

## **To Shine or to Illuminate?**

The light inside a human being is the most precious heritage of existence. In its pure state, this light is a turning toward love, mercy, and truth. This light, which shines and illuminates, is already present in the spiritual world of the human being. What the human being needs to do is not to close or cover that light. For any kind of selfishness and injustice devoid of the sense of justice and mercy covers this inner light; it prevents it from shining and illuminating. Thus, a veil forms over the heart.

Shining is a natural flow coming from the essence of being. Just like the silent rising of the morning sun. The sun neither tries to prove itself nor exaggerates its existence. As it merely shines, life awakens. To shine is to be nourished by one's own source and to reflect one's inner integrity outward.

Illuminating, on the other hand, is when this shining light serves as an occasion for others to find their way. When a human being recognizes their own essential light and lives in an authentic manner, they begin to illuminate their surroundings as well. That light guides, becomes hope, and gives consolation to hearts that have fallen into darkness.

Yet ostentation is neither a true radiance nor an illumination. Ostentation is the mask of arrogance, which tries to hide the inner emptiness with a false light. Such a light merely dazzles the eye but does not show the way; it merely attracts attention but does not touch hearts. In Syriac wisdom, this kind of light is called an "illusive radiance." For this radiance is at the service of the self, not of truth.

True light, however, is born from the purity of heart and from humility. That light is not hidden, but neither is it exhibited; it simply flows. It exists not to grow in the eyes of others, but to make hope sprout in their hearts. Because the measure of the true light is understood not by the desire to show itself, but by its facilitating the path of another.

The words of Saint Mor Ephrem (306–373) guide us here: *"The sun shines not only for itself, but for others as well; the light in the human heart is just like this. If it warms only itself, it remains incomplete, but if it illuminates others too, it becomes complete."*

Therefore, shining is not enough; the shining light must transform into illumination, not into ostentation. And the primary responsibility of the human being is not to draw a veil before

this light inside them. For truth lies in the human being recognizing their own inner light and connecting both themselves and others to life through it.

Consequently: Ostentation dazzles the eye but causes one to lose the way. Selfishness and injustice cover the light, drowning the heart in a veil. The light shining with humility, on the other hand, both gives meaning to its own existence and illuminates the path of another.

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