



WSV?

Part 2 of a 5 Part Series

by

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Bismi-Llaabi-r-Rahmaani-r-Raheem

Sura al Fatiha

**AL-ḤAMDU-LI-LLĀHI, MUQALIBA-L-QULŪBI WA-L-ABSĀR.
ALLĀHUMMA ṬḤABIT QULŪBANA ᶜALA ṢIRĀṬIKA-L-QAWĪM,
WA-JᶜALNĀ LI-WAJHIKA MUTTAJIHĪN,
WA ṢALLI ᶜALA-Sh-ShAFĪᶜI-L-HABĪB,
RAḤMATIL-ᶜĀLAMĪN,
WA MANĀRI-L-NAJIYĪN, WA MARSĀ-L-ᶜĀRIFĪN**

Praise be to Allah, the Turner of the hearts and sight.
O Allah, fix our hearts on the best of Your Ways,
and make us face You in our way,
and bestow blessings on the beloved intercessor,
the mercy of all the worlds,

the lighthouse of the survivors, the harbor of the knowers.

**YĀ MAWJŪDAN ^CINDA-Sh-ShADĀĀ'IDI
YA KhAFIYYA-L-LUTFI, YĀ LATĪFA-S-SUN^CI
YĀ HALĪMAN, LĀ YA'JILUQDI HĀJATĪ
BI-RAHMATIKA, YĀ ARHAMA-R-RĀHIMĪN.
SUBHĀNAKA ^CALĀ HILMIKA BA^CDA^CILMIK.
SUBHĀNAKA ^CALĀ ^CAFWIKA BA^CDA QUDRATIK**

O Existent One, O Thou Who are Present in all difficulties.

O Thou of Hidden Kindness, of Subtle-making.

O Gentle One, Who does not hasten, fulfill my need

with Thy Mercy, O most Merciful of the merciful.

Glory be to Thee, on Thy Grace, after Thy Knowledge.

Glory be to Thee, on Thy forgiveness, after Thy Power.

**BISMI-LLĀH, AL-HAMDU-LI-LLĀH
ALLĀHUMMA ṢALLI WA SALLIM ^CALĀ SAYYIDINĀ MUHAMMADIN, WA ^CALĀ ĀĀLIHI WA SAHBIH**

INTRODUCTION

We all know that what Shaykh Nooruddeen said is the truth, because we know it is the truth. He wouldn't speak anything but the truth. What I can say is that I attest in my own life to everything that he said as being so significant and so important, that I actually thought of just saying "Bismillah" and leaving... or staying. He touched on the most important, honest, and truthful things today. I remember my Shaykh, Hazrat Azad Rasool (ar). When I first visited him, I was this big experienced *sanatana vishwa dharma* person, having lived along the Ganges in a cave. I fancied myself to be a *sannyas*, although I was a householder at that time. He had one young man virtually in *khilwa* most of the time, sitting in a basement apartment. Me, I had free run, going back and forth, back and forth, wherever I wanted to go. I'm the one who probably should have been in the basement apartment, chained to the wall. But he knew better. Some of you know the story: when he would go to pray, I would say, "Would you like me to go to the *masjid* with you?" I had not yet embraced Islam fully. But in my mind, when people would ask, "Are you a Muslim?" I would say, "Of course. I'm everything!" Of course, I was no thing. He would say, "No, no, you stay here." I wouldn't ask why, but the question "why?" was in my mind: "Why not?" I would stay there, and all the people around would be looking at me as a curiosity on the campus of Jamia Islamia in New Delhi. They would all say to me, "Are you a Muslim?" And I would say, "Yes." The Shaykh came back one day and said, "Stay inside when I go to the *masjid*." I don't know what they were saying to him! "Stay inside," he said. "You can meditate."

I didn't ask why, because he was my Shaykh. I didn't ask him 'why questions,' usually—only on occasion. But the 'why questions' were always in my heart and mind – the bigger ones. Now, like Shaykh Nooruddeen, I'm alone; but of course, we are not alone. I've had to understand why it is necessary to be alone, and what the responsibilities of that are. Oh, of course we have our beloved family, and nothing compares to that in this world. We have our friends, and our work; but when it comes to the guidance, it has gone to another dimension. When my Shaykh passed, if I hadn't attained to that

dimension, I would have had no guidance at all. On occasion, I would still be asking myself why. There were many friends who were Sufis, *shaykhs* whom we came into contact with over the years, people who guided from far and near. But there was always the comfort of knowing that Hazrat was 011-91-11-00-61-10. I could call him up on the phone and we could have a two second conversation, and he was near. It was toward the end of my sojourn with him in this world that I asked him a few more questions.

THE TALK

Questions are miraculous; they affirm our consciousness. They affirm the essential gift from Allah (*Subḥānahu wa taʿālaa*) of freedom of choice. They imply cognitive processes that are unique and which direct us toward the values that influence us, good or bad, toward decisions that direct our life. Questions enable definition; they create dependency and trust. They also create independence and arrogance, and sometimes, submission and wisdom. The best questions arise from love, attraction and compelling of the heart, but many questions also come from the bifurcated mind that harbors doubts and beliefs, a sense of meaning and fears of meaninglessness. For the most part though, every question is simply a door, a door to understanding why Allah (*Subḥānahu wa taʿālaa*) created creation and human beings; why He created this creation the way that He created it, with all its complexity and simplicity, chaos and order, separation and union, struggle and ease.

The last time that we sat here together, we were speaking on the question “what?” Today we address the question “why?” In many ways, “what?” is a simpler question than “why?” The implication in what Shaykh Noorudeen said is it is in how you approach it, and what you are approaching it with. As I pointed out in my talk, “what?” is often a question that Allah (*Subḥānahu wa taʿālaa*) asks us: “What will make you understand?” “What do you believe?” “What are you thankful for?” The question “why?” is a little more of a “human” question. It is the question we ask, openly and secretly. It is a question of the very young and the very old. It is a question we ask each other, a question we ask ourselves, and a question we ask Allah (*Subḥānahu wa taʿālaa*). Many children go through a phase of life when “why?” is their favorite question: “Why is the sky blue?” “Why does that person look different?” “Why do I have to do this or that?” As we grow older, our questioning-self evolves; we begin to ask questions like: “Why am I here?” “Why is the world the way it is?” And, as we expand our understanding, we may begin to ask, “Why are there struggles and difficulties in the world?” “Why do we need religion?” “Why do we have to submit?”

The ‘why question’ lies dormant in every child, waiting like a sleeper-agent to emerge at a critical time of decision or opportunity. It emerges, often at the moment of deciding one’s spiritual direction, the moment of deciding whether or not we will grasp the doorknob that opens the treasure house of real knowledge. The way that we answer this question dictates whether or not we will realize that the challenges in life come with guidance and means to achieve awareness of the Divine Presence. Whether or not we will find the courage, the stamina, the commitment to practice, find the discipline to study and to seek the guidance of those who know, the questions will still be there. The questions will be there whether or not we choose those things. For some, the question of “why?” is with us our whole life. It can be a frustration or solution. It can be a question born of arrogance or of humility. It can be a doorway to deep spiritual understanding or a justification for self-direction. For many of us who are spiritual seekers, “why?” is the question that drove us to this path, and the question we could only find an answer to on this path.

As Sufis, we seek to not only answer these essential questions, but to move beyond the question to the subtleties of human purpose and existence, to refine our perceptions, our understanding of who we are, where we are from, where we are going, and WHY. I have, over many years of this journey to and in the Presence of Truth, struggled with many questions and been challenged to implement what I know is True and irrefutable. So I’ll begin with the familiar and almost universally asked ‘why question.’

WHY IS THERE PAIN AND SUFFERING IN THIS WORLD?

There is the question of why there is suffering and evil in a world created by a Compassionate and Merciful Lord. The answer to this question will lead me to the questions: Why do we need Sufism? Why the *shuyukh*? And finally, why does it all matter? Why make the effort? These questions can only be answered in a framework of understanding the system of the Universes we are part of and our role in them. At some point in our lives, we have all asked the question “why?” in some form. We may have asked: Why do good people seem to be punished while those who are evil seem to flourish? Or, why does Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) allow people to starve when there is plenty of land and resources? Or, why do thousands and millions die in genocidal wars in the name of peace and truth? Or, why do poverty and preventable illnesses abound, when the means for ending both are available? And, on a more personal scale, we may have asked, why do I continue to be given challenges, struggles or hardships when I am a pretty good person? This is not a new question; it is question that human beings have been asking throughout history. In Surah al-Baqarah, Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) says:

WA QĀLA-LLADHĪNA LĀ YAʿLAMŪNA LAWLĀ YUKALLIMUNĀ-LLĀHU AW TAʾTĪNĀ ĀYATUŅ.

And those who do not know say, “Why does Allah not speak to us or show us a Sign?” (2:118)

We have been asking for this kind of “proof” since the beginning of time. But Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) responds in this same *ʿaayat*:

KADHĀLIKA QĀLA-LLADHĪNA MIN QABLIHIM MITHLA QAWLIHIM. TASHĀBAHAT QULŪBUHUM. QAD BAYYANNĀ-L-ʾĀYĀTI LIQAWMINĪ-YŪQINŪN

They speak the way people who came before them used to speak. Their hearts are alike. Yet, We have made clear the Signs to people [endowed] with certainty. (2:118)

The signs and the answers are clear for those who look with certainty (*yaqeen*). But this question of “why?” is not only a question asked by those with hardened hearts, it is also a question that was asked by the *Sahaabah* and answered by the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*), as illustrated in this *hadith*. Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **“When Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) wants to be good to someone, He tries him with some hardship.”**

And Abu Hurairah also reported that Ibn Masʿud said:

I visited the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) while he had a fever. I exclaimed, “O Messenger of Allah! You have a high fever!” He said, “My fever is as much as two among you [might have]. I asked, “Is it because you have a double reward?” He replied, “Yes, that is right. No Muslim is afflicted with any hurt, even if it is no more than the pricking of a thorn, but Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) wipes off his sins because of it, and his sins fall away from him as leaves fall from a tree.”

From these *hadith* we can begin to understand that through hardships Allah (*Subhānahu wa ʿālaaa*) tests our dedication, our love and our perseverance. He removes our ills, and He reminds us to look beyond the transient rewards of this life toward the next. But to gain an even clearer understanding, we must also look behind the question “why?” and begin with another question: the question of values, the questions of life’s direction. “What?” points to what and why: *ishaarat*—a series of points that lead us out of darkness to light. We must ask, “Why do we have this question in the first place? Why do we have an inclination for morality and ethic? Where does our concern about injustice come from? Where does our compassion originate?” Is it not because Allah (*Subhānahu wa ʿālaaa*) created us with the capability to care and with the ability to change and create change? There is an old joke that goes: “*Sometimes I want to ask God why He allows poverty, famine and injustice in the world when He could do something about it; but I’m afraid He might ask me the same question.*”

Our compassion for the people of this world, our sense of fairness and justice come from our *ruuh* (our soul), where Allah (*Subhānahu wa ʿālaaa*) imprinted those qualities, reflections of His Own Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names. These are the attributes that compel us toward compassion and mercy, perseverance and love, justice and peace. We are also given by Allah (*Subhānahu wa ʿālaaa*) independent choice, which means we have the ability to choose right from wrong, good from bad, truth from untruth. Allah’s (*Subhānahu wa ʿālaaa*) interaction with His creation and creatures is predicated on free will. For choice to be effective as a means of understanding and fulfilling one’s potential as a spiritual human being and a member of a community of goodness, it must have its opposite. We may ask, “Why do so many people ‘get away’ with bad things?” But if every time someone chose evil Allah (*Subhānahu wa ʿālaaa*) intervened, then there would be no moral or ethical choice. If every time a Muslim ate pork, a lightning bolt struck, then there would be no value in the admonition against pork or any prohibited thing. There would just be barbecued pork!

Let me present to you a cogent and personal response to this question from the writing Dr. Ziauddin Sarwar, noted author and journalist. I shared with Dr. Sarwar a similar experience from the early days of my search for Truth. I reached the same conclusion, which I will take the time to elaborate on, as I believe this is common to all seekers who are sincere in unlocking the mysteries of life here and Hereafter. He is known as a progressive Muslim. He has written about 45 books, works for rights for independence, and is sought after in many venues. I found him to be an interesting man. I happened to mention that I was working on this talk, and he wrote to me:

I don't mind admitting that sometimes such questions [of why] test my own faith and fill me with doubt. I have spent some time thinking about this and finally resolved the question to my own satisfaction.

“Why is there so much evil and suffering in the world when God, by definition, is kind and merciful?” is a question that has been asked by all philosophers of religion throughout history. In Western philosophy it is known as 'the problem of evil.' And it is firmly seen as 'the problem of (belief in) God.' I was trapped in this conundrum for many years. It leads you to blame Allah, and deprives you of any motivation to act.

Then I realized the problem of evil is not a problem of God, but a problem of metaphorical terms. You can't have one without the other. If there was no suffering, and all we had was Good, then we would have a monolithic world where we could not choose how to act. It's a bit like democracy: you need at least one person to dissent for it to be classified as democratic action. Similarly, you need at least one person to commit evil for us to be defined as humans with free will. Humans by definition err, and sometimes take the wrong path leading to evil. To be fully human, we need to appreciate that both good and evil reside within us. They are an integral part of our free will.

The essence of all this is: as human beings it is our responsibility to do something about evil and suffering. Of course, Allah is always there and we can't do anything without His Will. But as the Qur'an says, Allah does not change a people's condition unless they change themselves. So Allah Himself puts the onus on man to do something about the injustice and suffering that man himself has created. This is where my own faith returns: it gives me the agency and conviction to act in this world and do something about all the injustice that we face and we have created. The important thing for me is that Western philosophy does not have an answer to the question, but leads you to a circular

logic. To find an answer, an agency, we need to step out of the circle and place the problem on the shoulders of man. Of course, this does not mean that community becomes less important; on the contrary, if individuals have so much power and responsibility, it becomes even more important for individuals to be bounded by communities.

When we pause to think about it, we already understand the basic answer: we are created to take part in a decision-making process. Life becomes meaningful because of our ability to make decisions, to choose—choosing to manifest service, choosing to express love, choosing to exhibit patience, choosing to be just. It means that it must first exist within us and reflect the qualities of our Creator. Our compelling urges for compassion, mercy, forgiveness, justice, peace are in themselves testimonies to the essential Will of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*). It is through choice, or even more subtly choosing not to choose (see *dars* on *tadbeer*), that we become more and more aware of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*), more and more aware of the Presence of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*).

WA LI-LLĀHI-L-MASHRIQU WA-L-MAGhRIB. FA-AYNAMĀ TUWALLŪ FA-ThAMMA WAJHU-LLĀH. INNA-LLĀHA WA ASIʿUN
ʿALĪM.

And to Allah belong the East and the West. And in which ever direction you turn, there is the Presence of Allah. Truly Allah is Vast, All-Knowing. (2:115)

Through remembrance of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*), the heart that is purified of darkness, of the evil whisperings of Shaytan is more reflective of the beauties of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*). A world where a person can refine themselves into a good and pious being is also a world with the potential for that same person to become corrupt and to be a tyrant. Both destinies belong to Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*). Imam al Ghazzali said: “Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) accomplishes what He does [within hearts] by controlling angels and devils, both being under the power of His omnipotence in turning hearts over, just as your two fingers, for example, are wholly under your control in turning objects over.” (Ihyaʿ ʿUlum al-Dīn (4), 3.24) Our fate depends on our relationship with Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*). The more we move toward Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*), the closer Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) comes toward us.

WAʾIDhĀ SĀLAKA ʿTBĀDĪ ʿANNĪ FAʾINNĪ QARĪB...

And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then verily I am near... (2:186)

The more distant we are from Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*), the more we depend on our free will and choice for our decisions, and Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) does not intervene. Our choices are our own. Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) did not build the concentration camps of Nazi Germany; people did. Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) did not massacre hundreds of thousands in Iraq; people did. We did. ...or in Bosnia; human beings did, and they still do, and they will again if given the chance. *Astaghfiru-Llāh*. As much as it seems wrong or counter intuitive that Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) doesn't intervene, we have to look at the larger system of existence, a system in which we have been given choice and responsibility.

A lifetime of eighty years or so is nothing in the face of eternity. Our soul, which transcends this body, is as real as this body seems to us to be right now. This world is the world of *amal*, of doing, of work. The *akhirat* is where we experience the eternal truth of what we became here. So the question we might also ask our self is: who is actually more blessed, someone who lives a life of ease and luxury with little connection to Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*), or someone who is born crippled, or impoverished, or in fear and who, despite those challenges, develops a connection with Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) through

their faith? From the point of view of eternity, the question takes on a much different perspective.

We need to understand the difference between Divine Presence and Divine intervention. We must strive to understand, to live in the consciousness of Divine Presence. We say, “*Haẓeri, Naẓeri, Shabadi, Mā’i.*” Sometimes the greatest gift given to one seeking nearness to Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta’aalaa*) is the gift of pain, the gift of struggle, and the gift of separation from this world. With conscious awareness, we can live our life coming to know, as fully as possible, that Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta’aalaa*) is Present; that Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta’aalaa*) is Seeing His Creation; that Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta’aalaa*) is witness to all acts and thoughts. We are accompanied in all things by Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta’aalaa*); humbled and grateful and compelled from within to live a more noble and spiritual life. Shaykh al-Alawi said: “*All the universe is Light, and the only thing that darkens is is the manifestation of the self in it.*” Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta’aalaa*) is Most Merciful, Most Compassionate. His Mercy pervades all things. This is the secret key to all openings. The reality we experience is only a metaphor and doorway to a Reality that is much larger, greater and more fulfilling. One could say then, in short-speak, that suffering and human servanthood are the means to not only liberate oneself from the Shaytan’s influence, but also collectively through the servanthood affect change in society. This is the view, as I understand it, of the Sufi.

WHY SUFISM?

I hope that in answering (or seeking to begin to answer) this larger ‘why question,’ I have also established and illustrated a framework for understanding and answering the question of, “Why Sufism?” Why is Sufism important in this world today? Why is Sufism important to Islam, and to us, individually? Life is a series of often-incomprehensible events; until we have reached the end of those events, it is hard to know why things happen. The trials and tribulations of life unlock secrets and capabilities that otherwise would remain sealed. What Sufism offers is a framework for understanding, a path for learning, a reason for submitting, and a way to see beyond the tests, trials, pleasures and distractions of the moment into the greater pattern, the System of the Universe, the Unity that is Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta’aalaa*). Sufism is the door to all that is universal, all that is eternal, unifying, affirming of ONE truth, inclusive not exclusive, transcendental and loving in Islam. It emerges and flourishes amidst challenges. It holds high the banner of Rasuulu-Llaah (*salla-Llaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) as a unifying force/light/being for all people, and at the same time disdains any coercion, any elitism, any separatism.

◆ Sufism offers a framework for understanding

We live in a time when personal experience, individualism is paramount. We live in a time when we think we can say we believe something, and that saying it will make it true. But Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta’aalaa*) reminds us in Surah al-Ankabut:

أَهَاسِيبَا-ن-نَاسُ أَئِنِّي-يُتْرَكُ أَئِنِّي-يَاقُولُ آمَانًا وَهُم لَأَيُفْتَنُونَ.

Do people imagine that they will be left [at ease merely] because they say, “We believe,” and will not be tested with trials? (29:2)

That is an ‘*aayat*’ that I tried to pretend I could hear Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta’aalaa*) saying, “Do you really think.....? How could you possibly imagine!” Most people don’t want the tests and trials needed to change and grow. Most people don’t care to change. Most people don’t even know that they can change. And change to what and from what? We live in a time when individualism is so important that we have lost an understanding of the value of collective community. In this day and age, everyone thinks they can be the exception—that someone else will take care of the collective responsibility. Someone else will take care of the elderly. Someone else will take care of the poor. Someone else will take care of my mother, my father ... some stranger, who may or

may not deliver the dinner, or change the diaper, who may or may not change the sheets. We go out and live our own lives, and we make our own rules. But if we make the rules ourselves, and think they originate with us (“these are my values, my rules for life, my personal philosophy”), we can abrogate them at any time. It’s not that the rules are good or bad; it’s the fact that we make them. As good and true, as sincere and altruistic as these “personal rules” may be, when we see them as coming from our self, we are more susceptible to Shaytan, because Shaytan always wants us to abrogate what is immutable and good, and so gives us reasons which sound good, to do something that takes us away from Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) instead of toward Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*).

In a world like the one we live in, where the rules and guidelines come from the individual, a Sufi is not easily recognized or even respected. But where there is concern for all humanity, for the community as well as the individual, the Sufi finds his or her way. Who is a Sufi? We will discuss that in a future *dars*, but for today we need to have a working definition. One definition is, “*A man or woman of religious learning, so he or she applied what they knew. And Allah (Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa) bequeathed them knowledge of what they did not know.*” A Sufi is the one who knows that he or she does not know, and whom Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) gives knowledge to. A Sufi applies what he or she knows, and Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) gives us knowledge that we didn’t have. Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) Most High says:

...My slave approaches Me with nothing more beloved to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him, and My slave keeps drawing nearer to Me with voluntary works until I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he seizes, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks Me, I will surely give to him; and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely protect him. (Sahih Bukhari - Fath al-Bari, 11.340 41, *hadith* 6502)

Ultimately, this statement of unity (*tawḥeed*) puts into context human life and our goals and values in this life, the “why” of life.

◆ **Sufism is a means to a personal experience of the presence of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*)**

Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) tells us that the most important thing in this life and the next is to approach Him and to remember Him. How we remember Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) is in the way Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) wants us to. Through Tasawwuf, a person develops and maintains a desire for a personal experience with Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*), all within the tradition and lineage of the teachings of the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) and his *Sahaabah*, and the *tabayyin*, and the *taba-tabayyin*; all within the realm of the family of the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) who were all sincere, who had *tawakkul* (trust), who relied on the *Rahmat* (Mercy) of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*).

So often, we deny that Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) created us for something more than our own pleasure, more than our own definition of what life should be. We deny that He gave us struggles and difficulties so that we would be aware of what is right and good; so that we could become aware of the value of *zakaat*, *sadaqah*, *ṣawm*, or *ṣalaat*, or *hajj*. But it is hard to deny that Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) has offered us a step-by-step manual for success, for knowing how to deal with gain and loss, happiness and grief, sadness and joy. Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) offers us this most reliable manual: His Qur’an. Understanding and living the Qur’an through the heart, applied in the practical day-to-day situations of life, is the essence of Sufism. This manual for life tells us many, many things; but if we choose to be the creator of our values, if we choose to map out our own path, our own teachings, we are choosing to live our life in the dark.

A person who chooses this path is aggregating knowledge. Picking up a book here, a book there... you like this writer or that writer; and you read a Christian book and a Jewish book. Maybe you pick up a couple of quotes from the Qur’an... collecting the things you “like.” I’m not speaking against the books, you understand. I’m not speaking against religion or Torah or the Injiil. I’m telling only where it is all truly aggregated, and where it is to be found

in this perfect sense. As Shaykh Nooruddeen pointed out to us, we are the perfection of the religion. Some may ask, “What’s wrong with that? It’s all the same truth, right?” Yes, but the problem is “I” am the creator. You are not dealing with your own ego. You are not submitting. But somewhere along the line of life, Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) will make you submit. At some point, we are all forced to submit. There will always be some loss, some problem, some challenge, some sickness we did not intend, something our words spoke, but we didn’t intend that to be the way they came to be the truth or manifest. “I didn’t mean that! I didn’t intend for that to happen!” That’s right, because you didn’t know what the intentions or the means could be. The person who trusts Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*), the seeker on the path knows that that moment is the moment to be patient, persevering and trusting in Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*).

WA LANABLUWANNAKUM BISHAY’IM-MINA-L-KHAWFI WA-L-JŪ’I WA NAQSIM-MINA-L-’AMWĀLI WA-L-’AÑFUSI WA-Th-
ThAMARĀTI WA BASHSHIRI-Ṣ-ṢĀBIRĪN—ALLADhĪNA IDhĀ ASĀBAT’HUM MUṢĪBATUŅ QĀLŪ INNĀ LI-LLĀHI WA’INNĀ
ILAYHI RĀJI’ŪN.

And surely We shall try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of worldly wealth and lives and the fruits [of labor]. And give good news to the steadfast who, when they are visited with misfortune, say, “Truly we belong to Allah and truly to Him we return.”
(2:155-156)

The understanding that comes after this moment is one of the jewels of life. After the ego may be damaged, after the fear may be there, after the worst thing that could possibly happen happens, after the loss, after you have been up to the top and taken to the bottom, if it develops your faith then the world will never look the same. [Let us all make *du’aa* for the poor patient who is probably in the helicopter flying over us. *Bismillah ar Rahman ar Rahim, Ya Shaafi.*] Yes, there will be problems and things that drive you crazy, things running around in your mind; your heart will skip a beat, but if you persevere, you will always see beyond those things into the infinite Unity that is Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*). Everything will be all right. With perseverance on the path, we can develop a subtle awareness of the Divine Reality, as present before our eyes, in all we hear, in all we feel, and in all the opportunities provided, whether through joy or sorrow, happiness or sadness, comfort or pain. Imam Ali (*radiyya-Llaahu ʿanhu*) said: **“A person who has succeeded in self cognition has attained the highest form of success.”**

Parenthetically, I hope everybody in this room, when the helicopter flew over, who knows this is Charlottesville and knows where the hospital is, thought the same thing I did. I hope so. It’s not because I’m so smart or so great or anything like that. But maybe, maybe, maybe, I’ve absorbed something other than my own self. One thing triggers another thought, and that thought goes to the heart, and the prayer is sincere. Really, this is the alchemy of Sufism. A Sufi is trained in the means for this kind of success: not just the forms, but also the essence of those forms that is revealed through the valleys of refinement of the self (*nafi*). As all things in the physical world (from sub-atomic particles to vast solar systems) are in eternal motion, so too, we as individuals are moving toward a goal of Eternal consciousness, awareness of the Divine Presence, the endless journey of toward Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*), in Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*), with Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*). *Sayr illa-Llaah , sayr ma’a-Llaah, sayr fi-Llaah.*

◆ **Sufism is a continuation of the tradition of the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*)**

These answers that I have given to the question I originally posed (“why Sufism?”) should resonate with your heart and your belief and understanding of Islam. Why? Because *Tasawwuf* is the essential teaching and practice of our Prophet Muhammad (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*). It has been sustained over the

centuries and is continuing to be developed according to time, place and circumstance, always within the framework of the inviolable and essential teachings that form the core and foundation of Islam. When I say that it is continuing to be developed, it means in us. We are continuing to develop an understanding of what Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿaalaa*) has completed in the *Deen*. Also, as far back as one can go, we find that teachings and real knowledge have always transmitted teacher to student, not text to student. The nature of real learning is of becoming, not just knowing. That means experiencing and having someone who can verify one's experience, and place it in the context of the spiritual journey (*ṣayru-s-suluk*). Such a person must have access to the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*) and to the successive guides (*silsila*) who go back in a line to the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*). He must know the teachings and guidance that come from the outer sources and inner sources.

Much of this knowledge and process is found directly in *Shareʿah*, which not only gives direction and instruction, but forms the binder of the text of spiritual journeying. Imam Malik said, **“He who practices Tasawwuf without learning Sacred Law corrupts his faith, while he who learns Sacred Law without practicing Tasawwuf corrupts himself.”** This is why throughout history, Tasawwuf has been taught as part of the curriculum in *madradas*, and why the greatest scholars and *ʿulamaa* have also been Sufis. The Sufi comes to realize that we are placed between the *dḥaabir* and the *baatin*, and it is here that we must develop the ability to turn in either direction, aligning ourselves with the Will of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿaalaa*). Sufism is not the image of pious men removed from the world, sitting with beads and long beards. Today, Sufism must be applied to the world and to the situations we meet in life, in the societies we are a part of. Seeing the Divine Presence everywhere means seeking to bring forth that Divine potential in each other; applying the values of Islam to day-to-day life and creating a dialogue of hearts. This requires a firm and unyielding relationship with Islam, Sufism and the Guide (Shaykh/Murshid).

WHY DO WE NEED A SHAYKH?

This brings me to the last of the ‘why questions’ that I would like to address today. Sometimes a would-be seeker finds that everything about the path resonates with them, but for the idea of a *shaykh*. They may ask: why do I need a *shaykh*? Why can't I just teach myself? Or why can't I just learn directly from Qur'an and Sunnah? After all, the Qur'an is given by Allah. Whenever I am asked this question, I always say, “You don't need a *shaykh* until you need a *shaykh*.” That being said, the tradition of the *shuyukh* is part of Sufism and is the model passed down from the time of the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*). Many ask this question with deep sincerity, seeking the answer to the question of why knowledge and guidance are passed down through the *shuyukh*, and what the role of the *shuyukh* is in the life of a seeker. So I will take some time to briefly address this question from my limited understanding.

Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿaalaa*) created the system that is the Universes. He created the world. He created Hazrat Adam and Hazrati Hawa, out of whom came humanity. He created the groups of individuals and the prophets for their communities, like Prophet Musa (*ʿalayhi-s-salaam*) and Prophet Isa (*ʿalayhi-s-salaam*). Then He created, specifically for us sitting here in this room, the Prophet Muhammad (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*) through His agents. There is a living chain of instruction and experience, of memory and of practice that begins with the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*) that was transmitted to the lives and words of the *Sahaabah*, and from them to the *tabāʿeen*, from the *tabāʿeen* to the *tabāʿ- tabāʿeen*, and from them to the *shuyukh*.

This living lineage has far more power, meaning, and originality than words in books and laws. It is said that the dust of the horse of Mu'awiyya, as it passed by Rasuulu-Llaah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿaalaa*), was more holy than the company of Sidna Umar (rah). Because the dust of the horse of Mu'awiyya touched Rasuulu-Llaah (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*). But how is this knowledge transferred? One *subbat*, one glance, of the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*) was sufficient for the *Sahaba*. A meeting or two with Abu Bakr, or Imam Ali, or Sidna Umar, or Sayyida Fatima, Hasan, or Hussein (may Allah be pleased with all of them) may have been sufficient—just one moment with them. But when you get down to us, it has to be three nights, four days a week. I had to sit for hours and hours and hours, and days and months and years with my Shaykh to get the same thing you could have gotten from a glance of the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*). If you accept that, then what do you think you can get on your own? Let me share with you a metaphorical story on this subject:

A bubbling Stream reached a Desert and found that it could not cross it. The water was disappearing into the fine sand, faster and faster. The Stream said aloud, "My destiny is to cross this Desert, but I can see no way."

This is the situation of the disciple who needs a master, but who cannot bring themselves to trust one, the pathetic human situation.

The voice of the Desert answered, in the hidden tongue of Nature, saying, "The Wind crosses the desert, and so can you."

"But, whenever I try, I am absorbed into the sand; and even if I dash myself at the Desert, I can only go a little distance."

"The Wind does not dash itself against the Desert sand."

"But the Wind can fly, and I cannot."

"You are thinking in the wrong way; trying to fly by yourself is absurd. Allow the Wind to carry you over the sand."

"But how can that happen?"

"Allow yourself to be absorbed in the Wind."

The Stream protested that it did not want to lose its individuality in that way. If it did, it might not exist again.

"This," said the Sand "is a form of logic. It does not refer to reality at all. When the Wind absorbs moisture, it carries it over the Desert, and then lets it fall again like rain. The rain again becomes a river."

"But how," asked the Stream, "could I know that this is true?"

"It is so, and you must believe it, or you will simply be sucked down by the sands to form, after several million years, a quagmire," said the Sand.

"But if that is so, will I be the same river that I am today?"

"You cannot in any case remain the same Stream that you are today. The choice is not open to you; it only seems to be open. The Wind will carry your essence, the finer parts of you. When you become a river again at the mountains beyond the sands, men may call you by a different name; but you yourself, essentially; will know that you are the same..."

So the Stream crossed the desert by raising itself into the arms of the welcoming Wind, which gathered it slowly and carefully upward, and then let it down with gentle firmness, atop the mountains of a far off land.

As this story illustrates, we do not need the *shaykh* until we reach the desert and decide we need to. We must cross it. Until then, we are simply a stream going along our path. But when we reach that desert and see that we have no choice but to submit and accept this path—that is when we need a guide.

WHY DO WE GIVE BAY'AT?

In almost all Sufi Orders, a first condition and necessary part for entering into an Order and becoming a formal seeker on the path is to give *bay'at* or to become *mureed* or *mureeda*. Some may ask, “Why do I need to give *bay'at*?” This, of course, is a larger subject, but I will address it briefly here as it falls within the context of ‘why questions.’ It also falls in the context of ‘who questions.’ To give *bay'at* means to submit wholeheartedly to the *shaykh*, and to commit oneself to follow certain things, and to restrain from certain other things. Prior to the time of the Prophet Muhammad (*salla-Llaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*), *bay'at* referred to giving allegiance to a leader or to the chief of a clan. It was an affirmation of loyalty, and a promise of obedience to a person in authority, often taken for social purposes or before going into battle. Muslim rulers continued the practice of giving and receiving *bay'at*. However, over time, governments and social institutions abandoned this practice.

The Sufis picked it up and carried it on in the *tareeqah*, not for battle or political purposes, but in support of the journey to Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah*). The *bay'at* came to signify not only the seeker’s formal affiliation with a specific group or master, but also his or her intimate relationship with Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah*). *Bay'at* is an affirmation of our commitment to the fact that the *shaykh* has accepted us, and the acceptance of the *shaykh* is the acceptance of the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) and of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah*). Your contract with Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah*) is your *bay'at*, your word. It is the doorway to fulfilling the potential of living Islam, living life to its fullest and transcending the limitations of life. The benefits of this companionship are felt and lived. Words cannot describe them in the fullest sense. Once a person asked about the famous verse:

*Yak zamana subbat ba awliya
Behter az sed sala ta'et e bay-riya*

***The momentary companionship of Friends of Allah
is better than hundred years of sincere worship.***

Saying this seems to be an exaggeration. How can this be possible? Hazrat Hakim al-Umma replied that, “*It was no exaggeration at all. Moreover, the message was still not completely conveyed. If the poet had said,*

*Yak zamana subbat ba awliya
behter az sed lekh sala ta'et e bay-riya*

***Momentary companionship of the Friends of Allah
is better than million years of sincere worship,***

it would not have been an exaggeration.”

There are dimensions of significance to *bay'at* that cannot be known until one has entered into this contract. The same holds true for marriage, for having children, embarking on a new career, or even moving to a new place. You think you know, but you just don’t know. While one has some knowledge of what is entailed, one learns much more about the realities of marriage, or parenting, or working at a particular job, or living somewhere once one has embarked upon it. In *bay'at*, you commit. From that commitment knowledge comes. The Qur’an says in Surah al-Maa’idah:

YĀ AYYUHĀ-LLADHĪNA ĀMANŪ, ITTAQŪ ALLĀHA WA-BTAGHŪ ILAYHI-L-WASĪLATA WA JĀHIDŪ FĪ SABĪLIHI LAʿALLAKUM TUFLIHŪN.

O ye who believe! Be mindful of your duty to Allah and seek the way of approach unto Him and strive in His Way in order that you may succeed. (5:35)

And, in Surah al-Fath, the story of those who gave *bayʿat* to the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*) is referenced:

INNA-LLADHĪNA YUBĀYTʿŪNAKA INNAMĀ YUBĀYTʿŪNA-LLĀHA YADU-LLĀHI FAWQA AYDĪHIM. FA-MAN NAKATHA FAʿINNAMĀ YANĀKUTHU ʿALĀ NAFSIH. WA MAN AWFĀ BIMĀ ʿĀHADA ʿALAYHU-LLĀHA FA-SAYUʿTĪHI AJRAN ʿADHĪMĀ.

Verily those who pledge their fealty to you do no less than pledge their fealty to Allah. Then anyone who violates his oath does so to the harm of his own soul, and anyone who fulfills what he has covenanted with Allah, He will soon grant him a great reward. (48:10)

Who is it to? It is to Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿaalaa*). The Prophet Muhammad (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*) received *bayʿat* from his companions on several occasions. Almost all Sufi Orders have a lineage that traces back every line to Rasuulu-Llaah (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa ahli wa sallam*). It is just like a family: one who becomes a *mureed*, spontaneously becomes connected with all the saints of the Orders, having become a member of that family. He or she thereby becomes a deserving candidate for help from the elders of the Orders. My Shaykh, Hazrat Azad Rasool (*alaihi ramo*) liked to use this example to illustrate the importance of *bayʿat* (he was a teacher):

We know that if an accident befalls a registered student at a university, the authorities, staff members, and students of that university will take action and the injured student will get medical attention immediately. On the other hand, if one is not a registered student, there will be nobody to take care of one's needs. Similarly, when a person becomes a mureed or mureeda, he or she becomes a registered saalik on the path and will constantly obtain assistance in every respect on the journey. Sometimes this help will come in obvious ways, through the direct assistance of the shaykh. At other times, help from the shaykh or elders may come in ways the student cannot even imagine —ways that are subtle yet significant, transcending distances of time and space. To become a mureed also helps a student to improve him or herself, because now, he or she feels some responsibility on his or her shoulders. He or she understands that if one does something wrong, it will bring a bad name to the Order. For this reason alone, the student tries to set a good example. In this way, the elders will be happy, and a better understanding may be established between them.

Becoming a *mureed* is the most significant aspect and is emphasized more than the teachings at times. However, in our Orders, the relationship between the *shaykh* and *mureed* is a relationship between the teacher and the taught. The whole emphasis is on studying the teachings and doing the practices, rather than simply becoming a *mureed*. In giving *bayʿat*, the aspirant becomes part of a community of faithful *mureeds* and *mureedas*. He or she affirms a commitment to service and *adab* (spiritual courtesy), based on ethical purity, justice, love, service and personal sacrifice *fi sabiil Allah* (for the sake of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿaalaa*)) and of one's fellow human beings. In each interaction within the community, the *mureed* or *mureeda* considers himself or herself to be below others. He or she seeks nearness to Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿaalaa*) through *khidmah* (service) to His creatures and His creation. Selfishness is the enemy of spirituality. If one lives this service, eventually one becomes a friend of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿaalaa*). When one becomes a member of a *tareeqah*, they receive blessings of the lineage and the spiritual protection of the Order.

Once, there was a man who traveled to a far away city. While he was there, he committed some crime and was sentenced to death for it. When he was brought before the judge, he begged permission to put off his execution for three days so that he could return to his home village to say goodbye to his family, put his affairs in order, and assure that his family wouldn't starve. The judge asked if there was someone would stand in his stead, meaning that if he didn't return, this person would be executed instead. An old dervish man came forward and said, "I will stand in your stead." The day came for the execution and the man had not returned. The preparations were made and the minutes were ticking down. Just before the dervish was going to be executed, just as the sword came up, the man galloped up on his horse saying, "I am here! My Lord, I am here!" The judge was so impressed by the honorability of the man and the selfless dignity of the Dervish, that he pardoned both.

That is the power of the protection of the Order. It turned out that man was not guilty. Members give *bay'at* to the *shaykh*, creating a link between the one giving and the *shaykh*, and the Prophet Muhammed (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*). That link is unbroken; it connects the chain as you become the recipient of the Light of Rasuulu-Llaah (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*). It's perfectly reasonable to ask the question, "Why am I deserving of this?" It's a question I hope to ask once a day at least. But the answer is obvious also: this is what is your destiny. This is the hand that was put in your hand. The hand over that hand is the hand of Rasuulu-Llaah (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), and the hand over that hand is the Hand of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*). Now, what do I do? Who can I be?

CONCLUSION: WHY IT MATTERS

In conclusion, *inshaa'a-Llaah*, I have begun today to answer the questions of "why?" that linger in our hearts and minds. *Inshaa'a-Llaah*, I have begun to help to develop an understanding why Sufism is so important. But it's not the words; it's the compelling from inside that will make the difference. And it is why these traditions have been passed down over 1,433 years, and how they have been preserved and transmitted through the *tareeqahs*, through the *shuyukh*, starting with the Sunnah of Rasuulu-Llaah (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

At certain times in our lives, these teachings may not seem that important or critical. But there is a point when they will become critical. If you are not prepared at that point, that's when you are among the lost. You lose your sense of right, your sense of justice. You lose your sense of patience and perseverance. You lose your sense of why you exist, your capacity to forgive, your capacity to repent. If we do not practice and develop faith, and discipline it with the little stuff in life, like doing prayers on time, sitting in *muraqabah*, serving the person next to you, or giving a kind look with your *salaam*, or your *salaam* itself, then we are not going to get it when the big stuff comes falling down from the sky. If we don't forgive the little things, and try to understand the distractions and temptations that go on with human life—things which are provided for us as a means to understand—like our work, our job, the difficulties with someone we are working with, their capacity to understand us, our capacity to understand them, some disagreement in our marriage, some disagreement with our children, some disagreement with the powers that be, then when the big questions and challenges come, we will be lost. The Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

What the people of Paradise regret most is the time spent without the *dhikru-Llāh* in the world.

The Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) says in another *hadith*:

"Shall I not tell you of the best of your works, the purest of them in the eyes of your master, the highest in raising your rank, better than giving gold or silver, and better for you than to meet your enemy and smite his neck and they smite yours?" They said, "What is it, O Messenger?" And he said, "It is remembrance of Allah."

Let everything converge to an affirmation of *dhikru-Llah*. That's the way to understand why we are here, to increase our *iman* through our good actions, through our *dhiker*, through our taking responsibility. And remember that *dhiker* is not just saying, “*laa ilaaha illa-Llaah*” or “Allah, Allah, Allah.” *Dhiker* is realizing that wheresoever you turn, there is the countenance of Allah. *Dhiker* is realizing and feeling the Divine Presence. *Dhiker* is knowing that you know that Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) is coming toward you. On this path of *Tasawwuf*, our errors, our shortcomings, our weaknesses are corrected, one after another, as we develop more certainty and more submission and more trust in Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*). In all that Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) has created for us, all the difficulties that we have, all the illnesses we have, all the dis-ease we have, we find there is a remedy. All the weights can be lifted. We don't have to believe that the tests and trials and difficulties we experience are finalities. Nor do we have to think they are unique just to us.

We are passing through this world. We want to do good works, develop faith, trust, and submission no matter what. Then as we pass out of this world, we will pass into the vastness of the life after this life, and we will have abundance within us. If we didn't have challenges, there would be no need for faith. There would be no need to grow, to understand. This is the purpose we were created for. This is a very unique and special path. I walked many paths before I came to Islam. I walked many paths before I came to my Shaykh. I had wonderful teachers, famous and hidden. But I will tell you, from my experience, this is a very unique and special path. And a person who wastes one day will have that day to face 10,000 times in the Hereafter. Don't waste a day. Don't be taken with your own knowledge or capabilities, or the things that are distracting you from your practices and meditation, *muraqabah* or recitation, or your service to others, and all of them, hopefully. Unless we take advantage of what Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) has provided for us, Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) will remove it from us. Don't leave the food out on the counter, because then you have to throw it away. It will get mold on it and go bad. That means you don't care for the starving people in this world, and you have no concern for the value of that food.

*I asked for strength and
God gave me difficulties to make me strong.*

*I asked for wisdom and
God gave me problems to solve.*

*I asked for prosperity and
God gave me brawn and brain to work.*

*I asked for courage and
God gave me dangers to overcome.*

*I asked for love and
God gave me troubled people to help...*

My prayers were answered.

CLOSING DU'AA

We are blessed to be in the line of the Prophet Muhammad (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and be harbingers of good.

I pray Allah (*Subhānahu wa taʿālaa*) that we do not refuse the bounties that have sent us in our spiritual life, just as we don't refuse the bounties on the table of our physical life.

I pray Allah (*Subhānahu wa taʿālaa*) that we see the beauty and the meaningfulness of the bounties that He gives us for our spiritual life and as Muslims and believers, just like we see the beauty of the flowers and the food before us.

O Allah (*Subhānahu wa taʿālaa*), help us to understand that what You grant us in this world is nothing compared to the eternity that is based on what we do in this world. Help us to prepare ourselves for an eternity of goodness by the way we act, the company we keep, and the faith that we have.

Allaahumma, yaa mufattiḥa-l-abwaab, wa yaa musabbiba-l-asbaab, wa yaa muqaliba-l-quluubi wa-l-absaar,

wa yaa daleela-l-mutahḥareen, wa yaa ghiyaatha-l-mustaghayatheen,

ananaa tawakalnaa ʿalayka, yaa Rabbu-l-ʿaalameen, wa nufawad amwarinaa ilaa-Llaah,

inna-Llaaha baseerun bi-l-ʿibaad, bi'alfi.

“Laa ḥawla wa laa quwata illaa bi-Llaahi-l-ʿAliyi-l-ʿAdheem.”

O Allah (*Subhānahu wa taʿālaa*)! O Opener of doors, O Causer of reasons, O Changer of hearts and insights.

O Guide of the perplexed, O Aid of those who call out for help.

We rely on You, O Lord of the worlds. We entrust our affairs to Allah (*Subhānahu wa taʿālaa*).

Surely, Allah (*Subhānahu wa taʿālaa*) is the Seer of His slaves, by means of a thousand.

“There is no power and no strength but in Allah, the Elevated and Tremendous.”