

# LECTIO DIVINA: A CALL FOR SALAH & POETIC BEING

MOMINA KHAN, PHD

## ABSTRACT:

I reflect back on the ARTS Pre-Conference 2017 of the Canadian Society for Studies in Education. It was a day full of non-linear knowledge exchanges, conversations, creations, contemplation and arts-based activities. Collaborators dwelled in, engaged, and emerged together spiritually, poetically, and musically to rekindle their learning, coexistence and mystical understandings. I was in my fasting state with dry mouth, hungry stomach, and thirsty soul combined with contemplative sessions, plus my scholarly and poetic inspirations in the flesh. It was purely an epoch of unbridled spirit tenderly wrapped in creative and contemplative ways of being present in the moment, with the flawless beauty of a flute in the backdrop. I stood in a single corner of a square room. I began my *Lectio Divina*. I entered *Salah*. I reached contemplation through praying poetically.

## BIO:

Momina Khan is a mother, poet, and researcher who recently received a PhD

in Education in 2018 from the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. In life and scholarship, as a mother and woman of color she engages in constructing counter stories through interweaving narrative and poetry. The narratives of her experiences from immigration to citizenship, from multiculturalism to eurocentrism, from parent involvement to parent engagement, and from a racialized mother to a researcher are narratives of gaps, silences, and exclusions shaped in the bumping places children and families experience in schools. She strives to re-conceptualize the dominant aspects of mandated curriculum by decentering the eurocentric perspective, knowledge and content. She challenges curriculum makers, educators and teachers that there are alternative perspectives of knowing worthy of inclusion. Her work & poetry invites and entices schools and educators to become leaders in eradicating barriers to racialized students' sense of self, sense of hybridity, sense of belonging, and sense of citizenship.



Figure 1: Before I bow: the prayer mat [Khan, digital photograph]

## ARTS Pre-Conference CSSE 2017

May 2017 ARTS Pre-Conference at Ryerson University in the city of Toronto, Ontario, where my first ever footsteps were carved on Canadian soil. My steps and status as an immigrant to Canada inscribed a new chapter of life history written on pieces of myself and soul.

### **Nomadic bodies**

bodies in philharmonic momentum  
the scent of age upon pages as we  
cross and write a cosmos of  
complex mobilities and interconnections  
in the throes of space, place, time  
diaspora dallies into daily lives &  
moments split-cell into senses of orientation  
*dinner for two: the home & the host*  
understanding and outlasting kingdom of ties  
handcrafted filigree within & across  
national & international borders  
kinship ties, telephonic relations  
home in the heart or in the heat  
*fractured families*  
geographically dispersed homes, habitats  
sounds on the move in the sweet grass  
morphing into momentous velvet images  
*nostalgic living*  
the fringes and frontiers of intersection  
ideas, philosophies  
relations, bonds  
humanities, civilizations  
histories & identities of I  
self-understanding sleep  
*belonging is coming and going*  
beyond the boundaries  
(dis)location, (re)location  
exit there enter here  
interweaving the lexicon of travel  
dualistic (dis)positions, (re)positions  
bifocality of daily rhythms and encounters

*competing loyalties & realities*  
entanglement of local and global experiences  
disrupting and unwrapping the familiar  
re-doing the spine of being, belonging  
*dual citizenship dual nationality dual identity*  
traveling & transcending the topographical  
borderlands of place and pace  
sociocultural, historical, political  
economical, communal, temporal  
ontological, geographical  
(inter)subjective and (inter)sectional  
(inter)mediate and (inter)dependent  
dimensions - *a new birth*

The preconference day brought back all those faded memories to the forefront, my youngest son's birth at Toronto East General Hospital away from our families, my husband's first job at Toronto Pearson Airport as a qualified doctor, my pushing of a four-seat second hand stroller filled with my four babies, my eldest daughter's first day at kindergarten without any knowledge of the English language, our frequent trips to Goodwill stores, our constant conversion of dollars into rupees, our shopping for discounted clothes and toys for the kids, the excitement on our kids' faces when swinging on the swings in public parks, our first apartment on the third floor of the Cosburn Avenue building, and many more.

ARTS... renovates  
the illusion of memory  
both past and present  
overlapping the gap  
tension & restoration  
the  
absolute difficult  
befalls  
the  
absolute possible

## ARTS-Day Rhythm: Ramadan Begins

An Arts Pre-conference day, full of conversation, creation, contemplation, non-linear knowledge exchanges and arts-based activities. The first formal fast, Ramadan's beginning. Ramadan, the most sacred month for Muslims in the Islamic religion. Muslims all around the world observe strict fasting from dawn to dusk for thirty days. Fasting in Islamic faith is a physically and spiritually uplifting experience of self-reflection, self-restraint, and self-purification in order to attain divine-consciousness. In my fasting state combined with contemplative sessions, plus my scholarly and poetic inspirations in the flesh, it was purely an epoch of unbridled spirit tenderly wrapped in creative ways of being present in the moment, with the flawless beauty of a flute in the backdrop.

As the elevator door opened, there was a kitchen right in front of my eyes at the heart of the space. I put my bag and laptop at one of the tables organized for the collaborators. The space began to feel full as more and more collaborators entered. The kitchen and food were at an arm's length distance. Everyone mingled and munched together. Some of them knew each other as reflected through their comfort level. I did not know any one: I was not a poet, I was not a scholar, I was not an expert, I was not white, I could not eat food, I could not shake hands, and I could not explain what I was feeling. A young female participant brought her hand forward and greeted me with a lovely smile. She also had an accent; my anxiousness began to turn into ease. I was sitting on a couch smiling and chatting through my eyes. They were eating, and I did not want to disturb them.

The euphoric sound of the flute called for reunion, direction, and duration. With every note that it hit, we journeyed to an unknown activity within a known space. The flute became everyone's reliable friend and finest guide physically for the day and spiritually for ever.

ARTS .... the collapse of the distinction  
eternal love between flute and food  
flute mutates into food  
a mighty melody  
whistling nutrition  
for my soul  
food morphs into flute  
an immortal tune  
crooning nourishment  
for my body

it fills me  
bit by bit  
my hungered soul  
my dry mouth  
my vacuumed stomach  
throughout the day  
today  
&  
everyday  
unfolding  
silence  
begins to sing  
like a flute  
in the air  
and  
hunger  
begins to blaze  
like food  
on the flame

### Favourite Quotation

We, as the conference collaborators, were asked to bring a favorite short quote or short poem as part of a Lectio Divina process together. Jalaluddin Rumi who was a 13th Century Sufi mystic and Persian poet is a great inspiration for me. In my *Urdu* school textbooks and among my family members who read his poetry aloud when making references, I grew up with him. I did not know why I picked particularly this quote; perhaps my vision and intention subconsciously mapped a series of intense concepts found within it.

*“Observe the wonders as they occur around you. Don’t claim them. Feel the artistry moving through and be silent. Don’t grieve. Anything you lose comes round in another form.” (Rumi, n.d-a)*

I observed the following tiers enclosed within this quote:

**1. Observe the wonders**

I see wonders in places, faces, people, symbols, things, thoughts, landscapes, and the universe. I keep wondering and pondering till I become part of that wonder. I align my curiosity to intense gazing.

*I reach poetry through the incidental and accidental "wander for wonders."  
(Leggo, 2003, p.12)*

**2. What occurs around you**

I see everything breathing, moving, colliding and vibrating: the rhythms, actions, experiences, life, breaths, heartbeats, nature, water, bodies, sight, blood, day and night. I align my heartbeat with movements.

*I reach poetry through motion, rhythm and location.*

**3. Don't claim them**

I see the ugly game of dichotomous claim: the claim of knowing, beliefs, expertise, legitimacy, entitlement, authority, and supremacy. As poet Leonard Cohen (1993) advises, "Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets through" (p. 373). What I know is not all, what others know could be a call. I commit to rise through enlightenment rather than sink into entitlement. I align my knowing with unlearning.

*I reach poetry through imaginative and elevated thoughts.*

**4. Feel the artistry**

I see and feel the artistry in metaphors. From a particle of dust to a star shining in the sky and in between is all abounding in metaphors. I align the sprinkled dust particles on the earth and the scattered stars in the heavens to "hear the melodies of [my] temperature" (Barba, 1995, p.162), the tunes of my eternal spirit and musicality of my internal silence. I align specks on earth with stars in heaven.

*I reach poetry through divine and metaphorical understandings.*

**5. Moving through**

I see a crack in everything as there is no such thing as walls of cement, and between those cracks, wonder, imagination, knowing, understanding and experience travel and leave traces of light in their wake. I align rupture with refill.

*I reach poetry through transition and in-betweenness.*

**6. Be silent**

I sit in silence to feel the eternal pull, gravity anchoring me to the ground further and farther to the core—more silence. I hear, see, touch, and feel silence and confront imposed compliance. I enter a liberating space where I move to action (Fels, 2002) to unmute my voice and to confirm my presence. I align loud silence with quiet noise.

*I reach poetry through inner voice and wide-open words.*

**7. Don't grieve**

I see gain and loss as natural and ordinary phenomena of our humanly life

experiences. As a result, the emotions of grief and happiness accompany us. Grieving upon losing something or someone from our life is an inevitable process, but our reactions and responses towards grieving play a central role in this venture. Sustained grieving can turn into suffering while contained grieving can turn into healing. "Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional" (Murakami, n.d). I align my wound with nonlinear life and the "renewal that washed upon my soul" (Rajabali, 2017, p. 53).

*I reach poetry through the broken and bandaged pieces of life.*

#### **8. Anything you lose comes round in another form**

I see that giving, not receiving, is a reward. Giving is receiving. I lose myself in humility, I receive tranquility. I lose myself in care (for others), I receive self repair. I lose myself in prayer, I receive miracles.

*I reach poetry through losing myself in the humming of birds and words.*

### **People of Metaphor**

We, the people of intuition not institutionalism  
the people of metaphors not literalism  
the people of conception not commercialism  
the people of spirituality not secularism  
the people of mother earth not capitalism  
the people of magnificence not narcissism  
the people of consecration not consumerism  
the people of evolution not materialism  
the people of sacredness not fundamentalism  
the people of imagination not pragmatism  
the people of soul-full-ness slit from isms

We, sans isms, sans time-frames, sans leakages  
we, a bloc of hoping humans  
texture becomes us  
the cartographer's wrought  
in flesh, bones and blood  
muting & mapping & marrying  
desires of the corporeal body  
released from pollution  
and dissected imitations  
redemption  
a mystical puzzle

to find the sojourning soul  
filling the metrics of life  
may be  
60, 70, 80  
or perhaps ninety  
from end to end

five times a day  
1,2,3,4,5 (×) 30 (×) 12

turning & returning & yearning  
backward, forward  
inward, outward  
upward, downward  
horizontally, vertically

falling	rising	dipping	dropping	moving	leaning
imagining	reciting	merging		bowing	kneeling
earthing		centering		grounding	

an interminable journey  
trodden primrose path  
towards mystery  
searching for ichor

### **Lectio Divina: Process and Progress Together**

As part of contemplative practice, collaborators were sent a three-page introduction to the *Lectio Divina* practice to read prior to the day of our assembly. I was hearing about *Lectio Divina* for the first time, and read the lines and links, words and keywords written in the introduction text carefully and contemplatively. I could understand and feel it clearly, and although I had heard about it for the first time, it was not my first encounter with it.



*Lectio Divina* is a contemplative path into reflection on a text—either Biblical or contemporary (Mesner, Bickel & Walsh, 2015, p. 20). It is “a form of devotional reading in which we allow God to ‘read’ us and respond to our deepest desire. . . . [it is] slow, deliberate, meditative reading in which we allow the words to penetrate our heart and question our spirit” (Nouwen, Christensen, & Laird as cited in Mesner et. al, 2015, p. 20). According to (Mesner et. al, 2015), “traditionally, the process involves reading (lectio), meditation (meditatio), prayer (oratio), and contemplation (contemplatio)” (p. 20).

The found poem below is extracted from (Mesner et. al, 2015, pp. 20-21) asserted stages of *Lectio Divina* and (Paintner’s, 2010, pp. 12-13) steps that are stated in brackets.

~~Reading 1: Lectio~~ (“settling and shimmering”) ~~We invite you to sit with the text in silence and to simply let it sink in.~~

~~Reading 2: Meditatio~~ (“savoring and stirring”) ~~What word/phrase or aspect of the image stands out to you? Try to let this word/phrase or aspect of the image simply emerge organically.~~

~~Reading 3: Oratio~~ (“slowing and stilling”) ~~What is particularly evocative or resonant to you in this text?~~

~~Reading 4: Contemplatio~~ (“summoning and serving”) ~~What is a call to action that you hear in this text?—~~

*Lectio Divina* has roots in both ancient Jewish Haggadah and Christian Benedictine traditions. It continues to evolve and to be applied in a wide range of spiritual traditions beyond the Judeo-Christian (Mesner et. al, 2015, p. 20). As a Muslim woman following and practicing the third mono theistic religion of the world, Islam, I extend *Lectio Divina* beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition by focusing on *Salah* (prayer five times a day). *Lectio Divina* involves specific and contemplative readings of text and scripture, however my verbal recitation of the Quranic text which I read with inner eye and reflect on while praying my *Salah*, is the way in which I practice *Lectio Divina*. Since the day I began incorporating it more and more into my *Salah* practices, my intent for *Salah*, recitation of verses, movements of prayer, contemplation, attentiveness, and spiritual connection to God took a new direction. I began not to focus on what and how I am praying, rather what prayer is doing to me and giving me. I begin to eliminate my sense of self right from the moment I enter *Salah*. I let the prayer seek and speak, conceive and receive, bond and respond to my intentions, utterances, movements, motions, and rhizomatic connections. It takes me to the aporetic space of silence where I become vigilant to listen to and engage with reverberations echoing what lies beyond and in-between *Salah* and the Creator. This led me to a new kind of careful hearing, peace, affirmation, animation, and the total removal of self from my physical body in order to feel my bonding and belonging to the eternal source. I began to pray poetically, and *Salah* became my own daily *Lectio Divina*. I interweave a Judeo-Christian-Muslim perspective on *Lectio Divina* which is encircled in the process, movements, manifestation and lifespan.

### Lectio Divina: Judeo-Christian-Muslim

1. <b>Lectio</b>	<i>Niyyah</i>	Entering	whilst	Reading	<i>Child</i>
2. <b>Meditatio</b>	<i>Qiyam</i>	Centering	whilst	Pondering	<i>Youth</i>
3. <b>Oratio</b>	<i>Ruku</i>	Kneeling	whilst	Responding	<i>Adult</i>
4. <b>Comtemplatio</b>	<i>Sujood</i>	Feeling	whilst	Attending	<i>Elder</i>
5. <b>Eximo</b>	<i>Salaam</i>	Rising	whilst	Submitting	<i>Ageless</i>

sans Steps      sans Self      sans Whilst      sans Source  
 light & wind  
 re (evolve)  
 Eternity

#### Food for Thought, Flute for Soul

Noon. The flute whistles once again. Food for the stomach, and food for the soul, my *Zuhr* (noon) *Salah* began in a quiet corner on a hungry stomach. I stood in a single corner of a square room: therapeutic and thera-poetic space. I began my *Lectio Divina*. I entered *Salah*.

*Salah* is an Arabic word meaning, bowing, worship, prayer. *Salah* is the obligatory Muslim prayer, performed five times each day by Muslims. A “prayer is the highest form, the supreme act of creative imagination” (Corbin, 1969, p. 248) by unveiling of negligence from the soul to restore purification and enlightenment. Prayer is a “theophanic imagination” and poetic manifestation of light, “which determines a relationship between Creator and creature, imply the unity of their being (because it is impossible to conceive of any being extrinsic to absolute being)” (p. 246). Prayer is the divine epiphany manifesting a “theopathic union between divine Compassion and human passion” in which “divine solitude and human solitude: each delivers the other by joining itself to the other” (p.254).

when He shows himself to me, my whole being is vision<sup>1</sup>  
 when He speaks to me in secret, my whole being is hearing<sup>2</sup>  
 when He guides me to a pathway, my whole being is movement  
 when He whispers to me in silence, my whole being is prayer  
 when He nudges into my spirit, my whole being is renewal

Creative imagination in the service of creative prayer through deep concentration

and manifestation of divine unity regulates movements for the celebration of prayer and behind all movements and manifestations is the perfect spirit, the spirit of repair, renewal and wisdom (Corbin, 1969; Khan, 1994).

### Times Five a Day

who says my five is a number  
I + IV no more  
VI - I is none  
boundless addition sudden deletion  
flimsy abstraction curt subtraction  
to be alive  
to strive & thrive  
the cure of the fall  
to rise in a papered fall  
love without death  
the sun and the moon  
visible gears invisible  
invisible nears visible  
it's a suave encounter  
a carapace  
of you and me  
of soul breathing in earth  
Allahu Akbar, God  
in the seven seas  
in the seven skies  
in everything low & high  
poetic, meditative, contemplative  
religio-spiritual  
it's a true call  
a Prayer  
my daily *lectio divina*  
reciting with poetry  
superior, sensorial, symmetry  
listening to the melody of my soul  
speaking to movement  
body abounding  
from dawn to dusk

dusk to twilight night  
kiss and kneel  
pry open the core  
Creator and creature  
capsule of self & soul  
Five is infinity  
five is *Fajar*, dawn  
five is *Zuhr*, afternoon  
five is *Asar*, evening  
five is *Maghrib*, dusk  
five is *Isha*, night

the eternal love between a celestial pair  
sun and moon  
makes me begin

\. *FAJAR - the dawn*

*Silent lullaby lay  
warm in night's comprise  
the moon is rebirthing  
to bestow somewhere else  
a sheen in the cosmos  
veiled sky, serenity at its crux  
faded stars: grey and blue  
preparing to revel in a musical silence  
a birthing sun  
holding a pallet  
the hue of realization  
opaque mindfulness  
ready to paint a paradise for the eyes  
piercing the darkness  
enlightening  
soul hearing the melody that ears cannot  
celestial tune to the earth of earths  
quietude and stillness  
night dew meant to cling to the soil  
sweet vapours rise from the earth*

*glorious rise  
restorative remembrance  
of all truths  
Prayer is superior than sleep*

I step on the prayer mat  
I enter Fajar salah  
*Allahu Akbar*  
Standing  
Kneeling  
Kissing  
the ground  
*God's truth  
is beauty*

٧. **ZUHR - the afternoon**

*the sun charioteers the day  
radiant heat hastening  
to give abundant light and love  
amidst the verdant blinds  
righting the rays  
Ascending  
movement, motion, moisture  
voices and choices  
the sound of weighty winds  
a coterie of creatures  
rhythm in the curve of trees  
beauty in the bow of flowering petals  
spinning wheels on the highway  
thinking, feeling, feeding, doing  
speaking, listening, trusting  
busy mind, busy body*

I step on the prayer mat  
I enter Zuhr salah  
*Allahu Akbar*  
Standing  
Kneeling

Kissing  
the ground  
*God's power*  
*is immortal movement*

Ϛ. **ASAR – the evening**

*the sun sinks low*  
*behind the bend of life*  
*sculpted radiance in a divine setting*  
*gold splashes everywhere*  
*the commotion begins to repose*  
*chirp metamorphoses into whisper*  
*home is the beginning and end*  
*fluttering of day's delight*  
*winding down*  
*the falling light*  
*neither vivid nor dark*  
*in the middle*  
*of transitory time*  
*in a state of losing*  
*day, time, light*  
*moments, movements*  
*descending*  
*time is limited*  
*and so is our worldly stay*

I step on the prayer mat

I enter Asar salah

*Allahu Akbar*

Standing

Kneeling

Kissing

the ground

*God's glory*

*is absolute*

ϛ. **MAGRIB – the dusk**

*On the brink*

*the sun sojourns into  
night and fading light  
luminosity growing dimmer  
painting veins of indigo  
sapien strokes of most blended colours  
on the canvas of today  
shuttering close  
coming to rest  
calm simplicity  
a moment of change and chance  
the gifts and guises of today*

I step on the prayer mat  
I enter Maghrib salah  
*Allahu Akbar*  
Standing  
Kneeling  
Kissing  
the ground  
*God's might*  
*is eternal*

◦. **ISHA – the night**  
*the moon rolls in mirth  
silvery & heavenly light  
crooning a little symphony  
to the squealing stars  
in the dark  
dripping in tranquility  
listening to my heart  
speaking to my mind  
stroking my conscience  
deeming my wonders  
knowing my deepest yearnings  
seeking my inner divine nature  
permeating into my being  
descending to the depth  
of my innermost core*

*agony bequeaths depth  
ecstasy endows height  
I see the light*

I step on the prayer mat  
I enter Isha salah  
*Allahu Akbar*  
Standing  
Kneeling  
Kissing  
the ground  
*God's in me*  
*and so it shall be*

.....

I begin in prayer  
I end in prayer  
I am born  
with & in  
prayer  
I will die  
with & in  
prayer  
I see  
a pattern  
my day keeps  
evolving  
& revolving  
with & in  
a circle  
and so too  
does my salah

*Allahu Akbar*

*I enter  
&  
re-enter*





Figure 2: *Lectio Divina*: spiritual states of ascension [Khan, digital photograph]

### Sacred Salah

Bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem – بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

in the name of *Allah*  
I begin in harmony  
with *Divine Presence*  
the most gracious  
the most merciful  
ruby rug oriented on a line with the *Qiblah*

holy house in the desert  
standing in humility  
in the direction  
of the *Kaaba in Mecca*  
reacquainting myself with  
the earth beneath my feet  
on the verge of  
motion

rhythm

repetition

submission

I enter *Salah*

\*The LECTIO

*NIYYAH*

raised hands

instruments of prayer  
touching the soft of the ear  
the foundation resides in the entry of my heart  
intention is a tapered door on the holy house  
in a state of personal divine service  
I intend to pray without ceasing  
the act of gazing, uttering, hearing  
listening with my passionate ears  
I reach concentration  
*Allahu Akbar*

\*The MEDITATIO

*QIYAM*

overlapped hands

lowering my eyes & head  
overlapped hands on my chest  
standing upright leaps in faith  
as lips read & read  
pondering upon, dissecting quietness  
Centering  
unveiling my consciousness  
now entering peace  
the words are with my eyes  
feeling with my heart, my mind, my soul  
*Allahu Akbar*

\*The ORATIO

**RUKU**

Kneeling

grasping my knees  
sincerity and humility to God  
humility is in God  
I bow down and complete submission  
showing reverence solely to my Creator  
real emancipation sits  
in unconditional devotion  
effusion of being  
created being creative being  
my dissociated self  
from this world and the hereafter  
only  
God's word and God's presence  
hearing Allah's word within my soul...  
an intimate dialogue  
you made me me so I could be me  
I am grateful  
when the heart is alight in trust  
&  
He surely responds  
*Allahu Akbar*

\*The CONTEMPLATIO

**SUJOOD**

I prostrate

hands and forehead deep into the earth of earths  
I feel the highest degree of obedience and servitude  
I place on the earth the loftiest part of my body  
in the presence of the Omnipotent Authority  
I feel You, I came to the world from the dust  
&  
I will again return to the soil  
to be back with you  
I belong to You  
I am blessed

weeping inside out and outside in  
lamentations are saving me from the clutches of sins  
an utter wordless contemplation  
in a divine mirror  
seeing infinite in finite form  
divine voice vibrating  
unity of divinity-humanity  
I feel His tender love and transforming embrace  
I raise my head  
Resurrection, the Day of Judgment  
I will rise up from the 'dust of my tomb'<sup>3</sup>  
and be summoned without end  
*Allahu Akbar*  
*ascending descending transcending*

\*The EXIMO

**SALAAM**

I exit

I depart  
in two/into parts  
turning right  
my right shoulder  
first *Salam*  
turning left  
my left shoulder  
second *Salam*  
a mount of sanctity  
*peace & security*  
*mercy & blessings*  
be upon you  
salutation  
the recording angels  
my deed sheets  
re-turning  
to the thoroughfare of  
being & body  
transcending

## Transcendence Manifesto

I intend yet my prayer *seeks*  
I begin yet my prayer *enters*  
I view yet my prayer *reads*  
I recite yet my prayer *speaks*  
I utter yet my prayer *reveals*  
I stand yet my prayer *ascends*  
I move yet my prayer *journeys*  
I bow yet my prayer *submits*  
I perform yet my prayer *fulfills*  
I feel yet my prayer *touches*  
I focus yet my prayer *deliberates*  
I realize yet my prayer *enlightens*  
I sense yet my prayer *meditates*  
I face yet my prayer *encounters*  
I cease yet my prayer *captures*  
I ground yet my prayer *heals*  
I finish yet my prayer *completes*  
I rise yet my prayer *transcends*  
I accomplish yet my prayer *conquers*

Prayer \_\_\_\_\_ re (occurrence) re (formation)  
*Creator's Creative Creation*

### What does contemplation mean?

Contemplation, neither a clever engagement nor a crystallized awareness, is “being present- in the moment” and an attentiveness and openness to what is “not yet known” (Walsh, Bickel, & Leggo, 2015, p.1). It is a “momentary glimpse into another world” where “the moon stays bright when it doesn’t avoid the night” (Rumi, n.d-b), such a “glimpse has the potential of rewriting the world” (Fels, 2002, p. 5). It is by solely living on the “edge of chaos” (Taylor & Saarinen, 1994, p. 9), where there is something more than what we experience with our senses.

Reborn  
deep down  
in the ocean  
I can't  
hear

see  
touch  
taste  
smell  
speak  
*at last*  
I can  
breathe  
evolving  
no senses  
writing  
no words  
sinking  
no vibration  
I see  
a sea  
of waves  
within  
I hear  
a tear  
of ace  
within  
in (fusing)  
re (turning)  
be (coming)  
be (longing)  
be (ing)  
inter (being)  
for (ever)  
a (live)

I initiate and practice contemplation by distrusting what I already know and believe, by rejecting entitlement, by repressing quest for certitude, by actively stepping into the threatening and unfamiliar, by consciously seeking beauty in broken things, by recognizing haze in light, by finding light in chaos, by accepting messy moments, by feeling peace in clutter, by losing self to uncertainty, by deliberately giving up liberty, by spreading my being flat on the surface of lucid evidences. Finally, by evading my caged body, becoming a formless being, releasing the spiritual person from ready-made testimonies and allowing my flowing breath to fall into a choking beat, I reach “contemplative states of [super]consciousness that include a witnessing

aspect” (Walsh & Bai as cited in Guiney Yallop, 2016, p. 285). I witness collision, interconnectedness and interdependence of body, mind and soul by “suspend[ing] assumptions” and “purposefully delay[ing] conclusions” (Wiebe, 2016 as cited in Sameshima, Miyakawa, & Lockett, 2017, p.48). In witnessing the “collision of light and life” (Keshavaraz, 2006, p.112), I experience the mergence and emergence of the “infinite relational resonance” (Neilsen Glenn, 2010, p.6). I intuit the loss of my sense of rational self in the sea of divine love, I synch self and soul with relativity and feel recomposed. I begin to comprehend the melody of relativity of my body, mind, heart, soul, people, and the world in which I exist. I intend and begin to think rhythmically, pray mystically, and “live poetically” (Leggo, 2005). I engage in being an interbeing, and I exist with energy. The paroxysm of prayer, mysterious sign of recognition, “the beat and the pulse of the heart, the inhaling of the breath” (Khan, 1994, p.74), the exhaling of the words and verses, and the synergy and symbiosis of the creature and creator, drifts me toward “the perpetual and elusive process of [being], [interbeing] [and] becoming” (Gide, 1970, p. 197). This quality of self-awareness and heightened reflexivity expands and extends the boundaries of my being and interbeing to live well for existence and coexistence through “working towards the cessation of suffering for all beings” (Sameshima, et. al, 2017, p.49). My contemplative exercises of *Salah* move upwards and downwards and inwards and outwards; they run in lightness and darkness, and echo in silence and noise; they emanate an uncertain but peaceful awareness-mindfulness. In attuning to this seamless unity of the moment and movement of my spiritual flight, I become indifferent to earthly affairs through experiencing both the “unification of will and feeling, and unification of [divine] essence” (Corbin, 1969, p. 109).

Contemplation galvanizes a unification of epiphanic moment, theophanic imagination, divine response, mystical rhythm, and eternal benevolence. I had always searched for contemplation in quietness, stillness, shadow and shade and with a high attentiveness to run away from both inner and outer noises, but my repeated *Salah* practices taught me that contemplation is a melody of an action not peace. Contemplation is an act of being in a “state of perpetual ascension” (Corbin, 1969, p. 206) where ascending movement of renewed and recurrent creation never ceases. By juxtaposing my inner noise to outer roars, I hear the ultimate sound –

no vibration.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Sufi cited in Corbin, 1969, p. 251.

<sup>2</sup>Sufi cited in Corbin, 1969, p. 251.

<sup>3</sup>Corbin, 1969, p. 283.

## References

Barba, E. (1995). *The paper canoe: A guide to theatre anthropology*. R. Fowler (Trans.). London, UK: Routledge.

- Corbin, H. (1969). *Creative imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, (R. Manheim, Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1958).
- Cohen, L. (1993). *Stranger music: Selected poems and songs*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.
- Fels, L. (2002). Spinning straw into gold: Curriculum, performative literacy, and student empowerment. *English Quarterly*, 34, (1/2), 3-9.
- Gide, A. (1970). *Fruits of the earth*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.
- Guiney Yallop, J. (2016). A book review of *Arts-Based and Contemplative Practices in Research and Teaching: Honoring Presence*. *Art/Research International*, 1(1), 283-291.
- Keshavarz, F. (2006). Flight of the Birds: The poetic animating the spiritual in Attar's Mantiq al-tayr. In L. Lewisohn & C. Shackle (Eds.), *Attar and the Persian Sufi tradition: The art of spiritual flight*. London, UK: The Institute of Ismaili Studies.
- Khan, H. I. (1994). *The mysticism of music sound and word*. New Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Leggo, C. (2003). Calling the muses: A poet's ruminations on creativity in the classroom. *Education Canada*, 43(4), 12-15.
- Leggo, C. (2005). Pedagogy of the heart: Ruminations on living poetically. *The Journal of Educational Thought*, 39(2), 175-195.
- Mesner, K., Bickel, B., & Walsh, S. (2015). *Lectio divina: An invitation to readers*. In S. Walsh, B. Bickel, & C. Leggo (Eds.), *Arts-based and contemplative practices in research and teaching: Honoring presence* (pp. 20-22). New York: Routledge.
- Murakami, H. (n.d). *Goodreads*. Retrieved from [https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/3354.Haruki\\_Murakami](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/3354.Haruki_Murakami)
- Neilsen G., L. (2010). Resonance, loss. In M. Dickinson & C. Coulet (Eds.), *Lyric ecology: An appreciation of the work of Jan Zwicky*. Toronto, ON: Cormorant Books.
- Paintner, C. (2010). *Water, wind, earth and fire: The Christian practice of praying with the elements*. Notre Dame, IN: Sorin.
- Rajabali, A. (2017). (Re)turning to the poetic I/eye: towards a literacy of light (T). University of British Columbia. Retrieved from <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/24/items/1.0343399>
- Rumi. (n.d-a). *Goodreads*. Retrieved from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/74846-observe-the-wonders-as-they-occur-around-you-don-t-claim>



- Rumi. (n.d-b). *Goodreads*. Retrieved from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/80724-the-moon-stays-bright-when-it-doesn-t-avoid-the-night>.
- Sameshima, P., Miyakawa, M., & Lockett, M. (2017). Scholarly engagement through making: A response to *Arts-Based and Contemplative Practices in Research and Teaching*. *REVISTA VI*, 16(2),45-67.
- Taylor, M., & Saarinen, E. (1994). *Imagologies: Media philosophy*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Walsh, S., Bickel, B., & Leggo, C. (2015). Introduction. In S. Walsh, B. Bickel, & C. Leggo (Eds.), *Arts-based and contemplative practices in research and teaching: Honoring presence* (pp. 1-19). New York: Routledge.

