

Cultivating the Garden

If we cultivate the garden, its fruit will be good. And one day, the fragrance of that garden will make other gardens beautiful as well. Starting from the natural world to nourish and enrich the spiritual world is a didactic and fundamental approach of Syriac culture. For this reason, there is a saying I greatly cherish in Syriac culture, which calls every person, every office, every institution, every task, and every profession to avoid laziness and to act responsibly: **“Cultivate your garden so that your fruit may be good.”** In Syriac: *ud karmok u netab firok* — ܐܰܕ ܕܠܰܡܰܕܰܝܰܬܰܐ ܕܰܢܰܬܰܒ ܕܰܦܰܪܰܝܰܟܰܐ — ܕܰܢܰܬܰܒ ܕܰܦܰܪܰܝܰܟܰܐ

We all have a garden: an unseen inner world. Some are stony, some thorny, some fertile, some left neglected. In some hearts, wild weeds grow for different reasons; in some minds, the land is dry, cracked, like a field without water. Every garden is entrusted to the hands of its owner. It is given as a trust. For thousands of years, Syriac culture has reminded us to protect this trust: ܕܰܢܰܬܰܒ ܕܰܦܰܪܰܝܰܟܰܐ ܕܰܢܰܬܰܒ ܕܰܦܰܪܰܝܰܟܰܐ **“Cultivate your garden so that your fruit may be good.”**

This saying teaches not only to cultivate the soil, but also to cultivate the spirit behind the soil, to nourish the world of meaning. For a human being will one day be tested by everything they have neglected. An untended garden is surrendered to weeds. An uncultivated mind, a heart without direction, an unpurified soul—these will all grow poisonous weeds in their dark corners.

Cultivating the Self

To cultivate the garden means to cultivate and improve the self. To plough the garden means to turn inward, to see one's stones, to remove one's thorns. It is not easy. For with every stroke of the hoe, old stones emerge from beneath the soil: abandoned fears, hidden angers, forgotten resentments. The soil hurts, yet it also heals. To prune roots requires courage; but the true fruit lies hidden there.

The Water of the Garden

A garden without water cannot bear fruit. The inner garden, however, is watered with love, compassion, virtue, blessings, and good deeds. Virtuous deeds are the water and breath of the soil. As thoughts are purified, roots grow deeper, the trunk grows stronger, the fruit ripens. The beautiful fruit visible on the branches is proof of the labour given in the darkness of the soil.

Beautiful Fruit is Healing

To cultivate or tend the garden means to protect our inner world against the winds of the outer world. To keep our thorns from piercing others, we must first confront ourselves. For a person cannot know their light without recognising their darkness. And one who does not know their light cannot be a light to others. A mature word brings comfort, a gentle act carries hope. Beautiful fruit is not only for us, but also a healing for others. That is why cultivating and nurturing our garden is both a responsibility and a gift: for ourselves and for all the paths and people whose lives intersect with ours.

Labour Grows the Fruit

A garden does not bear fruit or become fertile in a single day. It requires patience; seasons pass, the soil tires, sometimes the rain is too much, sometimes drought falls. But the one who does not give up, who does not abandon the soil, who takes up the hoe every day anew—labouring tirelessly and without weariness—will in the end taste the fruit of their own garden.

Yes, for beauty and peace we must cultivate well the garden entrusted to us. We must cultivate it so that our fruits may be good. We must tend well the garden entrusted to us, so that our life may be beautified. And may the fragrance of the garden be a healing for every heart it touches.

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