

Store and Supermarket¹

While walking through the alleys of wisdom on a boundlessly clear day, I came across two signboards. One said, "**store**" and the other said, "**supermarket.**" There was a public service ad displaying some messages in ancient lettering accompanied by captivating images. I could not figure out what it was. The ad, however, was drawing much attention from passersby.

Upon trying to decipher the messages cascading across the screen, I abruptly found myself at a junction. Checking my pocket, I took the route which led to the "**supermarket.**" After a tiresome walk, I arrived at my destination. The supermarket's automatic doors opened immediately. I found myself inside. The interior was well-organized and oxygen-rich. The atmosphere was relaxing and enjoyable. The currents of air in this atmosphere were enough to transport me away into the depths of history. Syriac literature lay virtually unfurled before me. There I saw Nisibis (Nusaybin), glowingly entitled the "**City of Meaning and Masters / Mdinath Sukole u Malfone.**" Edessa (Urfa) was flatteringly characterized as the "**Bride of Mesopotamia / Kalath Bethnahrin.**" The aura of the School of Nisibis and Edessa felt so soothing that I just about refused to leave. I was experiencing the historical fluctuations in the struggle for the development of Syriac language. I was besieged, so to speak. Under this state of siege, a question weighed on my mind due to that natural human sense of wonder. How was such a perfect and pleasant place kept in order?

While spending time in that serene atmosphere, I ran into the supermarket's servicing seniors. From their dignified bearing and sincere attitude, it was obvious that they were connoisseurs of wisdom. **They guided one another with their light-bearing hands. Each bore his light his own way.**

They felt familiar to me. They welcomed my company. I felt right at home. In that short amount time, I can say that a tide of meaning had engulfed me. They must have guessed the question on my mind, because one of them approached me. Handing me a basket, he said, to answer the question on your mind, we must do some intelligent shopping. Please come with me.

¹ This epistemic composition is entirely fictional. It has been so devised and thematically written in order to be able to explain Şumloyo. It is more of a reminder than a comprehensive explanation. Let's just say that this is a translation, a contribution to our culture, which cannot be and is not read in any other language. Something is bound to be lacking. I take responsibility for whatever this composition lacks.

He spoke to me so unassumingly that I could not refuse that senior master. I accepted his request.

We passed through the pretty aisles and entered another building at the back of the supermarket. The corridors of this building were embellished with pictures full of wisdom. The important contributions of Syriac, which had served as a major bridge in the advancement of civilization and intercultural interaction, were written on these pictures. I grew so excited; almost as though I was on a cultural tour. It felt a great honor to receive this tour. It was a tour that one wished would never end. I realized that I grew in awareness with the new meanings which I learned. The fact that the secrets hidden within the depths of the Syriac language were not as of yet adequately uncovered left me deep in thought. The sight of certain coffers cast haphazardly in the midst of those ancient corridors sent waves of melancholy through me. Inquisitively, I asked what the coffers were.

He resumed his inspiring speech: Those coffers hold the "**orphaned concepts and abandoned meanings**" of Syriac. These centuries old concepts that have reached our day have been molded and interpreted by living conditions with regard to the sociocultural meanings they convey. They have attained an integrity of meaning in the river of life that flows from past to present and they form a strong sociological tie between past and present. Unfortunately, in the event that they are not adopted, it's only a matter of time before they die. Each concept within those coffers means a new meaning, a new horizon in life's reality. As you understand and digest the concepts, in due course, you will attain your own unique reasoning. You will remember the roots of your spirit, which will give you an awareness of new things. And do not forget that as you complement your deficiencies and fix your mistakes, the scenery of the outside world will change in hand with the interior. As they say, "**Every concept, every word grants access to culture.**"

Therefore, the light of your new awareness will function as resistance to being swamped and to negative passivity; it will serve as an antibody when it comes to repelling life-poisoning, growth-impeding mental antigens (virus, microbe, bacterium...).

My curiosity was even more piqued after this clarification. When I built up the nerve and opened one of the coffers, my heart was wrenched. I felt like crying. Some of those orphaned concepts and abandoned meanings had died out of neglect; others were in their death throes, crying bitterly for help. Several were concealed in dust.

While the wise, senior master and I discussed the reasons for this horrible spectacle with an anguished heart, he spoke with a different feeling behind his words and in a different tone of voice, saying angrily,

You only assume that you know. One by one, you must find all your masks of personality and you must get rid of them². This is the only way you can discover the reasons and free yourself from the illusions in which you live. Investigate and learn the meaning of the phrase, "**Şbuk kul medem, d'teşkah kul medem / You must let go of all, in order to find all.**" The best medicine lies hidden in the unity of heart and mind. This is what Saint Mor Aphrem (303-373) meant when he said, "**Armo fğutto bhuşobayk vatğus enun sed leboğ / Restrain your thoughts before letting them into your heart.**" This statement emphasizes the need for our hearts and thoughts to be spiritually united in order to inspire life. In truth, I find it odd that you had not hitherto learned this basic truth from your own culture. What you need to do is remember, see, and balance the meaningful aspect of life that gets eclipsed by material abundance. The words, "**To know the unknown, one must first know what is known.**"

I was shaken. I felt like I had been slapped. As I tried to comprehend what all of this meant in a state of confusion, he told me calm down and added,

You must examine your spiritual roots in order to understand this. You must be able to let go of that reactive personality which stimulates "**narcissism**" and "**arrogance.**" When your perceptions change, so will your reactions. When your reactions change, so will the results you create. You must be able to sincerely transition to a proactive personality that will enhance your "**awareness of incompleteness,**" "**awareness of appreciation,**" and "**humility.**" If you do not learn these ways just to spite the common, prevailing divisive and condescending language which remains in force, you will continue to have difficulty understanding things useful to you, as you did until now. **Don't be a fool, be a dervish. What matters is that people value themselves and others. What matters is being able to complete others as much as one can.**

You ought to know that intentions are very important in all areas of life, especially in one-on-one relationships and collaborative works that require unity. Sincere intentions are true and permanent. A person's intentions are reflected back on themselves. Never forget the words, "**Action without intention is worthless, insincere intentions are soulless.**" This statement

² People cannot discover their true selves until they have shed the worldly masks that they adopt after birth. Unfortunately, as long as they keep these masks, they cannot reach that innate divine essence and unique potential which exists from birth but gets veiled afterwards. The chief masks include negative ambitions, desires, passions, worries, suspicions, addictions, prejudices, negative conditioning, illusions, fantasies, obsessions, complexes, bigotry, jealousy, cheating, humiliation, narcissism, rivalries, comparisons, ostracism, marginalization, scorn, haughtiness, pontification, possessiveness, arrogance, grudges, anger, revenge, exploitation, abuse, superstitions.

emphasizes the significance of intentions, not efforts. The more you focus on the glow of others, the more will you glow yourself. When you live according to your highest light, you will be given even more light.

He told me not to lose hope. Life is awareness, sincerity, action, change, growth. There is always another step to climb on the staircase.

In that serene and austere atmosphere which gave off the odor of literary labor, I inquired as to how the steps were supposed to be climbed. Immediately at this moment, he indicated a big and heavy door which opened with some difficulty because of its unoiled hinges. Once several drops of oil had been dribbled on the hinges, I saw that the door became readily openable, even with the touch of a finger. I saw this with my own eyes.

And the senior master continued to teach me with his glowing visage: **"Use love continually like an oil, because love makes all things easier. Love always finds a way. Open your heart and allow love to flow free."**

It is true, once we oil our hinges, doors are easier to open. The same is true of humans. They must be mentally renewed. They must be oiled with new concepts and meanings. However, the quality of the oil is crucial.

The profound speech of that wise senior master who was all smiles was stirring me up, so to speak. It was teaching me new lessons I was unaware of.

I sense that you are pained. You are right, but the causes of negative outcomes force me to tell you this. I must tell you the following for the sake of new social diagnoses and awareness.

Quite simply, you must look for the cause in alienation, estrangement, and partial detachment. Remember, the main cause of alienation, estrangement, and partial detachment is language and culture!

You get stuck in the restricted meanings and expressions of the words/concepts you know. You cannot fulfill your desire with restricted and consigned knowledge. You must learn new things in order to break free from restrictions. You must wonder which concepts constitute Şumloyo culture. You must refine the meaning of those concepts by filtering them through your mind and soul. You must strive to incorporate your unique experiences and abilities into your personal knowledge, and to internalize them. **The concepts of Şumloyo culture include all the goodness and help that enriches life. Under their guidance and supervision, they carry people from**

the carnality/false identity in human nature to the humanity/true identity which is the human soul. It is as difficult as it is simple. The difficulty lies not in the unknown, but in erroneous knowledge. The subtleties of those concepts function according to spiritual thought. **For "the spirit" is a divine energy that allows us to value not only ourselves but everything besides. It is the essence of life.**

The two signboards at the beginning of the road which read "**store and supermarket**" actually refer to the culture of "**şumloyo and şu'loyo.**" They announce it and hint at it.

I was having trouble understanding. What was he trying to say?

I mustered the courage to ask him. His reply was very interesting.

Store goods are not sufficiently nourishing, formative, or transformative. The goods sold here are produced in **سۇلو** Şu'oloyu's ubiquitous facilities where production is dictated by the needs and expectations of fixed opinions and popular culture. In all areas of life, in every place far and wide, high and low, everyone eagerly and fervently, deliberately or unintentionally prefers to shop here. Often this preference is uninformed by the existence of a supermarket.

The supermarket is an heirloom. It belongs to the core culture. Supermarket goods are invigorating, nutritious, formative, and transformative. These goods are produced in **سۇملو** Şumloyo's rare facilities where production addresses the needs of truth of justice. Due to the arduous journey, nobody even wishes to happen by here. However, those who do happen to happen by, do not wish to depart.

While trying to digest his words, I repeated my question so as to satisfy my curiosity: I take it from your explanations that the "**şumloyo**" concept is a sociocultural, philosophical concept that feeds social thought within the dynamics of life. In that case, would you be willing to further clarify their meaning?

"You ought to know that all languages and cultures reveal humanity's secrets. However, those who do not return to their source and essence, are doomed to destruction. No society can survive for long with a way of thinking that does not originate from its own essential culture. Once every society develops a way of thinking that derives from its own essential culture but at the same correlates with the universal, social cohesion and intellectual progress will find meaning. This way of thinking must develop into a form of contact that serves social justice, peace, equity, mutual transformation, and coexistence rather than

asserting one's own dominance or destroying others. For everything in the universe is useful as long as it furthers the understanding and development of the meaning of life.

These are the kinds of complementary and comprehensive meanings attributed to the concept of "**şumloyo**." It is based on awareness of incompleteness, appreciation, and mercy; as well as on active altruism, conscience, and true information. It is not in the habit of expecting praise or awareness. It seeks for ways to become aware of people and appreciate them. As in the multifaceted understandings of progress, "**şumloyo**" is empowered by discipline and culture. This is the main dynamic of discipline and culture. It emphasizes self-knowledge and self-discipline. Remorseless, deceptive attitudes such as manipulation, abuse, and exploitation which harm people's inner worlds are morally evil in its eyes.

The concept of discipline/**tarbitho** has been derived from the verb "**rbo, rabi**," which means to grow and raise in the necessary rules of etiquette such as politeness, courtesy, and gentlemanliness; learning and teaching rules and conventions for the purpose of being informed; and mastery, on moral grounds, of manners, decency, and etiquette.

The concept of culture/**mardutho** has been derived from the verb "**rdo**," which has connotations in Syriac such as "to walk, go, travel, flow, discipline, educate, teach manners, give guidance, learn."

In other words, it is impossible to understand '**şumloyo**' without comprehending the subtleties in meaning of tarbitho/discipline and mardutho/culture. Therefore, one must be in a state of flux in order to grow in politeness and courtesy; and to walk in knowledge and wisdom. According to şumloyo, it is difficult to remain in flux without the values of discipline and culture. Without cultural riches, material riches serve no purpose save to bring new dimensions to extravagance. No matter how tall the mountain of material things/carnality/selfishness is, the path of culture and discipline spans them. The path of discipline and culture is the humane path which lays the foundation for inner transformation and growth.

In the course of this integral, nourishing, relaxing, formative, and inspiring conversation, my mind had focused on the messages that had cascaded across the public service ad. The wise master must have perceived this, as he spoke once again with a glowing spirit:

When the concepts attributed to şumloyo culture³ have an effect on one's thoughts, the spirit warms up and loosens up. Inner eyes and inner vision are illuminated. Consciousness and perception develop, grow. More opportunities rise up. Differences and capacities become pleasant. Thus, each person, authority, and institution becomes tranquil and at peace with its own position. Each becomes active in its own duty and role. Each maintains its esteem by preserving its sobriety.

When the concepts attributed to şu'loyo culture⁴ have an effect on one's thoughts, the spirit freezes and calcifies. Inner eyes and inner vision are darkened. Consciousness and perception

³ Şumloyo **مومكلا** means complementary. The leading concepts attributed to şumloyo culture include: Spiritual intelligence=havno d'ruho, will=sebyono, love=hubo, sabro=hope, peace/tranquility=şayno, well-being=şlomo, power of love=haylo d'hubo, pardon=husoyo, forgiveness=şubkono, heart=lebo, clean=dağyo, pure/şafyo, clean heart=lebo dağyo, idea/though=huşobo, clean thought=huşobo dağyo, spirit/soul=ruho, humility=mukoğō/makiğutho, faith=haymonutho, self-esteem=şayo, respect=ikoro, value/dignity=yakro, agreement=tarutho, blessing=burktho, truth=kuştō, trust=tuğlono, thanksgiving=tavditho, justice=kinutho, unconditional love=hubo lo ksiso/hubo lo tanvoyoy, compassion=havsono, mercy=rahme, awareness=foruşutho, compassionate awareness=foruşutho d'havsono, awareness of incompleteness=foruşutho d'absirutho, awareness of appreciation=foruşutho d'amyakronutho, perseverance/tolerance=humsono, tenderness=hnono, respect for labor=ikoro d'maksoro, help=udrono, empathetic tenderness/ruhofo, patience=msaybronutho, generosity=şfi'utho, generous=şfi'o, virtue=myatrutho, science/education=yulfono, discipline=tarbitho, culture=mardutho, ethics=ithiki, morality=şafiruth znayo, decency/manners=tarbitho, diligence=kaşirutho, individuality=hatitutho, freedom=hirutho, assiduous=kaşiro, proactive=zrizo, augmentative=mrabyono, guide=mşablono, inner guide=mşablono gavoyo, responsibility=mşalutho, truthfulness/consistency=trisutho, gentlemanly=knığō/rmisō, getlemanliness=knığutho/rmisutho, rational power=haylo mlilo, serenity=bhilutho, serene=bhilo, smiling=hviho/fkiho, to smile=bursomo/hvihutho, warming=mahmonutho, facilitation=madlonutho, unburdening=maklonutho, thanksgiving=tavditho, constructive criticism=gunoyo mbanyono, praise/appreciation=kuloso, solution=şroyo, altruism=enahnoyutho, character transformation=şuğnoyo d'yasro, consolation of meaning=buyoo d'sukolo...!

⁴ Şu'loyo **موجلا** means boasting. The leading concepts attributed to şu'loyo culture include: Ego=naşo, selfishness=enonoyutho, love of power=hubo d'haylo, conditional love=hubo tanvoyoy/hubo ksiso, patronization=rabutho, lazy=hbanono, laziness=hbanonutho, greedy=kaluto, kalututho=greed, oppression=ruşono, instigation=fetno, depravement=hbolo, complex=naşo zu'rto, loftiness=eloyutho, jealousy=hosudutho, envy=hsomo, domineeringness=uşumyo, persecution=flumyo, exploitation/abuse=şubzozo, scorn=şitutho, judgement=dino, judging=duyono, prejudice=dino kadmo, stereotype=dino amumoyo, harsh/(cold) looks=havro karsono, vanity=methavzyonutho, flattery=meştāfronutho, obsequiousness/sycophancy=şufardikutho, mockery=bezho/muyoko, labor exploitation=şubzozo d'maksoro, slander=u'şukyo, comparison=fuhomo, rivalry=muroyo, complaint=kbulyo/kutroğō, defamation=zulolo d'ikoro, vilification=şuhomo, trickery=neğlo, grudge=aktho, anger=ruğzo, rage=elmo, hate=senetho, pride=şubhoro, narcissism=şufroho, conflict=heryono,

narrow, constrict and diminish. Less opportunities rise up. Differences and capacities become bitter. Thus, each person, authority, and institution becomes restless and ill at ease with its own position. Each becomes passive in its own duty and role. They lose the ability to preserve their sobriety and esteem.

The chief purpose of şumloyo culture is to lend assistance on the path of life, to provide internal and external enrichment, and to protect physical and mental health. Those who adopt the şumloyo culture value people and develop relationships with them because of divine essence and human dignity.

Those belonging to şu'loyo culture value people and develop relationships with them based on their needs, expectations, and interests, because they are self-seeking. Because of their inner emptiness, such people are ready to misunderstand at any moment.

After these fine explanations my spirit was rested to such a degree that I intuitively checked the clock. It was time. Let's get to our shopping, I blurted.

There is no rush, he said, first you must make your choice. What is your priority? What would you like to purchase? We will begin our shopping accordingly. You cannot buy everything you want at once. You must be patient.

In that case, I've made my final choice. From now on, I refuse to even mention the store. Please, let's go to the supermarket.

But, he said, it is urgent that you decide what you need. Otherwise, you will not be able to purchase what you want, even with a full wallet. The management spirit is very different at the supermarket. You can return once you have consumed your purchases, he told me.

After going through certain processes, we both entered the supermarket with resolution. The place was wonderful. It rendered services to people who were in search of something, as I was. Anything that was a necessity could be found here. It could be purchased, but only after a certain waiting period...!

I did not have much time. I could not wait. Seeing as I was here, I happened by the **TRUTH** aisle.

strife=masutho, condescension/insult=bsuryo, estrangement=makronutho, obstruction=ma'skonutho,
exacerbation=mavkronutho, disturbing=malzono, disturbance=malzonutho, notion/illusion=sebro,
delusion/hallucination=maklonutho, conditioning=maşronutho, immorality=sahnutho....

The first addition to my cart from this aisle was "**human dignity.**" I found "**love and respect**" on the shelf and grabbed that too. A little further down, there was "**understanding and patience.**" I grabbed both because both were needed at all times and places. However, according to the truth of the words, "**insincere intentions are soulless,**" they were meaningless without sincerity.

I grabbed a bagful of "**persuasion, faith, and hope.**" "**Culture, discipline;**" a little further off- "**sincerity, responsibility, positivity,**" as well as "**respect for hard work**" were not to be ignored. They made a strong impression and were dazzling among the aisles. I wanted to grab bagsful of them. But I was not allowed to take too many. They only allowed me a single bag of "**culture, discipline, and morals.**" They said that the others were among the elements of "**culture and discipline**" anyhow.

I hesitated for a moment, dropped "**rational power**" and "**courage,**" and continued shopping. My cart was nearly full when I remembered that I still had to grab some "**awareness.**" I added "**discipline, diligence.**" Though there was an attempt to grab varieties of awareness, I was barred from doing so.

With great excitement, I was trying to fill the bags. I was trying to acquire a lot of things for myself and my close circle. But I was barred. As a matter of principle, everyone could only shop for themselves. Buying things for others, even gifts were prohibited.

Lastly, I added "**conscience,**" "**humility,**" "**forgiveness,**" "**justice,**" "**loyalty,**" and "**appreciation, gratitude**" to my cart as well.

Next, I made towards the checkout to pay for my purchases.

I believed that I had acquired what was necessary for my spiritual and mental health. While moving towards the checkout, "**individuality**" and "**freedom**" caught my eye. Both were an absolute necessity in life.

"**Peace,**" "**tranquility,**" "**compassion,**" and "**merciful awareness**" were sitting on the last shelf. "**Free will,**" "**wisdom,**" "**blessing,**" and "**happiness**" sat to the side. I added these to my cart as well. As I slowly approached the checkout, my mind went to the bill. My cart was chock-full. The bill was hefty. I had a feeling that payment would not come easy for me.

I asked the senior master beside me how much the bill would tally up to. I was not prepared for this much shopping.

You chose meaningful things. Keep them with you when you go to checkout, he replied.

At the checkout, an old cashier went over all my things. He reviewed them.

How much do I owe you? When I inquired about the bill, the old cashier laughed and told me to pass through.

With much respect that came from self-discipline, he said, "**you mean a lot to us.**" You have a very influential, priceless patron. Our records say that you are a brother of Christ. You are a partner here. You owe the house nothing. You will make no payment.

Christ paid on your behalf centuries ago!

That was when it struck me. I was shocked. I was transformed. As I left checkout, I was impatient and curious to read what the ad brochure I had taken with me had to say. It perfectly captured the spirit that managed the supermarket: "**Our supermarket provides services based on the policy, 'freely ye received, freely give.'** No one can learn, internalize, and apply the truths of life for another. For this reason, personal shopping is fundamental. Purchases are merely seeds. As in the principles of divine truth and justice, these seeds that sustain life, peace, stability, and progress are subject to optional distribution. Those who sow these seeds into their hearts and grow them are given even more abundant opportunities with new shopping possibilities.

These opportunities come into play everywhere depending on the person's choice.

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