

The Purpose of The Spiritual Quest and Sura Fatiha

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Lecture transcribed by Irshad Soofie (<http://www.sufi.co.za>) :

We begin with Allah's Blessed name; we praise Him and we glorify Him as He ought to be glorified and we pray for peace and blessings on all His noble messengers and in particular the last of them all, the blessed Prophet Muhammad. Nabi Muhammad warned; he warned of an age that is to come, which would be a terrible age, more terrible than any age that mankind would ever had experienced since Adam came on earth. Very few would survive that age. A terrible, evil, mastermind will attempt to take control of the world. And that terrible, evil, mastermind of whom Allah had hinted when He said:

{1} قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ

{2} مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ

That terrible, evil mastermind will attempt to impose his evil, oppressive dictatorship over the whole world and mislead mankind' and deceive mankind. That evil mastermind will have a PhD in deception. That in that age things will not be what they appear to be. That appearance and reality would be completely opposite to each other. That he would take the road to heaven and make it look like the road to hell; and he would take the road to *jahannam* and make it look like the road to heaven. Those who see with only external knowledge; that's all; the PhD from the University of Cape Town will be unable to penetrate his deception. Will form judgment on the basis of external knowledge; of external observation and would be deceived; would believe that they are on the road to heaven; when in fact they are on the road to hell and they don't know it. The purpose of the spiritual quest' the ultimate purpose, in this world, of the *halaqatul zikr*, is to be able to see what otherwise cannot be seen. The ultimate purpose in this life of the spiritual quest is therefore spiritual knowledge. Spiritual knowledge comes when external knowledge and internal knowledge are harmoniously integrated with each other. Allah speaks in the Holy Qur'aan about a people who have no internal knowledge; who do not pursue the spiritual quest or who pursue the spiritual quest but are not conscious of what is the goal of the spiritual quest.

Who believe perhaps that the spiritual quest is ultimately for the purpose of being able to perform *karamah*; actions which look like what the Prophets performed as miracles; and who do not understand that the spiritual quest is ultimately, for the purpose of acquiring internal knowledge. And He says of such people who are spiritually blind. He says [in the Holy Qur'aan in the 7th Sura, *al-Araaf* [The Heights], Verse 179:]

لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا

They have hearts but they do not understand

وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا

They have eyes but they do not see

وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا

They have ears but they do not hear

أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ

[They are like cattle]

These people, who would be the multitudes in that last age, they have a status equivalent to cattle. Even with a PhD from the University of Cape Town! Yes! They have a status equivalent to cattle.

بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ

[nay, but they are worse!]

Rather they are more misguided than cattle. And so, this is the ultimate purpose and ultimate goal, in this life of this gathering that we have here tonight, this beautiful gathering. And; my purpose tonight is simply to remind; to redirect towards that ultimate goal – internal knowledge. Nabi Muhammad ﷺ said and my teacher of blessed memory Maulana Dr. Muhammad Fazlur Rahman Ansari was so fond of quoting this hadith. What did the Prophet ﷺ say? He said:

Ittaku firasatal mu'min fa innahu yanzuru bi nurillah

Fear the internal knowledge; the internal, intuitive, spiritual insight; of the *mu'min* because when he sees' he sees with the *nur* of Allah .

Tonight, in this brief and blessed moment that Allah ﷻ has given to this humble servant to be with you let us briefly examine the subject of the *nur* of Allah ﷻ and how it enters into the heart. First of all it is not going to enter into the heart if we have *haraam* in the pocket. If we have money in a fixed deposit and we are taking the interest. If we are ripping of our clients. If we are employing someone to work

in the kitchen and we are paying her slave wages. The purification of the heart comes first. The purification of the heart would come when our conduct is righteous; and so *tazkiyyah* comes before *al-Ihsaan*. Having said that; some companions of the Holy Prophet were on a journey and it was evening time; and they were tired; and they were hungry. They came upon a tribe who were not Muslims. They worshipped the idols; but still Arab hospitality is famous and they were expecting some hospitality but they got none because the tribe didn't like the new religion, Islam. All right! So they settled down and spent the night. During that night a snake bit the chief of that tribe and they had no means of curing it. He would die by morning time. So they humbled themselves and they came to the companions of the Prophet and said: 'Do you have anything to help us, this is our chief and he is going to die'. So we said, 'Well! Since you treated us so badly; if we are to help you out you are going to have to pay for it'. They said: 'How much!' So we said, 'A hundred sheep'. They said; 'Deal'. One of the companions went and he recited *Suratul Fatiha*; and he blew on the chief and the chief was cured. So they collected the 100 sheep and they came back to Madinah. They went to the Prophet and they said: 'O Messenger of Allah ! This is what happened; can we keep the sheep'. He said: 'Yes! Keep the sheep because people are paying for services, much less than what you have done'. He also said that in *Suratul Fatiha*, listen to it, there is a cure for every illness.

So *Suratul Fatiha* is not only *Fatihatul Kitaab*- it is not only that which opens the book, it opens much more than the book. In fact it opens the door to *nur* from Allah . How does it open the door to *nur* from Allah ? Well if *Suratul Fatiha* has a cure for every illness; there is that which logically follows from it. That is; He Allah is the *Shafi*. From Him comes *shifa*- only He can cure. Not the hospitals, not the doctor, only He Allah can cure. So it follows that if *Suratul Fatiha* reaches Allah ; then *Suratul Fatiha* can open the door for the *dua* to be accepted. Then any and every illness can be cured. These are not my words; these are the words of he whom was sent to teach the Qur'aan, . Well then how can *Suratul Fatiha* open; remember it is *al-Fatiha*; 'that which opens'; how can it open the way, the road to Allah ? So that it may reach Allah . In *Suratul Baqara*, Allah says: [The 2nd Sura, al-Baqara, verse 29]

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا

He it is who has created for you [subjected to your use] whatever is on the Earth [everything].

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ

Then He directed His attention to the *sam'a*

فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ

And He fashioned this *sam'a*, as seven *samawaat*

Having performed this task' of fashioning the seven *samawaat*, so that between this world and the *arsh* of Allah there are seven *samawaat*. He then concludes with these words:

وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ

He doesn't say *kabeer*; He says:

عَلِيمٌ

'I have done this so that in this creation of Mine there is an avenue to *ilm*

وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

from *ilm*. So between here and the *arsh* are seven *samawaat*. He has also described the seven *samawaat* as being seven *samawaat* which are pregnant with *nur*, because did He not say: [The 24th Sura, *al-Nur* (The Light), Verse 35]

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

[Allah encompasses the totality of the *Nur* in the Heaven and the Earth]

So the seven *samawaat* are pregnant with *nur*. But then He makes mention in the Qur'aan [15th Sura, *al-Hijr*, verse 87] about:

سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي

The Seven Oft-repeated (verses)

Which are constantly, constantly, constantly recited! Nabi Muhammad told us that these seven verses were the seven verses of *Suratul Fatiha*. I often wondered why it is that Nabi Muhammad was so particular, that whenever he recited *Suratul Fatiha*, he *always* recited each *ayah* separately.

[Allah says in the Holy Qur'aan in the 39th Sura, *az-zumar* verse 9:]

هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

'Imran! Can you ever be equal to the one who has knowledge when you do not?'

The one who knows why Nabi Muhammad recited each ayah of *Suratul Fatiha* has to have more knowledge. I didn't have it. So sometimes you will hear me reciting :

{2} الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
{3} الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
{4} مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Three *ayah* in one. Nabi Muhammad would not do that. So why did he recite each *ayah* separately in *Suratul Fatiha* and he would never combine two *ayahs*? Never! The answer is very straightforward. These are seven verses and those are seven *samawaat*. This is al-Fatiha; not only *fatihatul kitaab* but *fatihatus samawaat*. Each *ayah* of *Suratul Fatiha* opens a *sam'aa* and at the end of *Suratul Fatiha* as we say *ameen*, if we don't have any *haraam* money in the pocket and if we are paying the African servant in the kitchen a wage, which is a just wage; and if we are not deceived by *murabaha* transactions, that these are *halaal* when in fact they are *riba* through the back door, that all Islamic banks are doing, then our *Fatiha* will reach the *arsh*. When *al-Fatiha* comes at the beginning of the *salaah*; at the beginning of the *raka'a* and we recite it *ayah* by *ayah* with the consciousness – this is called the psychology of religion- that our recitation is ascending the *samawaat*; then we won't be thinking about how much traffic there was on the road while we were coming here; we won't be thinking about the business transaction that I might have had today or might have tomorrow; whilst performing *salaat*. We won't be thinking about 'You know she shouldn't have put so much pepper in the food'. If we are concentrating on each *ayah* of *Suratul Fatiha* transporting our recitation of the *sura* through the *samawaat* then by the time we reach *aameen* we would have been psychologically transported to the *arsh*. Then in that sublime situation; the rest of the recitation of that *rakaat* will take place. And each *rakaat* of *salaah* performed that way. You can understand now why did Nabi Muhammad said:

As salatu Mi'raajul Mu'mineen

That in *salaat* there is the *Mi'raaj* of the believer

But, then he also said:

As salatu nur
That *salaat* is *nur*

Meaning that *salaat* could be the door through which *nur* can enter into the heart. So, *nur* comes down from the *arsh* through the *سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ* into the heart of the believer. As that *nur* enters into the heart- the angel asks, 'tell me what is *al-Ihsaan*'. You remember. You don't remember. You're not shaking your head. All right! Let me remind you because you know the subject. It was the last stage of the life of the Prophet ﷺ, he had performed the Hajj, returned to Madinah, he has about 81 days to left in his blessed life and in that period the companions were sitting in the Masjid with the Prophet ﷺ when a stranger entered. He was dressed in white, his hair was black but he was a stranger-nobody knew him- he was not a resident of Madinah. So if you're not a resident of Madinah it means that you have come from outside. In those days you didn't have air-conditioned automatic Toyota Camry's and Hondas. You have to come through the desert. You have to come on a camel. So if you were a stranger; you had to come from outside and therefore you would have dust on your clothes, eyebrows, beard and hair. He didn't have a speck of dust on him. So he didn't come from outside of Madinah and he was not a resident of Madinah. So where did he come from? Did he come down from the sky? This is a moment pregnant with drama. There is something puzzling. There is something baffling. There is something mysterious. There's something mystifying. There's something enigmatic about this moment. This is an unforgettable moment. Allah's wisdom is at work. The stranger walked through the gathering and came straight to the Prophet ﷺ and sat down in front of him with his knees touching the knees of the Prophet ﷺ and nobody moved. So this is a monstrously dangerous breach of security. Because this is the head of state and the Prophet of Allah ﷺ and we have just conquered Makkah; and the pagans of Arabia are biting their teeth in anger. So this could be an assassin, probably sent from Washington, and if he pulls out a dagger none of us is close enough to prevent him. So this is a monstrously dangerous breach of security and it is inexplicable because the companions of the Prophet ﷺ were extreme in their zealotness to protect him. So the puzzling, baffling, mysterious, mystifying, enigmatic nature of the moment-the drama- is increasing. Then the stranger begins to ask questions – but he's not asking questions about what is the speed

limit on that highway- he's asking questions about Islam, the religion. He asks questions and he knows the answers. What is this? We know that you will only ask the Messenger of Allah questions when you do not know the answer. When you already know the answer and you are questioning him, and when he gives the answer you say his answer is correct. What are you? A principal of a school and he's a student? So the drama is intensifying. What is Islam? What is Imaan? What is *al-Ihsaan*? When will the last hour come? What are the signs of the last hour? Every time the answer is given- 'your answer is correct'. At the end of the five questions he got up; as unceremoniously as he entered he left. 'We were left with our mouths open'- Speechless! Who was that? Then the Prophet turned to Umar . 'O Umar! Do you know who he was?' 'Allah and His Messenger knows best – we don't know who is he?' That was Jibraeel , in a moment in history, unique. It never happened before. It will never happen again. This is the one moment in all history, when Jibraeel came in the form of a human being. Not just before one girl to say to her, 'You will have a baby boy'. And she says, 'how can I have a baby boy when no man has touched me?' Not that kind of a meeting. This is before everybody.

'That was Jibraeel – he came to instruct you in your *deen*'. This event took place after Allah had sent down revelation to announce [5th Sura, *al-Maaida*: Verse 3

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا
This day I have perfected your '*deen*' for you, completed My favor upon you, and
have chosen Islam as your religion.

'This day'- the job is done finished. 'I have perfected for you your *deen*; I have completed my favor unto you'. After that! Now- this? So there must be something tremendously important here- that Allah should save this until after he has perfected the *deen*. What is it?

My teacher Maulana Fazlur Rahman Ansari taught one of the most important lessons of *all* he taught. He said, 'Never take any hadith in isolation- and study it in isolation- always take the entire body of knowledge, connected with that and study the body of knowledge; and locate the thread which binds it together in a whole'. That thread which binds it together as a whole he calls, 'The System of Meaning'. When you have located the system of meaning now go to the solitary

hadith to study it. So these five questions- we now look at them as a whole. When we look at them as a whole, we then discover that they're divided into two parts. The first part is- 'What is Islam? What is Imaan? What is *al-Ihsaan*?'- Three stages of religion. The second part- 'When will the last hour come? What are the signs of the last hour? In other words this hadith and event is telling us that when that age comes; when that evil mastermind, begins to take control of the world and when appearance and reality would be completely opposite to each other. When things will not be what they appear to be. When Nabi Muhammad raised his hands and he prayed:

Allahumma arinal ashia'qa ma'i

O Allah ! Kindly show us things as they are

Meaning that we might not be deceived by what they appear to be. When that age comes- when women will be dressed and would yet be naked! When that age comes- when women will be dressed like men; with a jacket and a trousers, and maybe even a tie! When that age comes- when people will eventually be having sexual intercourse in public like donkeys! When that age comes- when there will be the universal consumption of alcohol! When that age comes- when *riba* will be so prevalent, all over the world – then you will not be able to find a single person – not one- in all of mankind, would not be consuming *riba*! If a man says, 'I am not consuming *riba*- verily the dust of *riba* will be upon him'. 'Verily the vapour of *riba* will reach him'. When that age comes- when time will appear to move faster and faster; a whole year will pass and would seem like a month; a whole month will pass and would appear like a week; a whole week will pass and will appear to be just like a day; a whole day would pass like an hour; a whole hour would pass like the amount of time it takes to ??? When that age comes- then the only ones who will survive that age! The only ones who would be able to penetrate the deception of that age – and not be deceived! The only ones who will be able to penetrate the reality of things in that age! The only ones who read with *nur* from Allah would be the ones who have traveled the road from Islam to *Imaan* to *Ihsaan*. So when he was asked, 'What is *al-Ihsaan*? He replied and he said:

an ta'budallaha ka annaka tara

That you worship Allah as though you are seeing Him

When Nabi Musa went up the mountain, Mount Sinai; he spoke to Allah and he said: [al-Araaf, the 7th Sura, Verse 143]:

أَرْنِي أَنْظِرْ إِلَيْكَ

Show me Yourself! I want to see You!

What did Allah say?

لَنْ تَرَانِي

No! Musa ! You cannot see me! [Not with these eyes! you cannot see Me!

How can I worship Allah as though I am seeing him when it is impossible to see him? That's a good question. The companions of the Holy Prophet they asked, 'O Messenger! Will we be able to see Allah on the last day?' Remember whose asking the question. Not Mr. Bush and company! It is the companions of the Prophet who are asking the question. ' He said, 'Do you have any difficulty in seeing the sun when it is mid-day?' They said, 'No!' He asked, 'Do you have any difficulty in seeing the moon when it is full moon?' They said, 'No!' He said, 'that's how you are going to see your Lord on the Last Day.' The Qur'aan says, 'You can't see Me' and how can the hadith say 'you will see Him'. Looks like a contradiction here; doesn't it! How do we resolve this apparent contradiction? If we cannot see him with these eyes; do we have any other eyes besides these eyes? There is no more important question than this in this age. This is the most important question. There are many important questions in this age- but this is the most important of all. Do we have any other eyes besides these eyes? Now you are beginning to understand; what is the ultimate purpose of this assembly. Do we have any other eyes besides these eyes? Do we have any other ears besides these ears? This is-it's a big word I am going to use- epistemology. This is the study of knowledge. What is knowledge? How is knowledge possible? From whence does knowledge come? The evil mastermind, who attempts to take control of the world in the last age, declares that knowledge comes only from external sources- external knowledge. The Qur'aan says, 'No!' The Qur'aan gives another epistemology. Allah says [22nd Sura, *al-Hajj* in Verse 46]:

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ

Will they not travel through the earth?

فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا

So that perhaps, perchance, (by traveling through the earth) their dead hearts might come alive

When the dead heart comes alive they will be able to understand with the heart, what they could not understand before.

أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا

When the dead heart comes alive, they will be able to hear what otherwise they could not hear

فَإِنَّهَا

For certainly, surely

لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ

It's not these eyes which are blind

وَلَكِن تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

What is blind is the heart inside the chest

So when *nur* comes down it will come down only when the heart has faith. When we speak with the lips that, 'we worship You Lord' but in fact in the heart we worship our bank account- then that's not faith. Like the man in *Suratul Kahf* – the rich man- he worships Allah from his lips, but in his heart he worships his two gardens- his wealth. That's not faith. When faith enters into the heart; when we sincerely worship Allah - and He will know if you sincerely worship Him. When the war on Islam begins we will know who are those that run for cover and say: 'No! If I go on this road I will not get my U.S. visa. The U.S. visa is more important to me than serving Allah . If I walk on this path I will not get a green card. If I walk on this path my business will be jeopardized. If I walk on this path they will call me a terrorist. So, 'No! Not me.' We say to Allah , 'No! We cannot walk on the path of serving you'.

When there is true faith in the heart then you will have a backbone made of iron and steel and not recycled paper. You will be a man with long pants and not short pants. This spiritual assembly is meant to produce men of iron and steel – not men of recycled paper. If this spiritual assembly is being held week after week and we are still made of recycled paper, then the spiritual assembly is simply a mechanical act; not a dynamic act producing men of iron and steel. When there is faith in the heart and Allah tests you. When you pass the test then *nur* enters into the heart. When *nur* enters into the heart we are now able to see and not be

deceived by appearances. *Suratul Fatiha* is what opened for us the journey- *Suratul Fatiha* at the beginning of every *rakaat* of *salaah*.

What happens when we get *nur* in the heart? What happens when we can now see what otherwise we could not see and we no longer will be deceived? Let me give one example and we will end. Insha-Allah !

Everybody know what is a credit transaction? A credit transaction is one in which you given time to pay. Nabi Muhammad used to buy goods and he didn't have the money to pay cash and he was given time to pay by a Jewish shopkeeper; and so a credit transaction is *halaal*. But nowhere would you find that the shopkeeper was allowed to raise his price, when the transaction is a credit transaction. Cash price and credit price must be the same. Because if you raise credit price higher than cash price then money would be increasing because of time- that's simple isn't it. I have to wait for my money –so because of time my money should increase. That's *riba*! You don't agree with that! If I have to wait for my money and you must now pay me more because I am waiting- then time equals money. That's *riba*! The essence of the definition of *riba* in Arabia was if I had to wait for my money I was entitled to an increase in money. That was *riba* in Makkah and Madinah and this is *riba* . So credit price and cash price must be the same. The Prophet warned. He said, 'you will follow them step by step those who came before you to such an extent that if they were to go down into a lizards hole you will also go down into the lizards hole'. That's where we are today. Around the world 'so-called' Islamic Banks – Islamic Financial Institutions- around the world are now lending money on interest and disguising it as a sale and describing it as something called *murabaha*. No its not *murabaha*, its *riba*. The Commercial banks lend you money from the front door; the Islamic banks lend you money on interest through the back door. Yes! They call it *murabaha*. If you only see with external knowledge you'll be deceived. If you are in the *halaqa* – which is the beginning of the spiritual path- and *nur* comes to you and you are able to see with the *nur* of Allah then you will not be deceived. Then you will be able to recognize that this is not *murabaha* this is *riba*. A house is on sale for 500 000 rands and you don't have the cash to buy the house- but the cash price of the house is 500 000 rands. That's the market price. Tom, Dick and Harry;

everybody knows it- except perhaps the bank manager. So I go to the 'so-called' Islamic Bank and he says, 'No problem! We'll buy the house for the 500 000'. That's a lie because he never buys the house- the bank will never have legal ownership of the house. Never! That's a lie! The bank says, 'we'll buy the house for the 500 000 and we'll sell it to you for a million. We will give you 20/30 years to pay for it'. So the credit price is a million; because it's a credit transaction. What's the cash price? Its 500 000! Why would I pay 1 million for a house whose cash price is 500 000 rand? There is only one honest answer to that. I am prepared to pay 1 million because you are giving me time. So the difference between the credit price and the cash price is because of time. That's *riba*! The amazing thing is all the Muftis-let us not call any names-giving *fatwa* this is *halaal*. Nabi Muhammad warned about it. An age of spiritual blindness! An explosion of www.externalknowledge.com! Internal blindness! So Muftis, Maulanas and even Sufis around the world- even Sufi Shaykhs- with a spiritual blindness- are declaring this to be *halaal* when it is *riba*. I have given you only one example – there are many more examples. So let us end as we began. That the purpose- Maulana Ansari should have been delivering this lecture, not me- the very purpose, the essence of the spiritual quest is internal knowledge. The capacity to see with the *nur* of Allah ! The capacity to see what otherwise cannot be seen! The capacity to understand what otherwise cannot be understood. The capacity to penetrate beyond external appearance to reach to the internal reality of things!

Allahumma arinal ashia'qa ma'i

O Allah ! Kindly show me things as they are

That I may not be deceived by what they appear to be! I pray that Allah might give us a chance to meet again but if we never meet again- this is the message that I leave with you. This is the purpose, the goal of the spiritual quest. I pray that Allah may bless you all to be able to achieve *nur*. To be blessed with *nur* from Allah and so be able to see with the internal eye.