

## Kahfurto or the Inner Cage

The Surayt dialect of Syriac reminds us of a thousands-of-years-old truth regarding the inner cage: *“Nufkina mi kahfurtaydan - ܢܘܦܟܝܢܐ ܡܝ ܟܗܦܘܪܬܐܝܢܐ - ܢܘܦܟܝܢܐ ܡܝ ܟܗܦܘܪܬܐܝܢܐ”* - **“Let us get out of our kahfurto.”**

This epigrammatic saying is a powerful reference to the narrowness, blockage, and shallowness within the human being. For the freedom of the outer world loses its meaning for a human being who cannot get out of their inner cage. For the inner cage is the name of a state that narrows, shallows, and spiritually compresses the human being.

In Syriac, this state is expressed as **"getting out of the kahfurto."** Because unless the inner world expands, the narrowness of the outer world does not expand; shallowness does not transform into depth. For this reason, **"we must get out of our kahfurto."** That is, we must transition from the inner state that narrows us into a wider state of existence.

*Kahfurto* is like a vessel made of mud: narrow, shallow, and heavy. And whoever is inside this vessel, their supposing that they are free on the outside is merely an illusion.

*Kahfurto* is the compressed state of the soul; it is a personal prison formed by the intertwining of thoughts, emotions, hopes, and fears. Without getting out of it, a human being can neither think broadly, nor feel deeply, nor establish true bonds. It is beneficial for those who set out with the hope of finding themselves not to ignore this reality. For the true journey begins first with getting out of our own *kahfurto*.

Without the narrow space within us expanding, the outer world does not expand.

Yet, some set out with the hope of finding themselves and, instead of getting out of the *kahfurto*, they carry it to another window. They hold onto a teaching, cling to a guide; while saying "Now I will be myself," they actually transform into things that are not themselves. While wishing to get out of the window they are in, they get imprisoned in another window this time. They suppose they have become free by changing the frames; whereas they have merely changed cells.

What they find on the journey of finding themselves is a narrower life, a more fragile soul, and a more closed heart. That is, another *kahfurto*—but this time it becomes dirtier.

And over time, it is realized that: in the desire to find themselves, they have become so selfish that they have become unrecognizable. They are so offensive that they suppose everyone who does not greet them is an enemy. They are so sensitive that even the smallest word is a reason for a fight.

They are so detached that they view establishing a bond as a threat to freedom. They have become so narrowed down that they squeeze life into a single view. They have become so diminished that they wander around like a shadow; most of all, they harm themselves. They close themselves off so much that they deem leaving everyone outside to be maturity. They tense up so much that they accept the slightest criticism as treason. They become so alienated that, under the name of "finding oneself," they assume an exclusionary attitude toward everyone.

And a person involuntarily whispers this question from within: **"If getting out of the *kahfurto* is this, I wish you had never gotten out at all."**

Because on the path of finding themselves, some diminish when they ought to grow; they narrow down when they ought to expand; they become superficial when they ought to deepen.

Instead of being nourished by all dimensions of life, they take refuge in a single window. That window transforms into a wall over time, and that wall into a cell. In the end, they turn into an insatiable being who consumes everyone while wishing to be very happy; who fatigues everyone while searching for peace; who gets squeezed more into the *kahfurto* while saying **"I will get out of the *kahfurto*"**; and who becomes alienated even to themselves while saying "I will be myself."

Whereas, the fastest way to lose oneself is to descend into a dark pit under the name of enlightenment. True transformation is that a human being diminishes no one while growing themselves, becomes free without severing their bonds, and does no harm to themselves while becoming themselves.

And most importantly: it is to open up to life, not to a window. Those who can get out of their *kahfurto* with a sincere awareness are the ones who attain true freedom and depth.

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