in their spirit. And so, I think he wanted to learn and transmit their ideas and spirit. But at the same time, I think there was a moment where he just felt free of it all. I think it was just a natural progression and I saw it as part of his own unfoldment. But he had to be always moving along, exploring new horizons. He was growing at the same time as he was giving us these teachings. What I mean is that, he couldn't be held back either. He was just really flying in the inner realms. And, you know, he had a gift of being able to put words to an experience that was not only beyond words, but beyond human understanding. Still, somehow he managed to articulate that, and actually keep on articulating these experiences.

He possessed such a great gift. His teachings were like living prayers that had been passed on from those who had done them before; we were re-creating that attunement and that quality in our day and time to be passed on to the future generations. I thought this was one reason why his teachings were really very vital and very alive as well as very beautiful. In this way I felt he was a Sufi through and through. Also for example, in the way he had of imbuing his teachings with heart quality.

He had a certain princely quality. We had him to dinner a number of times over the years, and I noticed a certain noble quality about him. Maybe it was in his old world manner that was both very gracious and elegant. But I think manners meant a great deal to him and he certainly had beautiful manners. At the same time, he was also a dervish. He could go beyond any kind of civilized manner and just be ecstatic.

I think he was actually quite a shy man. He was quite shy and reserved. Reserve was a big part of it, I think. But that's the beautiful part

about it. On the other hand, he could be emotionally totally vulnerable to you and reveal such deep emotion and tears or love or joy. This came out, for example, when he spoke about his sister, Noor, growing up together and how she was the mother of the family, after his father's death.

He could sit forever, he'd fold up his legs and sit like a pretzel for hours and hours. And then, even when our knees were aching and sore and we needed a break to move around, he would let us get up, but he would continue to sit there. Once in New York, I remember someone going up to him and saying, "Oh, you look so peaceful and it's so amazing you can just sit there. How does it feel?" And he said, causally, "It's excruciating."

I remember being at the airport with him one time in Boston. We were flying to India; there were a whole bunch of us in the group. We had to wait a long time. The steward who was serving him at the counter said, "My, Mr. Vilayat, you certainly have a large family." He said, "If you only knew." And I think that was true. There were so many beings, you know, in his presence, seen and unseen.

But he would laugh at himself too. I remember one funny experience. He had been travelling and had just flown in and was obviously exhausted. At one point in a *samadhi* meditation he just *went off*. We all just sat there. Afterwards, we found out he wasn't in *Samadhi*; he said he'd been sleeping. He said he had a little sleep in the middle of that meditation.

I can remember another time he was grumping about something, and I said, "Well, why don't you just practice what you preach? Why don't you take that person's point of view and see how it feels for him?" He said, "Oh, no." I said, "Why don't you just take his point of view?" He said, "Oh, you mean, practice what I preach?" And we both laughed.

He was never afraid of showing his human weaknesses. You could see him struggling with his personal relationships, bringing up a family, yet dedicated to his spiritual quest, and his love for being a hermit while being involved at the same time in life. The way he showed such a breadth of being was very inspiring. He would enjoy a good meal and that sort of thing. In that way it was a real reconciling the irreconcil-

ables. He wasn't perfect, and he made many mistakes. I think he learned by his mistakes, they were painful to him, and they were painful for us to see. But they were human.

Once when we were having a very difficult time with a family issue, we asked for his help and there was really nothing he could do to help us. It was so interesting. You build up the faith that this person can create miracles, but there was no miracle that he could give our family in this particular problem. I thought about Abu Yazid Bistami, this ancient Sufi, who would take his students to the brink of hell, and then he would look down into the abyss and say, "Well, you have to go down there and bring those people back out." I felt like that's what Pir Vilayat did at that moment. It seemed like he was saying, "Well, you know, this is a very painful problem and you have to go down there and help that person out. I can't wave a magic wand and make it all beautiful again." Even as painful as it was, it was a really important life lesson.

There was one time when I was with him in the Alps, and there was a woman going through a divorce who was suffering a great deal. I turned to Pir and said, "Well, why don't you help her?" And he replied, "Good intentions can have bad results". Basically what he was saying was there was nothing he could do. In other words, that person had made her choices and it wasn't his to change anything. To see his detachment was a great lesson for me. Because, I know he felt a great deal of love for her, but he was *shahid*. He was witnessing the experience, like seeing and not seeing, and in that way healing. He was helping to heal that person, by not engaging. So that was interesting. I saw him do that many times. It was an important teaching. I could feel his love, but also his detachment in those situations where he would help the person by just being present, just by his presence.

In the same way, as a student of Pir Vilayat, you had to learn how to listen and not listen at the same time. You had to maintain a presence.

He used his life to illustrate his teachings, not because he enjoyed talking about himself. For example, when he told us about working for the Pakistani delegation, and some of the stories from his time on a ship. How you had to work with the glance to be conscious of movement on

the horizon, for example. In these ways he was illustrating mastery or developing inner sight. Then of course, most of the stories about his early life were about Murshid.

I was so deeply touched when Pir told us of his experience of climbing in the Himalayas and visiting a cave where he met this being of light. This was the rishi who said to him, “Why have you come so far to see yourself?” He often followed that story by telling us that you have to experience yourself as a being of light, as being authentic and transmitting light. I remember him saying how much these light meditations meant to him. Those morning meditations, and times when we attuned to the transcendent self were really the most inspiring times for me.

I was in a retreat in Florida with him one winter. He was doing a wonderful early morning meditation on light and it was raining quite hard. While I was sitting there meditating, all of a sudden the sky opened up and the sun came out. Suddenly it seemed clear and I thought to myself with my eyes closed, “Oh, how wonderful! Today was going to be a sunny day after all.” A little while later when the meditation ended, I opened my eyes and it was still raining. That was a really special moment of light for me, opening the crown chakra and experiencing other dimensions of light, awakening. It was a very tangible experience. The same thing happened in a meditation with inner sound where I was very definitely hearing the sound of the universe, the *hu*. I thought it was an airplane flying over-head, except the sound kept going on and on. I thought “That’s strange. There must be an airport around here or something.” You know, your mind just doesn’t want to accept the truth sometimes. Then all of a sudden, I realized that the inner sound had been awakened and that was what I was hearing. Those are beautiful moments when that happens.

In those early days, we did a lot of light meditations, and stages of awakening to light. I had the feeling that I was being given some mystical recipes to unfold the inner light and radiate it. He had a way of opening the door to the spheres of light and holding it open as we tried to travel there to reclaim our memory of those higher spheres.

He had a special gift for everyone he encountered. He could use his glance, which was actually the light of his soul to inspire. This was especially true during *darshan*, a moment when he would look in your eyes and you could feel that light of wisdom begin to reveal yourself to yourself. The way it worked was rather mysterious, almost miraculous. And yet, there was something so clear and telling about your own spiritual unfoldment in those moments, it was really like a moment of awakening. Over the years, he taught us how to work with that glance. Often after a meditation or *zikr*, he would instruct us to direct the light through the eyes to illuminate our life situations. That was both very subtle and very practical as well as it could become a tool in our everyday life. It was all part of his special gift, to give each of us tools to work with the spiritual dimension and bring it to fruition in our everyday life.

He himself was gifted with the ability to be very present to his inner senses: to the universal light, sound, and even the perfume, and he could maintain that. In his presence one could somehow reflect that and remember those inner experiences, really those mystical experiences. This would often become clear during a retreat when we would meditate in the morning or during the day on light and then walk out in nature. One felt as if one were walking in a transfigured landscape of the soul. You just saw and sensed things in a very mystical way. The colors were very brilliant and the light filtering through the trees was magical. And you felt the sacredness of all of life in those moments. That was a very precious experience

He had another very special gift, which was called giving *darshan*. He could enter the *akasha* of knowing the Divine Consciousness, the Divine Presence, and the Spirit of Guidance would speak through his intuition. I think he was able to tune himself pretty much at will. And then he would just sit in front of you, and he could speak to your soul. He would say things that were just unbelievably accurate, not just about the past, but the future as well. He said things which often you didn't know yourself. Or, perhaps you were both conscious and at the same time unconscious about them, and yet, when he spoke of them, you knew he spoke the truth on a very deep level. But, he could be very strong and dervishy too, if that was what a person needed. It was all very remarkable.

It was a very precious moment when you felt seen, seen in a way that you always longed to be seen by your parents or by others. It's such a rare gift in our human experience to feel that someone sees you for who you truly are and not just for your appearance or whatever. He was witnessing at the highest level. Of course, he would do that very gently; he knew how to show you to yourself in a way that you could assimilate and work with. It seemed as if he could take a torch made of the light of his own soul and just cast it upon you. At that moment you felt you were being seen in a rare and exquisite way. Someone was seeing you for who you truly were, in your archetypal nature in all its splendor. It's a gift to be seen that way, and once you experience that, you carry that with you forever. You always hope that someone else will see you that way. Indeed, there are people who do see you that way, but not everyone. It gave an exquisite feeling of being loved.

I remember one time he was giving *darshan*, and a person came who had been on drugs at some time, I saw tears coming in Pir's eyes as

he looked into that soul that had damaged itself. But then, he said such beautiful things about the soul and its unfoldment that it seemed like a tremendous healing. It had to be a tremendous healing.

But, there are times when the words don't even need to be spoken. Words can take away from the experience, because when someone in that high attunement sees you, it's like looking (seeing yourself) through the eyes of their soul; they can bring you into the consciousness of being light, being awakened. They can wake you up in that moment. Then, you remember who you were and who you are, you experience a state of awakening. In that there can be a sense of fulfilling ones life's purpose..

Once, he was giving my husband, who was a lawyer, a darshan. He said, "Your work is going to be about taking burnt matchsticks and building beautiful structures with them". I think it meant that in his life, he was going to take things that were somehow destroyed or in a state of collapse and he was going to have to build them back up into something beautiful. We became directors of the Abode and building the Abode back to a beautiful dwelling for human beings. I'm sure that was part of it.

Then I remember another *darshan* he gave. It was after my husband and I had come to be co-directors of the community. He said, "You're going to be the mother of the community". And that seemed very strange to me in some ways, because I didn't quite feel that way, I felt more like a child. But in fact, that was what happened. So in time, after three or four years, I began to enter that role. What it meant was that I had to keep my heart open to all beings and I couldn't have so many personal friendships. But I had to be present to all beings in the community. They were all part of my family. So that was a great spiritual lesson.

There were moments when you would be sitting in the group and your eyes would just connect with his eyes. At that moment, there would be a transmission of light and awakening, and my heart would be filled with that inexpressible love and joy. Once, at Chamonix, I came down to the post office and just looked at the little postmaster, there must have been so much love and joy in my eyes, because he started laughing. He couldn't stop laughing. He just went into a fit of giggles. It was such a funny experience. I had no idea that I could have such an impact. Another time, after meditating with Pir Vilayat in another Alps camp, one of the parents of a dear friend, Ophiel van Leer, came to visit. They were long time Sufis too, from Holland. His father took one look at me and burst out into tears. He said he felt there was just so much energy, so much soul light that it touched him very deeply. That came as a result of being in Pir Vilayat's presence. Without your even knowing it you were just going deeper and deeper into the essence of your soul and spirit, and then you just lived it. The way he would pave the path into the inner planes, you didn't even realize that anything was different, because it all felt so natural.

Another time, after the camp in the Alps, we were invited to a little gathering with the mayor. Now this was right after the Universal Worship, which closed with a lot of glorification. I watched Pir getting out of the car and he was hardly touching the ground. He was almost dancing with ecstasy as he walked across the street. I said, "Pir Vilayat, take a moment and breathe in to get your feet on the ground." I thought that the mayor would probably want to know that things were in hand up at the camp. That was an interesting moment.

I remember those times in India when we were riding elephants with him. He loved to talk about the power and majesty of an elephant. I

remember we went to visit the elephant house in Bodh Gaya. It was just amazing; he had such a rapport with these majestic beings. And then later on, we did take a ride through the jungle on elephants with him. He just sat there like a king, you know it was really exquisite to see that. He could go from being very playful to being very majestic and kingly. It was a fine experience just to watch him.

Certain places where we went brought out certain qualities in him. In India he often had an aloofness and he was more the detached *sanyasin*. At that time, he became peaceful and very otherworldly. I can remember him that way, wearing his turban, dressed in robes walking with his cane along the Ganges. There were days when he would go into that transcendent space and just stay there. Naturally, it was an exquisite experience as he lifted us all with him.

There was one time when Pir Vilayat took us with him to meet a famous saint, Baba Sita Ram Onkarnath Dam. He was a very slight man whose hair, never having been cut, grew down to his feet. His countenance was luminous; you could feel that his whole being was spirit. When they met you could feel their joy. They touched their heads together and held them there. Seeing the honor and respect these two beings had for one another was one of my most precious moments. As we sat mediating there was a solar eclipse. There was so much Light and Presence. It lifted my consciousness as if to the highest Himalyan peaks.

In the mountains in Chamonix he was very different again. You could see how much he loved it there when you saw him walking in the morning along the glacier. We would do these ritual purifications in the frigid water coming out of the glacier, watching the sun rise over the mountains on the other side of the valley. You could just feel his rapport with light at the high, refined altitudes. It brought out the qualities of the archangel in him. It felt so vast and magnificent.

We did those same early morning meditations in Ajmer by a lake in the desert. The lake was covered in mist as the sun rose over it. Pir would lead us in meditation as we looked into the rising sun. We would bathe our eyes in the mist. It was like being with such a noble being who had a great kinship with the sun. He was like a prince of the sun. We were indeed greeting Prince Huraksh, who is the archangel of the sun, but it was certainly reflected in Pir Vilayat and in each of us as we were brought into a state of glorification and ecstasy. It was really magnificent. Then came the chance to enter the cave of Moinuddin Chishti with Pir Vilayat. I was thinking, "Oh, this is going to be just such an ecstatic experience. But then it turned out differently. I felt like I had a shower of light that gave a feeling of total sobriety. I was just totally sober when I came out of that cave. It was an amazing experience of awakening.

He loved being in the mountains; it brought out a playful side in him. You could see him almost skipping up the mountainside. He was so at home in nature and enjoyed his cave in Chamonix. There was just a little hammock that swung and a small area where you could sit and meet with him. He was as much at home in the cave as he was in the Oriental Room of Fazl Manzil, which had elegant, fine furniture and artifacts and paintings. He had the ability to be at home wherever he was. He had so many facets of his being and they came out at different times according to the atmosphere of the place he was in and who was with him at the time.

You could see how he dealt with difficult situations and difficult demands made on him while maintaining equanimity. This was part of his total dedication to serving us. For example, as I got to know him over the years, I could see that in many ways he was a shy person. Nevertheless, he was willing to put himself into situations that required him to relate to so many people both internally and externally. That was quite remarkable. He also had a gift of acknowledging people fully, both inner and outer, while at the same time, keeping a loving detachment. So,

there were both: he was very present, supportive and kind, but at other times he could be hard, and challenging. He was willing to give of himself, but at the same time, he was beyond the human dimension.

I would say that he had a tremendous longing in his soul to be in nature. In his appreciation of nature he reflected the unfolding of the divine nature in one's self. He managed somehow to be in the world, but not of it. There is something about stepping aside from our everyday life and relationships that can feed our soul. He helped us all to feel that. Those retreats we did in nature with him were exquisite. It's true, they were hard, but it was a dynamic and transformative process that really put us through some inner changes, energetically, mentally, and emotionally. I always felt that he was going through it with us and it wasn't easy on him either. He had his own issues to work with; and, in that way I always felt he was very human. I never lost sight of that. He was a very interesting human being, but at the same time, a meditation master, a true spiritual master. As some people got to see that, they found that they could not deal with his human faults, so to speak, that humanness. But for me, it was somehow something I accepted as part of the whole being. I never lost sight of the fact that he had his feet on earth but he had his head in the heavens and he was doing the very best work he could possibly do.

For many, many years Pir Vilayat dedicated himself to Murshid's teaching. In *The Message in our Time*, and many other teachings, he strived to uncover the essence of these teachings and then elaborate on them. His aim was to explain what he thought was today's outlook on any particular teaching. He often led the practice of *tassawuri*, where one first envisions the teacher or the messenger and then, in *tawajjuh*, you enter into the consciousness of that messenger, thereby deepening your emotional attunement to that messenger. For years he did forms of attunements to Hazrat Inayat Khan, which is called *tassawuri* Murshid. He did this with us on his pilgrimages to India by taking groups to

places where Murshid had visited, also by meditating and doing these practices in the Oriental Room in Fazl Manzil. This is the room where Murshid meditated and where many artifacts of his life remain.

I think he succeeded in opening the door to his father widely for many of us through these (methods) ways. Of course, there were some people who felt an attraction to Pir Vilayat alone because he was so dynamic, but I would say the majority of the *mureeds* that I knew over the years felt a deep connection with Murshid as well.

At an especially sacred place on the mountain at the Abode, we built the Sanctuary, which was I think a first attempt to represent the Universel. We had a Cosmic Celebration there honoring all the Masters, Saints, and Prophets. It was also celebrating the Universel coming down to earth, which in a way each of us represents. In this moment when he could bring together the different messengers, he succeeded in bringing heaven to earth. He could take a whole group of people and lift them up. We all shared the jubilation in his being. Here he really became the majestic conductor. He always said that when he left the world he would like to conduct choirs in heaven. You could see that he was much more than a spiritual director, he was moving and directing energy. There was more than just what was happening here before our eyes; you could feel the heavens were moved. He was an intermediary between heaven and earth.

Pir Vilayat had a very deep longing to finish what Hazrat Inayat Khan had started, but had not completed. It was almost as if he had made a pledge to his father on the inner planes to continue his work. So when he got the inspiration to build the Universel in Suresnes, we were all very enthusiastic to support that project. He would often have his beggar's bowl and ask for contributions to begin the project. The original design incorporated four Buddhas sitting back to back. He had several architects involved in this project. One was Nader Ardalan a great

Iranian architect. Once when Pir Vilayat was speaking about the vision his father had had, he was so enthusiastic and felt it so deeply that both he and Ardelan cried. Then he sang Murshid's sung *zikh* . It was very touching. It was so beautiful, their tears and all.

Slowly but surely, it was designed and built. The actual construction was very challenging for everybody. I think on the physical plane, just to pull together the materials and the brokers and the finances was a very difficult and frustrating experience. However, opposition seemed to give Pir Vilayat an impulse to move forward. It really stimulated his energy. There was a lot of opposition, but of course, when you build something like that, representing unity, diversity is really magnified. And so it was. Somehow he reconciled the irreconcilables. Even though you could never see how two things could fit together, he could and he would bring them together. I think that was one of his gifts: to see opposites and create unity, despite the opposing pull, and somehow find balance and equanimity in that.

The celebration when it was finished was magnificent. There were different members of the Inayati family, music and representatives from all the religions, a choir and lots of jubilation. The design was very lovely. The idea was to give it a crystal quality so that it would reflect light. It had a beautiful marble floor and was surrounded by a pool of water. I must say, over the years, just seeing him celebrating in the Universel on different occasions helped to inspire many of us with other projects that required overcoming many obstacles.

There came a time when he asked me to assist him in his retreats. Over many years, I would become sort of a sounding board and would listen to the teachings and practices and then try to re-create them for others so that they could continue doing them on their own. I never had to struggle in doing it, he would speak and I would feel like I was receiving a direct transmission from him. It was almost as if he was writing his words on the template of my soul. It was like a stream of consciousness coming through all the time. He had a special gift of being

able to work in that way with those individuals who were receptive. He could use that person who would then become a part of the teaching process. It was different with Puran, who was his assistant with retreats prior to me. He would always question the process, would talk about what worked and didn't work, and how best to frame it. In my case, it was quite different. The framework, how it fit in, as well as what he was trying to communicate, were always very clear to me.

My work in the evolution of the retreat process all started during that earlier period when I was having dreams. There was a time when I felt like I was on some kind of journey in another world, where I met many beings on the inner planes. I was being connected with the spiritual government of the world. And during that period this being came through very strongly and said, "You've got work to do." Then when I was in Chamonix, I felt there was a deep calling to participate in the evolution of the retreat work. So I went through a very rigorous training to guide retreats. When we moved to the Abode in 1980, Pir Vilayat asked me to assist him.. He was doing a whole series of small group retreats, some a week or more at that time. My assisting him was a part of this natural evolution. I felt very comfortable in that work and felt very nourished by it. There was never any question about what to do or not to do. The process unfolded in a very natural way. I had a deep commitment to the retreat process itself, because I had gone through a long retreat myself, which was very transformative. It had cleared up a lot of old issues. It was both an awakening, a renewal, and a rebirthing. Having experienced it myself first-hand, I knew how very effective, and just how transformative it could be. I wanted to do everything I could, to help bring that process further into manifestation. Assisting Pir Vilayat was certainly a good way to do that. I felt that here was a process I wanted to share with others. And so, we got into a rhythm of doing that at the camps, both in the United States, and in the Alps camp where I would assist him.

I can remember someone said to me, “Why weren’t you more creative and, doing your own thing?” On hearing that, I thought they really didn’t understand how profound and how creative this process was for me; it was taking part in the transformation of human beings and manifesting the Divine Nature. So, it was very creative. I was very deeply touched by the process, and also moved by the power of it, the power to transform. Pir Vilayat was so creative in his approach to the process himself. Often he would change directions, whether it was rising above the world, or entering more deeply into the depth of universe, or expanding out into the cosmos, or awakening in life. Whatever direction he went, he managed to weave these fabrics together: to weave a tapestry of the spiritual journey in very creative and wonderful ways.

When he was teaching, he was often so inspired and in such an altered state of consciousness that it was hard for people to remember or frame it. I felt that I was given the inner direction and guidance to take what he was offering and put it in a logical, developmental form that people could assimilate. I saw where he was going and where he wanted to take people. Very often it was clear to me right from the beginning what the steps were. It was almost like I was the notebook that he was writing on.

He had the freedom just to flow. I understand now that when you sit in front of a group, it’s almost like every soul speaks to you about their longing, and in a way, you absorb that energetically. You just take that attunement and in your own being it transforms itself into a spiritual practice. So, I think it was both; I think he had a sort of a map of what he was hoping to achieve. He would help people open the door to these thresholds of awakening consciousness, but then he would just flow with what was happening. I can’t tell you how many times I heard people say, “Oh, I know he did that just for me.” or, “He spoke just to me.” But in reality, he was speaking to everyone on some level.

He did that in different ways. Sometimes it was his attunement to a master, saint, or prophet. He would just tune into that being – whether it

was Melchizedek, the high priest of Jerusalem, or some *rishi* or Murshid himself. When he spoke of Shiva on Mount Kailash with the snake around his neck, for instance, taking in the toxins of the world and transmuting them, it was not just the image of that being that he would transmit to you, but there was a vibrational, an energetic experience that was transmitted as well. All of a sudden, you felt like you were somehow that being. You became part of that being vibrationally, the evolution of that being, what they were bringing to humanity, to the unfolding of humanity at that time.

He could work with his own *chakras*, his *lataif*, opening them at different levels. When those subtle centers were opened, it was like opening a window for anyone who was ready to go through. They needed to have purified their mental and emotional bodies enough, which is to say, to be purified both energetically and spiritually to stand the vibration, and go through that threshold. Then slowly, he would awaken these different subtle centers, and then you would be a mirror for that. Also, your consciousness would be awakened into those higher or deeper levels. When he was really in a state of *samadhi* he would just stay there for a period of time and keep that window open. That threshold could be open for anybody who was ready to move to that level of consciousness. And sometimes when you passed through there was a *hal*, which was like a special moment. You had a high, an eureka moment. But other times, it went more slowly, you felt like you were progressing to a *maqam*, a stage of your spiritual unfoldment, where you could hold that attunement yourself to some degree, naturally, not as much as Pir Vilayat could, of course.

But then, there came a whole new challenge, I think the body of *mureeds* were now longing for integration and more meaningfulness in their lives. Instead of just awakening consciousness and finding these more subtle states of emotion, many felt the need to be more grounded. And when that point came, one had to think about *tawhid*, which is

awakening in life. I think that was a great challenge for him. It challenged him to change his modality of teaching, to bring in more of the psychology of the creative artist to our lives, the healer. So there was a period where he really started shifting his attunement to a feeling of understanding, and embracing life more fully.

He was truly a musician of the soul. He enabled individuals to return to their origins and re-inherit their divine nature thereby healing their sense of limitation. And, he had the capacity to open individuals' minds and hearts so that they could see things in new and different ways that they hadn't imagined. He put them in touch with their potential being within. He could do this by transmitting light and inner sound and in other ways as well. He could awaken one's intuitive knowing through his glance or through dream states. I know this through my own personal experiences.

I thought he was absolutely a unique being. I felt so privileged having known him in spite of all his idiosyncrasies and personal challenges. I felt it had been an honor to know someone of that magnitude. Magnitude: that's a good word for it.

I loved the gifts he was giving us as well as his teachings, and at some point, it went beyond the person for me. You know, I think it was when I reached the point where I just honored him as a great teacher for me. His personal problems or the problems in his life were just very human, but they didn't matter to me. I felt a lot of compassion for his struggles in life as they got greater. But, all that seemed to fade into insignificance.

As time went on, I learned to get into his thinking. Especially in my dreams, I could see things from his perspective. It was almost like there was no separation. Finally, on one of those retreats out in California he said, "Aziza is walking in my footsteps". It was very beautiful, and I was very touched. "More than anyone, she sees what I am and how I am doing things." I guess it was natural. You see, it had become so

natural, I never thought of it as anything unique. I thought everybody was doing the same thing.

After his second stroke, Pir Vilayat said he would be unable to meet with them anymore but he would meet with them in the seven Planes of Light. He often spoke of building the body of Light, the rainbow body of the Buddhists. For this he gave the practice Ya Ba'ith, the resurrector. We were doing Suluk when the call came that his time had come. Pir Zia had to leave, so I took his place. When the word came that he had died, we saw a flock of geese flying overhead, and then a rainbow appeared in the sky. Everyone saw it. Such wonderful omens.

In the end, at his funeral and memorial service, the coffin was placed in the Universel, and it was covered by multi-colored rose petals. It coincided with the time of his birthday, so they had eight lovely tall candles set around representing the eight decades of his life. It was such a beautiful image.